MIDWESTERN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Fall 2022 Vol. 21 No. 2

MIDWESTERN
JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

ISBN: 1543-6977

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

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

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

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

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

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BOOK REVIEWS

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Fall 2022 issue of the Midwestern Journal of Theology, once again I would like to begin by expressing my sincere thanks to all who have contributed to make this happen. Special mention goes to Dr. Jason Duesing, Provost and Academic Editor, for all his invaluable assistance; to Dr. Blake Hearson for all the time and energy he invests in each issue; and to Mrs. Caitlin Collins for all that she does so patiently and efficiently in the background.

We are again blessed to publish a rich and varied assortment of articles for this issue, and we are always very grateful for the many articles we receive. If you are interested in submitting an article for consideration, please submit a Word document direct to Dr. Michael McMullen at mmcmullen@mbts.edu. We are sorry we are not able to publish every article we receive.

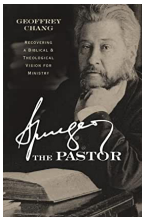
We open this issue with four papers that were given at the MBTS 2022 Spurgeon Library Conference. The first is 'Unwavering in the Cause of Truth: The Consistent Preaching Witness of C.H. Spurgeon,' that was given by Tom Nettles. This is followed by Brandon Rhea's, 'Three Sabbath Controversies in the Life of C.H. Spurgeon.' The third paper was entitled, 'Pastoral Thanatology: An Exegetical Examination of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 as a Theological Model of Ministry to the Grieving,' given by Richard Sams. The final paper published here was given by Midwestern's own Colton Strother and is entitled, 'Protecting the Sheep of Goat Yard Chapel: John Gill's Doctrine of Church Discipline.'

We conclude this issue with two articles under the sub-heading of For the Church. Our penultimate article, 'A Biblical Vision for Theological Higher Education,' is by Jason DeRouchie, and this is followed by Davy Ellison's, 'The One and Only?'

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

Books in Brief

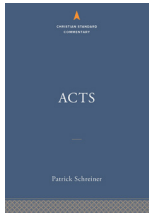
New and upcoming releases from the Midwestern Seminary community



SPURGEON THE PASTOR: RECOVERING A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL VISION FOR MINISTRY

by Geoffrey Chang
(B&H Books)
AUGUST 9, 2022

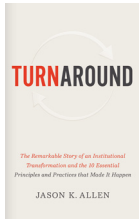
In Spurgeon the Pastor, Geoff Chang, director of the Spurgeon Library at Midwestern Seminary, shows how Spurgeon models a theological vision of ministry in preaching, baptism and the Lord's supper, meaningful church membership, biblical church leadership, leadership development, and more.



ACTS: THE CHRISTIAN STANDARD COMMENTARY

by Patrick Schreiner
(Holman Bible Publishers)
SEPTEMBER 1, 2022

Acts: The Christian Standard Commentary is part of The Christian Standard Commentary (CSC) series. This commentary series focuses on the theological and exegetical concerns of each biblical book, thoughtfully balancing rigorous scholarship with practical application.



TURNAROUND: THE REMARKABLE STORY OF AN INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION AND THE 10 ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES THAT MADE IT HAPPEN

by Jason Allen
(B&H Books)
SEPTEMBER 13, 2022

In this book, Dr. Allen shares the leadership principles he learned through the turnaround of Midwestern Seminary—principles you'll be able to apply in whatever area God has called you to lead.

GIFTS OF GRACE: 25 ADVENT DEVOTIONS

by Jared C. Wilson
(The Good Book Company)
OCTOBER 1, 2022

Reflecting on a few short verses each day, this devotional examines the wonderful gifts of grace that we receive through the coming of Christ and belief in his gospel.

for the Church
MIDWESTERN
BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Midwestern Journal of Theology 21.2 (2022): 1-22

Unwavering in the Cause of Truth: The Consistent Preaching Witness of C. H. Spurgeon

TOM J. NETTLES
Senior Professor of Historical Theology
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Distilling Doctrine

Spurgeon believed in the coherent connections within the entire framework of biblical theology. He saw it as the duty of the Christian minister to have a well-founded systematic understanding of biblical truth. "I have kept strictly to the gospel of the Puritans, and have felt no temptation to wander into those new paths which in this country attract so many."[1] This is possible because of the perfectly consistent, non-contradictory nature of Scripture as a revelation from God. The goal is to epitomize specific doctrines from the word of revelation leading to a final synthesis of the dominant purpose of revealed truth—the glory of God. Every facet of the entirety breaks the spectrum into a necessary doctrinal

[1]C. H. Spurgeon, *Sermons of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon of London* 20 vols (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1892), 9:9. Volume 20 volume of this set was published in 1892 ends with brief biographical reminiscences by G. Holden Pike who also wrote a six volume biography of Spurgeon and contains reports of his last service in Mentone, France. The first volume contained a preface completed in April 1857 by ELM, was published in 1857, gathers sermons from 1855 and 1856. ELM probably refers to Elias Lyman Magoon, pastor of Oliver Stret Baptist Church in New York before he went to First Baptist Church, Albany. He was deeply and sincerely impressed with the culture, doctrine, sincerity, effectiveness, singularity, and faithfulness of the twenty-two year old preacher. Volumes 2, 3, 5, 9, contain short prefaces by Spurgeon. Volumes 14-19 contained 17 sermons each while other volumes varied in number. Some volumes chose a thematic approach for inclusion of sermons such as volume 13 entitled "Storm Signals" and contained sermons on warnings about eternal peril. Volumes 18 was composed of sermons from 1887 and volume 19 from 1888. They were originally published by Sheldon & Company in New York. Spurgeon called this publisher, "My esteemed friend Mr. Sheldon." Hereinafter, SS.

color for the perfection of the white light of God's glory. In "The Bible," he reported that an old friend had recommended that he preach the greatest themes of Scripture, the three R's, "Ruin, Redemption, Regeneration." After commending the idea, Spurgeon noted, "I believe there is a better epitome in the five points of Calvinism—Election according to the foreknowledge of God; the natural depravity and sinfulness of man; particular redemption by the blood of Christ; effectual calling by the power of the Spirit; and ultimate perseverance by the efforts of God's might. I think all those need to be believed, in order to salvation."[2] Volume 2 has a preface written by Spurgeon in January 1857 and contains sermons about which Spurgeon remarked, "The same doctrines which we taught last year are repeated in these sermons." He offered no apology but affirmed, "Our ministry is a testimony that no new theology is needed to stir the masses and save souls; we defy all the negative theologians in England to give such proof of their ministry as we can. ... we must boast that the old doctrines are victorious, and that the Lord the Spirit has most signally honored them."[3]

In the preface to volume 9 of this series Spurgeon maintained this commitment: "I have preached what I believed and delighted in, and all my hopes for time and eternity rest in that everlasting covenant of grace which from my youth up has been my theme." He was not unaware of other options in historical theology nor of the fashionable "Modern Thought" provoked by the intrusion of critical literary theories into biblical studies. He assured his thousands of listeners, "I am not ignorant of the novelties of modern thought, nor do I cling to old-fashioned ideas our of reverence to antiquity; But I believe, and desire to record the belief, that the doctrines of grace are the marrow of the Gospel, and that the further men advance upon the teaching of Jonathan Edwards, Bunyan, Calvin, Augustine, and Paul, the further they go astray."[4]

The doctrinal direction of the New Park Street Pulpit was enunciated in the resonant and clear, perfectly intoned tenor voice of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, on January 7, 1855. They set the entire course for Spurgeon's preaching: "It has been said by someone that 'the proper study of mankind is man.' I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is

[2] SS, 1:37.
[3] Ibid., 2:vi.
[4] SS, 9:10.

equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God—the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father."[5]

Spurgeon, even at twenty-one years of age, looked upon the synthesizing of biblical truth leading to expansive views of God as the only study that in its very nature is endless and inexhaustible: "There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity—so deep that our pride is drowned in its infinity." After some words commending the study of other sciences that expand the intellect, Spurgeon again laid claim to theology as the queen of the sciences: "after all, the most excellent study for expanding the soul is the science of Christ, and Him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity."[6] At the opening of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Spurgeon famously announced, after having commended John Gill's *Body of Divinity,* "But the body of divinity to which I would pin and bind myself forever, God helping me, is not his system of divinity or any other human treatise, but Christ Jesus, who is the sum and substance of the Gospel—who is in Himself all theology—the incarnation of every precious truth, the all-glorious personal embodiment of the way, the truth, and the life."

A saving knowledge of God, therefor, as well as a true experiential knowledge of every doctrine of revelation, depends on two related convictions. As Calvin so simply yet profoundly introduced the *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* our eternal well-being depends on Knowledge of God and knowledge of Man. Knowledge of Man, or ourselves, concerns how sin has established the certainty of our condemnation apart from a

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[5] Charles Spurgeon, *New Park Street Pulpit* (6 vols) numbered consecutively with the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* 63 vols. London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1855-1917. Volume sev en begins with sermons in New Park Street and in sermon 369 the Proceedings at the opening of the Metropolitan Tabernacle are recorded. The first sermon in the new series is in volume seven listed as number 369a. Hereinafter NPSP and MTP.

[6] NPSP, 1:1.

righteous means of forgiveness and acceptance. In short, we are condemned and corrupt from original sin and from personal transgression. Knowledge of God comes to us through two elemental parts. First, in our mental rebellion we have brought cognitive blindness on ourselves and must have the revelation of true propositions about God. This will include most potently the wisdom of the cross as borne by Christ. Second, we must be brought in heart to an experiential sense of the existential truth of the propositions. True knowledge will combine both assent and consent to revealed redemptive truth. Calvin began with Knowledge of God, but I will look first, and briefly, at how Spurgeon handled the knowledge of man.

Fallen Man in a fallen World

In "Sin's True Quality," Spurgeon gave a sweeping and gripping summary and survey of the reality of sin. He portrayed the beauty of an unfallen world in its "unwithering loveliness" of plant and bird and beast and then takes us to "two perfect beings, a man and a woman, the parents of our race." All things were created by God, upheld by him, and reflected his glory. Then we survey thorns and thistles and behold the bloody wildness that has seized the beasts; we find the man toiling and sweating to keep alive. Spurgeon takes us to the carnage of a battlefield where lies "a mangled mass of human bodies, cut and torn, riddled with shot, skulls splintered with rifle balls, dabbled pools of blood."

In another scene, he pictures the "dismal pit that has no bottom, that place wherein spirits condemned of God are put away for ever, ... that place where God's wrath burns like a furnace." But not even there has Spurgeon reached the climax of his survey of horror, but must show us that on "Calvary's tree the Lord himself who loved us, and came to earth to bless us," was nailed to a cross in undeserved hate and malignity, pierced in side, beaten and torn in flesh, and became a curse. All of this because sin entered when by man came death. The final proof of the exceeding sinfulness of sin is that fallen men became murderers of Christ.[7]

But beyond that, Spurgeon would have us see the truly exceeding sinfulness and infinite evil of sin in that only the infinitely lovely,

[7] Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia* 15 vols (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977) 14:207, 208. Hereinafter, SEE.

innocent, Son of God could put it away by becoming a sacrificial offering. The sins of his people in "one tremendous mass" were on the cross "imputed to him" so that he stood as "an equivalent for the sufferings of all the guilty ones for whom he stood."[8]

Frequently, Spurgeon brought the doctrine of sin to bear on the conscience of his congregation and illustrated it through personal experience. Preaching prior to the Lord's Supper in 1855, Spurgeon reminded his hearers that Christ is an infinitely glorious person who has by his blood procured our redemption. Spurgeon queried, "Why do we need an aid for remembering?" in light of such an astounding event. The realty of indwelling sin makes the reminder necessary. "We have a worm in the heart, a pest-house, a charnel-house within, lusts, vile imaginations, and strong evil passions, which, like wells of poisonous water, send out continually streams of impurity." Spurgeon knew that the universal reality included him. "I have a heart, which God knows, I wish I could wring from my body and hurl to an infinite distance—a soul which is a cage of unclean birds, a den of loathsome creatures, where dragons haunt and owls do congregate, where every evil beast of ill-omen dwells, a heart too vile to have a parallel—'deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.'"[9]

In a sermon about God's sanctifying purpose in the lives of his saints, Spurgeon again referred to his own need for such subjugation of sin by a peculiarly poignant admission of the power and deceitfulness of the defiling power of sin: "Ah, I remember when words I never heard from human tongues rushed through my ears filling my heart with blasphemies which I never thought of—profane suggestions which made me tremble like a leaf as they poured through my poor brain! I could have died sooner than they should be there and yet they were rushing through my mind and bearing all before them. Many of God's people are tried in that way."[10]

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[8] SEE 14:216 "The Putting Away of Sin."

[9] "The Remembrance Of Christ" (spurgeongems.org):1; NPSP 1: In "The Remembrance of Christ" Sunday evening, January 7, 1855.

[10] MTP 27:33 (1881).

Scripture and the Spirit

In light of such devastating evil and blindness, we need a clear guide as to how sin is the be dealt with through the moral haze of our lives. How does a sinner come to a saving knowledge of God? In simple terms, apart from a full trust in the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture one has shut himself off from any certainty in knowing the one true God. Second, unless there is an opening of the heart to the truth of Scripture, one may just as easily miss the real impact of the truth as if he did not believe in its inspiration. By accepting the infallibility of the propositions of Scripture, one may gain true facts about God and his redemptive purpose. By the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit, one is brought into a saving belief of these truths. We will look, therefore at Spurgeon's view of Scripture and his doctrine of spiritual apprehension or sensibility.

O Blessed Bible

Perhaps Spurgeon's greatest contest over the doctrine of Scripture came in the "Downgrade Controversy" that led to his resignation from the Baptist Union in October 1887. The first entry in the 1888 MTP was entitled "On the Baptist Union Censure."[11] After much discussion and epistolary correspondence between Spurgeon and members of the Baptist Union, particularly members of the Council, through the last half of 1887, the Baptist Union Council met on January 18, 1888, and passed a resolution centering on Mr. Spurgeon's charges concerning doctrinal decline, "in the judgment of the Council, [the charges] ought not to have been made." John Clifford, commenting on these events, referred to Spurgeon's "martial tone," coloring it as "a shrill summons to war." Clifford's piece in the *Pall Mall Gazette* displayed his peerless aptitude for sly ridicule when he wrote, "Mr. Spurgeon may accuse the whole Union of anything he pleases, but no one among us may presume to whisper doubt about his action in a single case." The list of accusations to which he referred, Clifford postured in this form: "The Council has intimated, with unsurpassable mildness, that Mr. Spurgeon 'ought not to say', unless he is prepared to prove it, that our ministers 'make infidels,' scout the atonement, deride the inspiration of Scripture, degrade the

[11] MTP 34 (1888). It is the first entry, prior to the table of contents, and not paginated by was on pages 81-83 of the February 1888 *The Sword and the Trowel.*

Holy Spirit into an influence, turn the punishment of sin into a fiction and the resurrection into a myth." He wished Spurgeon would stop his accusations and pursue his call as an "eminent winner of souls."[12] An American paper concluded that in Spurgeon's interaction with the Council he had come out "at a great disadvantage" on issues of fraternity and piety. *The Independent* of New York wrote that he "throws out insinuations of deceit" against men of eminent saintliness and piety and of long-term usefulness in the kingdom.[13] Spurgeon dissolved and then reconstituted the annual Pastors' College Conference in light of the incursion of these issues into the ministries of his own graduates.

In his response, printed in the February issue of the *Sword and Trowel*, and appearing as the first piece in the MTP for 1888, Spurgeon put his convictions in context. In the Union's resistance to a definite evangelical confessional statement Spurgeon noted, "To say that 'a creed comes between a man and his God,' is to suppose that it is not true; for truth, however definitely stated, does not divide the believer from his Lord. So far as I am concerned, that which I believe I am not ashamed to state in the plainest possible language, and the truth I hold I embrace because I believe it to be the mind of God revealed in His infallible Word. How can it divide me from God who revealed it? It is one means of my communion with my Lord, that I receive His words as well as Himself, and submit my understanding to what I see to be taught by Him. Say what He may, I accept it because He says it, and therein pay Him the humble worship of my inmost soul."[14]

Calls to release details of his objections with names attached or cease the accusations, to reconnect with his brethren in the Baptist Union were equally impossible for Spurgeon in light of pledges made to S. H Booth and convictions about issues of doctrinal affirmation. He said, "The warfare has been made too personal and certain incidents in it, upon which I will not dwell, have made it too painful for me to feel any pleasure in the idea of going on with it. It might even appear that I desired to be reinstated in the Union, or wished to head a party in it, and this is very far from my mind. But let no man imagine that I shall cease from my protests against false doctrine, or lay down the sword of which I have

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[12] G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 6 vols (London: Cassell & Company, n.d.), 6:297. Hereinafter Pike.

[13]Pike, 6:297, 298.

[14]S&T, February 1888, 82; MTP, 34:np (1888)

thrown away the scabbard." In spite of efforts to make him deal in specific personalities, Spurgeon said, "However much invited to do so, I shall not commence personalities, nor disclose the wretched facts in all their details." Nevertheless, confirmatory evidence perpetually poured in to him so that he developed a "solemn conviction that the dark conspiracy to overthrow the truth" was at hand and "must be dragged to light." He pledged "to expose doctrinal declension wherever I see it."[15]

In an effort to pacify Spurgeon to some degree, the Baptist Union adopted a short confessional statement in April of 1888.[16] This statement was approved by a 2000-7 vote. Spurgeon would have registered a negative vote, for he viewed the confession as solving no problem. Its sparseness created lack of clarity, its caveats established its compromises, and its failure to recognize doctrinal challenges made it irrelevant for the present crisis. Conceding to the liberals one apparent concern, he knew that a creed did not guarantee spirituality. This very year, Spurgeon would say, "We are far too apt to put truth down in our creed, and after that to shut it away from practical everyday use. We believe it, and we should be indignant if anybody disputed it, and yet we ignore it." A proposition either disbelieved or unaffirmed has no power of spiritual transformation.

In 1855 he had said, "It is not for me to draw up creeds; but I ask you to search the Scriptures, for this is the word of life."[17] In this context of 1888, however, a clear confession was a necessary first step in the restoration of spirituality both in mind and heart, in the individual and in the church. The slipperiness of those who announced that the Bible alone was their creed in order to avoid any definite assertions of doctrine convinced him of the need for a clear and thorough statement of historic orthodoxy.

The first article that appeared on the Downgrade asserted that at the bottom of all doctrinal declension was a want of firm conviction on the inspiration and error-free character of Scripture.[18] In order to give a brief synopsis, therefore, of Spurgeon's abiding and consistent submission of

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[15] S&T, February 1888, 83; MTP, 34: unpaginated (1888)

[16] See William L. Lumpkin, Bill J. Leonard, eds. *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2011), 358-361.

[17] SS 1:38.

[18] S&T, April 1887, 170.

mind to God's revealed truth, we will examine the consistency of his view of the Bible throughout his ministry.

During these days, we find that his commitment to the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture is undiminished. The challenge of the last year seems never far from his mind in his preaching, and he sees in each text something to give him confidence as he carries on his 1888 labors in the spirit of 1855. In that first year in London, Spurgeon preached a sermon with the unvarnished title, "The Bible." Taking a text from Hosea 8:12, Spurgeon asserted from the words of the text, "This volume is the writing of the living God. ... This book is God's handwriting—that these words are God's. ... These words are the words of God. ... [M]ark its authority, for it is the word of God."[19]

By 1888, Spurgeon had not retreated a particle from the conviction he held thirty-three years earlier. On March 11, he preached "The Infallibility of Scripture."[20] Based on Isaiah 1:20, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," Spurgeon had no hesitation in applying this declaration to the entirety of the Bible: "All Scripture, being inspired of the Spirit, is spoken by the mouth of God."[21] No mere human words could demand our time and the grinding out of our lives in seeking to expound them and insist that those who hear adhere, but "When the Lord speaks, His speech is God-like, and its themes are worthy of one whose dwelling is infinity and eternity."[22] Though its credibility does not depend on human commendation, its profundity provokes the admiration of sensible men of letters. There is a "unique dignity" in its style and content, so much so that the philosopher John Locke spent a large amount of time in the last fourteen years of his life in close study of the Bible. When asked by a young gentleman what was the best way to understand the Christian religion, Locke responded that he should read the Bible. He continued, "Therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any admixture of error, for its matter."[23] Those words became embedded in the New Hampshire Confession of Faith and thereby into the *Baptist Faith and Message.*

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[19] *SS*, 1:26, 30.
[20] MTP 34:145-156.
[21] Ibid., 145.
[22] Ibid., 151.
[23] MTP 34:152 (1888).

When the mouth of the Lord has spoken, one may be sure that the words are an absolutely certainty. "Though heaven and earth should pass away, yet not one jot or tittle of what God has spoken shall fail." If God speaks, it cannot be mistaken for "God cannot lie. These are postulates," Spurgeon insisted, "which no one can dispute." Again, if the mouth of the Lord has spoken it, we have in each utterance "the special character of immutable fixedness." Then referring to the distressing unfixedness of modern thought generated by higher criticism, he added, "The rock of God's Word does not shift, like the quicksand of modern scientific theology." Its immutability is determined by the eternality of the speaker's perspective. If indeed, "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it," Spurgeon projected, "It is truth to me in this year of grace 1888, and if I stand among you a grey-headed old man, somewhere in 1908, you will find me making no advance upon the divine ultimatum. If 'The mouth of the Lord has spoken it,' we behold in His revelation a gospel which is without variableness, revealing 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.'"[24]

Unfolding the text's implications in conjunction with other texts, Spurgeon deduced, "All Scripture, being inspired of the Spirit, is spoken by the mouth of God. However this sacred Book may be treated nowadays, it was not treated contemptuously, or negligently, or questioningly by the Lord Jesus Christ, our Master and Lord." This unfaltering confidence of Christ is determinative because of the person of Christ. His reverence for the written word commands submission on our part because of his peculiar authority in the incarnation and because of his eternal omniscient authority. "The Spirit of God rested upon Him personally, without measure," Spurgeon reminded the crowd. Beyond that, "He could speak out of His own mind the revelation of God." Even with those advantages of personal access to immediately revealed truth, "He continually quoted the law and the prophets, and the Psalms, and always He treated the sacred writings with intense reverence, strongly in contrast with the irreverence of 'modern thought.'" Others may choose a path less certain, but "As for us and for our house, this priceless Book shall remain the standard of our faith and the ground of our hope so long as we live. … [T]he glorious Jehovah is our God, and we believe

[24] Ibid., 153.

concerning each doctrine of the entire Bible, that 'The mouth of the Lord has spoken it.'"[25]

Spurgeon claimed neither knowledge nor authority to correct the "divine revelation, but simply to echo it. I do not take it to be my office to bring you new and original thoughts of my own, but rather to say, 'The Word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.'" He posed a query to those who found ways to look to other sources of truth and minimize the absolute authority of the Bible: "Is the infallible revelation of the infallible Jehovah to be shaped, moderated, and toned down to the fashions and fancies of the hour? God forgive us if we have ever altered His Word unwittingly; wittingly we have not done so, nor will we."[26]

Since 1855, no conviction of Spurgeon's about the Bible had changed. What he said then could just as easily be spoken after thirty-three years, "This volume is the writing of the living God—each letter was penned with an Almighty finger. Each word in it dropped from the everlasting lips, each sentence was dictated by the Holy Spirit." No matter what language was used to describe inspiration—dynamic, plenary, plenary verbal, or dictation—Spurgeon knew that in the end the very words in all their nuances, contexts, and personal dynamic must be those that God wanted put into the text. "The words are God's words, the words of the Eternal, the Invisible, the Almighty, the JEHOVAH of this earth. This Bible is God's Bible and when I see it, I seem to hear a voice springing up from it, saying, "I am the book of God, man, read me. I am God's writing. Open my leaf, for I was penned by God."[27]

As Spurgeon surveyed the critical tendencies of the rising tide of liberalism, he noted that some theologians would take some revealed truths and infer from them doctrines that contradicted other revealed truths. He focused on the very words of revelation as a final authority in themselves rejecting the sinister piety of liberalism that extrapolated contradictions to clear teachings from misguided inferential theology. Embracing this same idea in 1855, Spurgeon said, "Far be it from me to exercise my reason in contradicting you. Reason! Your place is to stand and find out what this volume means, not to tell what this book ought to

[25] Ibid., 145, 146.
[26] Ibid., 147.
[27] SS, 1:26

say. Come you my reason, my intellect, sit you down and listen, for these words are the words of God."[28] The audacity of some to set their preferences and reason above Scripture shocked Spurgeon, even as a young man. "Blessed Bible," Spurgeon affirmed, "you are all truth."[29]

Inference is good when it serves the purpose of recognizing the coherence of cumulative revelation. But we cannot infer anything about God or his will that contradicts his stated purpose in Scripture. So still in 1888, Spurgeon would taunt, "Infer what you like from His nature, but if you draw an inference contrary to what He has spoken, you have inferred a lie, and you will find it so."[30] In a sermon about Jesus' word to the church at Pergamos, Spurgeon explored the ways in which the name of Jesus and the faith of Jesus were held fast and affirmed, "We hold fast the form of sound words, and accept whatsoever God has revealed, because he has revealed it. … When Christ speaks, we assent with our minds and consent with our hearts to all he declares."[31] This seemed particularly pertinent in teachings concerning wrath and endless punishment. Spurgeon did not treat Scripture as if it were a "Doomsday Book of wrath, but a Testament of grace." At the same time, he propounded, "if you do not believe its loving warnings, nor regard its just sentences, they are true all the same." One cannot grasp the character of grace if he omits the reality of just anger and none can avoid the words embedded throughout that canon. "If you dare its thunders, if you trample on its promises, and even if you burn it in your rage, the holy Book still stands unaltered and unalterable, for 'The mouth of the Lord has spoken it.'"[32]

He brought a spectacularly effective crescendo to these observations at the point of his personal experience with the unalterable and infallible truth of Scripture. "When friends forsake me, and foes belie me, and my own spirit goes down below zero, and I am depressed almost to despair, I am resolved to hang to the bare word of the Lord, and prove it to be in itself an all-sufficient stay and support. I will believe God against all the

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[28] SS, 1:30

[29] Ibid., 32.

[30] MTP 34:154 (1888).

[31] Ibid., 77, "Holding Fast the Faith." Later we will discuss the relationship between "assent" and "consent" in Spurgeon's preaching in the vital connection between Spirit and truth in regeneration.

[32] Ibid., 155.

devils in hell, God against Ahithophel, and Judas, and Demas, and all the rest of the turncoats; yes, and God against my own evil heart. His purpose shall stand, 'For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.' Away, you that contradict it; ours is a well-grounded confidence, 'For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.'"[33]

This resonates with what Spurgeon had proclaimed in 1855 when he said, ""But this is the Word of God. Come, search, you critics and find a flaw. Examine it from its Genesis to its Revelation and find an error. This is a vein of pure gold, ... O Bible! It cannot be said of any other book, that it is perfect and pure, but of you we can declare all wisdom is gathered up in you, without a particle of folly. ... This is the book untainted by any error; but is pure unalloyed, perfect truth."[34]

Sensibility

Our sin must be exposed, not only by a clear proposition of infallible truth, but in the receptivity of a heart that has been opened to receive the revelation. In 1881, Spurgeon preached, "Taught that We May Teach" based on Ezekiel 40:4, "And the man said to me, Son of man, behold with your eyes, and hear with your ears, and set your heart upon all that I shall show you; for to the intent that I might show them unto you, are you brought hither: declare all that you see to the house of Israel." Spurgeon spoke about the obligation that Christians have to observe intently, enjoy purely, and communicate faithfully the revelatory truths that they received. He speaks of "certain of God's servants" who receive special favors of revelation from the Lord. He related this to Moses, Joshua, Ezekiel, Daniel, John on Patmos, and Paul in the third heaven. These, according to his vocabulary, were periods of revelation. "And then, when the mind has been lifted above its ordinary level and the faculties are brought up by some divine process into a receptive state, He reveals Himself to us. These times come not always, but blessed are they to whom they come at all. When on the mountain alone with God, their spiritual nature asserts supremacy over the body till they scarcely know whether they are in the flesh or not—then the Lord reveals Himself to them."[35] He gave illustrations of personal circumstances in which certain

[33] Ibid., 156.
[34] SS, 1:31.
[35] MTP 27:39 (1881),

truths came to him that helped him help others. "I felt thankful to the last degree that I had been dragged through all my depression, because I was able to help him. Sometimes our experience is for the good of others and sometimes it is for our own good."[36] Passages like this have led some to call Spurgeon a mystic who set aside the necessity for propositional revelation as the only sure guide to truth and would look internally at his sense of the presence of Christ for guidance in his preaching and pastoral work.

As orthodoxy gave way to spirituality through the twentieth-century, Spurgeon was sure to be a source of interest. This deeply experimental element of Spurgeon has been misinterpreted. J. C. Carlile in a chapter entitled "Spurgeon the Mystic" in his book, *C. H. Spurgeon: An Interpretive Biography,* rightly defined Spurgeon's spirituality as fully harmonious with his activism in benevolence, evangelism, and earthy personality, his times of deep distress, and his endless stream of personal contacts each week. True mystics, Carlile rightly contended, dare greater deeds than most normally healthy people ever would attempt. He included appropriate quotes from Spurgeon's sermons about the exhilaration of the presence of Christ and the ecstasy of intimate communion with Christ. He showed convincingly that Spurgeon had an emotional and mental openness to powerful experiences of the felt presence of Christ. That which contorts his description of Spurgeon as a mystic is his abstraction of Spurgeon's spiritual profile from his doctrinal commitment. Carlile presented Spurgeon as a mystic in harmony with those great spirits through the ages that not only did heroic deeds but in whose "contemplation of the vision beautiful" they maintained the "unspeakable preciousness of the Presence." He presented Spurgeon as one that "proclaimed Christ the Son of God, the historical and spiritual reality, the abiding Presence made known to all who tread the mystic path."[37] This message, Carlile claims, was born in Spurgeon's "own experience."[38]

That in itself is true enough, but from that intensity of personal presence advocated by Spurgeon, Carlile deduced that a commitment to inspiration was non-essential to the "mysticism" he described. While

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[36] Ibid., 40,

[37] J. C. Carlile, *C. H. Spurgeon: An interpretive Biography* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1933), 279.

[38] Ibid., 278.

Spurgeon found "solemn delight in the consciousness that he walked with the Lord in the light of His Word," and would "appeal without hesitation to the very words of Scripture, taking the promises at their face value," Carlile could conceive of such delight accompanying any view of inspiration as long as there is solid confidence in the presence of Christ. "Whatever views may be held concerning inspiration," he reasoned, "it will be admitted that it is no small gain to the man who faces ridicule or is received with raptures of applause," both true in Spurgeon's experience, "to realize that he is not only doing the will of his Lord but that his Lord is really present with him."[39]

Carlile rendered neutral the revelatory and regulatory status of Holy Scripture in mystical experience, pointed to each mystic's awareness of the *Presence* and called that *Presence*, Christ. Spurgeon would never have diminished his expectations of the doctrine of Christ for a testimony of an awareness of the *Presence*. But Carlile in 1933 was interested in rehabilitating Spurgeon for acceptance by the increasingly liberal Baptist Union. If Spurgeon could not remake the Baptist Union forty-five years earlier, they would remake him post-mortem. Many things about Spurgeon were controversial and puzzling and only of passing value, so he noted. Much was of eternal good. "The passing must not be allowed to obscure the abiding," Carlile asserted, but there still is something that "rings true across the years." Spurgeon's most important contribution may be "the spiritual enrichment of the life of the time and all time, found in the eternal truth of the Divine Presence."

Such communion in the reality of Christ was, for Spurgeon, to be separated from all fanciful notions and ungrounded perceptions. True, the person of Christ himself constituted the joy and exhilaration of the experience, but only when the Christ enjoyed was the Christ that was God and man in one person, the righteous man and holy God conjoined to view sinners through that one face and that singular act of obedience, the propitiatory substitute for his elect, and their present advocate and mediator. Without these attributes and actions he is not the Christ that may be enjoyed in a consuming experience of love, and the consuming experience may be enjoyed only because all these historical, legal, and moral requirements have been answered fully and once for all; but the exalting delight itself comes from being enwrapped in the warmth of

[39] Ibid., 277.

Jesus as the one through whom we may enjoy an immediate fellowship in the glory of the triune God now made sweeter by our having been brought there at such infinite cost. The "Presence," however, has substantial reality only through the Spirit's operation upon the word of truth being the "Seal" of our inheritance and of the Word incarnate and written.

That kind of dynamic is present in this sermon. Spurgeon embraced what Jonathan Edwards and Puritans before him called "sensibility." In his "Personal Narrative," Edwards called it a "new sense of things." 281] He often wrote of becoming "sensible" of certain truths or of having "a new sense" or a "sweet sense" or a "sense of divine things" which were also described as a "delightful conviction" or an "inward sweet delight in God and divine things". Near the end of this narrative, Edwards forecast in his personal experience the kind of internal conviction that drove Spurgeon more than a century later: "Yet of late years, I have had a more full and constant sense of the absolute sovereignty of God, and a delight in that sovereignty; and have had more of a sense of the glory of Christ as a mediator as revealed in the gospel ... It appeared to me to be sweet beyond al expression, to follow Christ, and to be taught and enlightened and instructed by him; to learn of him, and live to him."[40] Sensibility, as Edwards employs the idea, is a state in which both the mind and the affections are convinced of and approve a biblical idea as if the senses themselves had recorded it on the consciousness as an invincible and indelible fact.

Reflecting on how God brought Ezekiel to the different locations, Spurgeon said, "We never learn a truth inwardly until God brings us to it." This kind of powerful internal evidence fastened Spurgeon on the doctrines of Grace. "Why, if the doctrines of grace are not true," Spurgeon exuded, "I am a lost man; if they are not the very truth of God, I have nothing to live for." This is substantially the same, but with a slightly distinct emphasis, as his 1855 confession, after listing the 5 points, "I think all those need to be believed, in order to salvation."[41] Now, thirty-three years later he confessed that Calvinistic doctrine held him. He could not conceive of a sinner possessing salvation unless sovereign grace

[40] Jonathan Edwards, "Personal Narrative," in *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, ed John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 281-296.
[41] SS 1:38.

possessed him. He insisted, "You will not hold truth aright unless you can say of it, with all your heart, 'The Lord brought me into it.'" All God's children are taught of the Lord and "there is no teaching like it, for he that is taught of God is taught infallibly."[42]

Spurgeon speaks not of revelation apart from the words and propositions of Scripture but focuses on the Spirit's work in infusing the spiritual power of the text into the human conscience and consciousness. Spurgeon demonstrates this by highlighting the sensory language of the text in Ezekiel: "Behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall show you." One cannot embrace a true sense of this kind of truth through a bare grammatical and syntactical understanding of the words alone, though it does not rise above or come apart from the actual content of Scripture. Words give true cognitive communication of the reality but only the Holy Spirit infuses the human spirit with the experience. Spurgeon summarized the command, "Strive as God shall help you by his Spirit to get at their innermost meaning by every power that is given you."[43]

Spurgeon internalized both sight and hearing by saying, "You are to spy out the meaning with the mind's eye" and "try to catch the very tone in which the promise or precept has been uttered." These will not come apart from the "exact words" in which inspiration has communicated the truths. "Cavilers call it folly to speak of verbal inspiration," Spurgeon recognized, but responded, "I believe that we must have verbal inspiration or no inspiration." Unabashedly he affirmed, "God's Word, as it came from Him, came in such perfection that even to the syllables in which the sense was clothed, there was infallibility about it." Without that, there would be no seeing or hearing to the purpose of spiritual knowledge. To embrace the sense of Scripture one must be jealous "over the words which convey the sense." When God opens his heart to you by his word, Spurgeon encouraged, "Do not lose a sound—a syllable." The way to learn from God is to love all that he says. "It is well when your whole heart comes to know the truth and when it knows it, encompasses it about with warm affections so that it may be like a fly in amber, the Word in the midst of your heart, encased there, enshrined there, never to be taken away from you." He wanted his hearers to "bathe in a text of

[42] MTP, 27:41 (1881).
[43] Ibid.

Scripture, and to let it be sucked up into your very soul, till it saturates your heart!" In summary, emphasizing both the proposition and the affection, "Set your whole heart on the Word of God."[44]

On April 22, 1888, Spurgeon preached on Jeremiah 32:26, 27: "Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?" The text determined the title: "Nothing is Too Hard for the Lord." He invited the congregation to "turn the question over in your minds till the omnipotence of Jehovah shall be your one all-absorbing thought."[45]

As an element of divine power, Spurgeon found the theme convenient also to emphasize the internal operations of God in his control of human moral agents. He asked, "Why did God state what Jeremiah already knew and already had affirmed?" The answer is that God often drives home true statements "into the mind of His most faithful servants" for "none can teach as the Lord teaches." No proposition of revelation is known as it must be known "until the Lord teaches it to them, hence it is written, 'all your children shall be taught of the Lord.'" In this kind of learning, "the Spirit of God becomes our schoolmaster." If the God of truth does not teach us the truth of God, "we shall never learn it." Jeremiah had no doubt of the truth of divine omnipotence. He himself had prayed," Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heaven and the earth by Your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You." By his own confession the truth was expressed, and yet "the Lord saw it needful to give him a special divine revelation, to impress it more fully upon his heart." It is important to know that a thing is true, but even more so feel a persuasion of the truth in itself "so as to embrace it."[46]

On August 26, 1888, Spurgeon devoted an entire sermon to the idea of the absolute necessity of effectual calling, the certainty of a true knowledge of the saving work and person of Christ through a "sensible" knowledge of him. Entitled, "JESUS KNOWN BY PERSONAL REVELATION" he based the message on Matthew 16: 13-17.[47] Near the middle of the sermon he stated his thesis thus, "There must be an inward illumination by the Holy Ghost, or you will never be truly blessed."[48]

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[44] Ibid., 42.
[45] MTP, 34:?? (1888).
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 481-492.
[48] Ibid., 489.

Having surveyed the answers that non-disciples gave to Jesus' question, "Whom do men say that I am?' Spurgeon related them to the answers of the so-called "thoughtful men" of his own day. They appeared respectful in their answers, even submissive to certain aspects of the life and teachings of Jesus, but wholly blasphemous in their minimizing, yea rejection, of the utter uniqueness of his person and work. They admire his morality, his precepts, his confidence in God as Father, and his devotion that led him even to die, but they omit the revealed and demonstrated truth set forth in the Bible. "It is usual nowadays to speak very respectfully of Him—if there can be any respectfulness in words which deny His Godhead. Today they rend the seamless vesture of the Crucified. They retain His example, and profess to value it, but His sacrifice they fling aside as a rag of superstition. They dare to deny His miracles while they applaud His precepts, they will have nothing to do with the doctrine of the cross, but with the self-denial of the cross they affect to be enamored. Our Lord will not thus be divided. Those who take not a whole Christ take not Christ at all."[49]

Why do they do this? It is not only because they do not believe in the infallibility of Scripture, although that disposition is basic to disbelief, but also, because they have not had a revelation of Jesus to the heart. The Father has not revealed this to them as he did to Peter and the other disciples. Throughout the sermon Spurgeon used phrases like the following: "reveal his Son in us personally; ... the Father reveals him to you; ... revelation of Christ in the soul; ... revealed to us by the Father; ... received the word by a revelation from the Father."[50]

As he developed this theme, he soon turned to query his congregation concerning the existence and character of their belief. While he is pressing for an internal revelation of truth to the soul, he does not do it, even as we have stated earlier, by omitting the biblical propositions to be believed. An internal revelation of Christ to the heart depends entirely on a full submission to the external revelation of truth to the apostles. He does not call for amorphous mystical sensibilities and fuzzy feelings, but for a soul-delighting and heart transforming fixture of conviction. "I will not enlarge upon this," reminding them that he could say much more about the relation between doctrine and sensible belief, "but come to

[49] MTP, 34:482 (1888).
[50] Ibid., 34:487, 488, 489, 490, 491.

close grips with you. Do you believe in Jesus by an inward discernment of Him?" As he continued, it becomes clear that the internal teaching of the Spirit, that which becomes sensible in the human affections, is to be identified with communicable propositions derived from coherent theological reasoning from the propositions of Scripture.

> Is He to you, clearly and distinctly, the Son of man and the Son of God? Is He to you, definitely, your Savior, whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for your sins? Is He your surety, substitute, and sacrifice? Beware of a misty religion! Beware of that which is without form, for it is sure to be void! Beware of that which is undefined and indefinable, because there is nothing solid in it! Beware of the religion which cries with the poet laureate, 'Behold, we know not anything'! This may suit brutes, but will never satisfy men."

Spurgeon piled up admonitions that they pursue knowledge that was "definite, clear, assured."[51]

True believers are unified in the content of their faith, for Christ is not divided nor is the truth about him ambiguous. Those to whom the Son has been revealed inwardly also confess the revelation of who he is outwardly. "We believe in Jesus Christ as man, as God, as Messiah, as Redeemer, as he by whose merit and precious blood we are saved. We alike glorify Jesus on whom our hopes are fixed."[52] Our words of praise, spoken as sincerely and as exuberantly as is possible for tongues of clay, fail to do him justice. Even angels and archangels in their most elaborate exclamations of praise must fail for "Jesus is infinite, incomparable. The brightness of the Father's glory is not to be set forth by our words."[53]

Given the full body of truth that we have in Scripture, the giftedness of apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers, none of them then or now can teach us as we need to be taught. Again, Spurgeon probed the relations between Scripture and the revelation that is saving by saying, "We do not even discover Christ merely by reading the letter of the Word of God. God teaches us saving truth through Holy Scripture, and by our

[51] Ibid., 484, 485.
[52] Ibid., 485.
[53] Ibid., 486.

devout meditation thereon, but these operate not of themselves effectually, but only as He is at the back of them. You might go on hearing, reading, and thinking, and yet never discern the Lord's Christ. The true disciple's knowledge of Christ comes not through flesh and blood, but by revelation of the Spirit, who is sent of the Father."[54]

He continued this theme throughout the sermon employing the language, as suggested by the Matthew 16 text, of "revelation." "This kind of knowledge is revealed to us by the Father," he reiterated, for "Flesh and blood cannot make us friends of Christ. The apostles knew Christ after the flesh, yet this was not the cause of their blessedness, but the Father gave them a revelation which brought eternal life with it."[55]

For Peter, this revelation was both propositional and sensible. Propositional revelation carries with it statements of truth, as Paul wrote, "Words taught by the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:13). This sort of revelation was peculiarly prophetic and apostolic (1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 3:1, 2; 2 Timothy 3:10, 14-15) and formed the content of the canon of Scripture, the words and sentences and paragraphs and conceptual connections by which we know through whom and in what form the free gifts of God's grace come to sinners. Sensible revelation consists of the undeniable conviction that comes to the soul of the truthfulness of propositional revelation. The proposition "All have sinned" is easy to understand; the proposition may be doubted and often is, particularly as applying to one's person. Sensible revelation drives the truth home to the conscience so that a person senses its truth and with the heart implores, "Lord, be merciful to me the sinner." As Spurgeon insisted, "It comes with an infallible certainty to the heart." Spurgeon instructed as he prayed, "May you enjoy a personal revelation in your souls by which the divine revelation in this Book shall be made your own forever."[56]

Such a converting revelation, that is, a sensible revelation, is given only to the elect. "It is to His chosen that He reveals Himself," Spurgeon announced, and "the rest believe not, and therefore see Him not." It is "to His chosen He comes and speaks with them as friend with friend." Loved with everlasting love, the elect may know that "the Father

[54] Ibid., 487.
[55] Ibid., 490.
[56] Ibid., 488.

foreknew you. 'Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.'"[57]

Spurgeon spoke in no uncertain terms about the clarity and power that accompanied this revelation. "It comes with an infallible certainty to the heart," He noted. This revelation is to be identified with the illuminating operation of the Spirit: "there must be an inward illumination by the Holy Ghost, or else you will never be truly blessed." It is this illumination that gives the certainty of one's saving knowledge of Christ: "To the illuminated mind," Spurgeon instructed. "The witness of the Father is absolute certainty. Oh for more of it!"[58]

So what may be done by those who hear Spurgeon say these words and conclude that they do not know Christ in this way? He tells them plainly, "Go home, and pray the Father to reveal His Son Jesus Christ to you." Spurgeon even suggests how they might pray. "Therefore, do, first and foremost, cry to God," Spurgeon instructed. Then he provided a model of words, "Lord, reveal thy Son in me!" Spurgeon gave more detailed encouragement saying, "It is a prayer I would have you all put up," and then recited, "O Lord God, the giver of Christ, shine into my heart, that I may see Your unspeakable gift! By Your Holy Spirit enable me to know who and what Jesus is, that I may accept Him as You have proposed Him to me. You did give Him out of Your bosom, give Him into mine. Enable me to speak of Him, as of one whose glory I have beheld, whose power I have felt."[59]

As usual, Spurgeon did not leave any doubt of his personal investment in the subject of his sermon. He related the text both to his involvement in the peculiar issues of the day as well as the eternal consequences of the everlasting truth. "At times my heart has been so full of joy that I could hardly have endured more. Jesus has been heaven within my heart. In standing alone, contending for the faith, I have enjoyed a sweet content in the sole fellowship of my Lord. In His presence, anxieties and fears have fled away, and questions have been solved once for all in a peaceful sense of infinite love. Son of the Highest, You are revealed to me in Your own light, and I am glad!"[60]

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[57] Ibid., 490, 491.
[58] Ibid., 488, 489.
[59] Ibid., 492.
[60] Ibid., 488.

Midwestern Journal of Theology 21.2 (2022): 23-41

Three Sabbath Controversies in the Life of C.H. Spurgeon

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Introduction

Iain Murray, a popular church historian who helped start The Banner of Truth Trust, began reading Charles Spurgeon voraciously in the 1960s. While serving as a pastor at Grove Chapel, Murray found an historic artifact in the church library. Tucked in the pages of a book, he discovered a ticket for admittance signed by one of the deacons of New Park Street Church to the Surrey Music Hall to hear Charles Spurgeon preach. Providentially, this ticket illustrated one of the themes of Murray's time as this church's pastor. He would read Spurgeon's sermons regularly. Through this process, he made another discovery—the caricature of Spurgeon in his mind did not match the Spurgeon revealed in his sermons. Murray writes, "It seemed to me that the Spurgeon of the sermons was a forgotten man and the more I read the more the conviction deepened. By which I mean that despite the modern encomiums bested on him as 'the prince of preachers' and despite the anecdotes which still survive in the evangelical world about his abilities and his humour, some of the most important aspects of his ministry have been forgotten."[1]

To bring these new truths to bear, Murray wrote the book, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*. In it, he presented three controversies from Spurgeon's life which he considered to have been lost from the public's memory. First, Murray focused on Spurgeon's interaction and critiques of Hyper-Calvinists and Arminians with whom Spurgeon disagreed regarding their doctrinal understandings of man's responsibility and

[1] Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (1966; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2012), 4.

God's sovereignty in salvation.[2] Second, Murray recounted Spurgeon's baptismal regeneration sermon from 1864 where he challenged evangelical Anglican ministers to leave the Established Church since its doctrine of baptism contradicted evangelicals' understanding of salvation. Finally, Murray's book detailed the Down Grade controversy which led to Spurgeon's resignation from the Baptist Union.

Even though Murray's work shined the spotlight on these forgotten controversies, his book was not comprehensive. Spurgeon's sermons, magazine, and life present a fourth forgotten category. The Prince of Preachers was a Sabbatarian who engaged in at least three major Sabbath controversies in his life. As this paper recounts the Surrey Music Hall Sabbath Controversy, the Scottish Typesetting Sabbath Controversy, and the Strome Ferry Railway Riot Controversy, it will show Spurgeon's belief in man's obligation to keep the Christian Sabbath, his life-long interest in Sabbath-keeping, and his conviction to obey the Fourth Commandment no matter the cost.

Surrey Music Hall Sabbath Controversy

On December 11, 1859, Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached his last sermon at the Surrey Music Hall.[3] For the previous three years, beginning with the tragedy on October 19, 1856, in which seven lives perished, Spurgeon held services at that venue.[4] To commemorate his last address,

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[2] "The point at which he diverged from both Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism is that he refused to rationalize *how* men can be commanded to do what is not in their power. Arminians say that sinners are commanded, therefore they must be able; Hyper-Calvinists say they are not able, therefore they cannot be commanded." Ibid., 105-106.

[3] Since Exeter Hall could not dedicate its building only to one congregation, the circumstances forced New Park Street Church to seek other accommodations while they built a new facility. Spurgeon noted, "We did not go to the Music Hall because we thought that it was a good thing to worship in a building usually devoted to amusement, but because we had no other place to go to," Charles Spurgeon, *C.H. Spurgeon's Autobiography. Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by His Wife, and His Private Secretary*, vols. 1-4 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897-1900), 2:196-199.

[4] Ibid., 205. In the middle of the service with an estimated 10,000 to 12,000 souls present, "all of a sudden there were cries simultaneously, doubtless preconcerted, from all parts of the building of 'Fire!' 'The galleries are giving way!' 'The place is falling!' the effect of which on the audience it is impossible to

Spurgeon chose his text from Acts 20:26-27. He took Paul's words as his own. The apostle said, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." With the precious seconds of the hourglass passing, the Prince of Preachers disclosed his agonizing love for the assembly's souls. "If you come not to Christ it is not for want of calling, or because I have not wept over your sins, and travailed in birth for the souls of men. The one thing I have to ask of you is this:—bear me witness, my hearers, bear me witness, that in this respect I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have preached all that I know of the whole counsel of God."[5] Nevertheless, Spurgeon's affection for these hearers could not stop him from moving the services to another location the following Sunday. This circumstance implores us to ask the question: What caused Spurgeon to stop holding services at the Surrey Music Hall?

The first of four options to answering this question looks to the church's new construction project. Did the congregation leave Surrey Music Hall to move into their new Metropolitan Tabernacle building? No, they did not. In fact, the church went back to Exeter Hall on December 18, 1859 and continued holding meetings there until March 31, 1861.[6] For approximately fourteen months, the congregation waited for the funds and masonry to be raised before they could hold their first service in their new building.

If their new church building remained unfinished, then option two investigates the Surrey Music Hall. Did this temporary venue inhibit Spurgeon's gospel work? Did its architecture and layout make holding services there untenable long-term? No, even though the investors built the Music Hall for amusements, the building comfortably fit Spurgeon's congregation and allowed him to evangelize to an even greater multitude. On the contrary, changing locations to Exeter Hall created capacity issues for Spurgeon's flock. In a letter written by Spurgeon on December 26, 1859 and published on February 9, 1860 in *The Christian Watchman &*

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describe," Ibid., 204. Due to the disaster, the church switched its services from Sunday evening to Sunday morning, W. Y. Fullerton, *C. H. Spurgeon: A Biography* (W. Williams and Norgate, 1920), 98.

[5] Charles Spurgeon, *New Park Street Pulpit*, vols. 1-6 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1969-2006), 6:30. In the following citations, *New Park Street Pulpit* will be shortened to *NPSP*.

[6] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 7:161.

Reflector, Spurgeon detailed the plight. "For not one-half of my people can get into Exeter Hall, if they were all able to go so far, and alas, not a third of them can make it convenient to walk that distance."[7] Spurgeon's fears became reality, because on the first Sunday at Exeter Hall the facility only filled a quarter of the audience of the previous week's service.[8] Thus, the congregation's leaving Surrey Music Hall made attending onerous and decreased the attendance. From a building perspective, Exeter Hall reduced the reach of Spurgeon's ministry.

The third possible option—small and declining attendance to the services at Surrey Music Hall—must be dismissed too. Biographer E.W. Bacon noted, "For three years the Surrey Music Hall services continued with great success and manifest blessing."[9] On one occasion in 1857, the crowd filled the Hall up to standing room capacity within ten minutes of the doors opening.[10] Fullerton also supported Bacon's statement. "There were, of course, ebbs and flows in the congregation, especially towards Christmas time, but the numbers at the end were as great as at the beginning."[11] Surrey Music Hall included in its sea of souls a diversity of classes and occupations. Bacon commented, "All classes of folk went to sit at his feet and hear the Word of God. Statesmen, soldiers, authors, artists, captains of industry, farmers, carters, clerks, factory workers, shopkeepers, thieves, prostitutes, ne'er-do-wells and drunks."[12] Charles Cavendish Fulke Greville, who served on the Privy Council and chronicled the British monarchy in his *Greville Memoirs*, recorded the details of his visit to hear Spurgeon. According to him, the pastor had "a very clear and

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[7] Charles Spurgeon, Charles Spurgeon's Letters to the Christian Watchman and Reflector, 1859-1863, ed. Daniel Kleven (unpublished, 2019), 19.

[8] G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 6 vols. (London: Cassell & Company, Ltd, 1892), 2:326.

[9] Ernest W. Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), 56.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Fullerton, C.H. Spurgeon: A Biography, 110.

[12] Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans*, 56-57. Among the dignitaries who visited the Surrey Music Hall during these services, Bacon listed "the Lord Chief Justice Campbell, the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs of London, Earl Russell, Lord Alfred Paget, Lord Panmure, Earl Grey, the Earl of Shaftesbury, the Marquis of Westminster, Lord Carlisle, the Earl of Elgin, Baron Bramwell, Lady Rothschild and Miss Florence Nightingale," 56.

powerful voice, which was heard through the whole hall" as he preached to 9000 individuals.[13] The preaching had "great effect" based upon Greville's observation of "the handkerchiefs and audible sobs."[14] Hence, the Surrey Music Hall provided Spurgeon with new ministry opportunities to preach to a myriad of souls who under other circumstances could not have heard him. Given his success in filling the Surrey Music Hall, the need for a facility while they built the Metropolitan, and the smaller capacity and limiting location for congregants at Exeter Hall, why did Spurgeon choose to move his services?

The real justification for leaving the Surrey Music Hall lands on Spurgeon's understanding of the Christian Sabbath. For him, the managers of the venue forced him to choose between biblical faithfulness or pragmatic considerations. At the beginning of the last service, he explained, "However sorrowful it may be to me to part with you, whose faces I have so long seen in the throng of my hearers, yet for Christ's sake, for the sake of consistency and truth, we are compelled to withdraw from this place, and on the next Sabbath morning hope to worship God in Exeter Hall."[15] In his mind, to continue renting the facility would require him to be inconsistent and not to walk in the truth. He, therefore, took his theological stand despite the disadvantages of meeting at Exeter Hall.

For three years, Spurgeon's congregation rented the Surrey Music Hall for the morning service, but they did not meet there in the evening. As a facility designed to make revenue, the owners wanted to provide shows on Sunday evenings to increase profits. Even though this plan would not interfere with Spurgeon's morning service, he objected. He clarified the events which led to his congregation's exodus in a letter to *The Christian Watchman and Reflector*:

> The proprietors of the last named place had twice attempted to open it on Sunday evenings for music and amusements. I was, however, able to prevent this by threatening to cease my occupation, and as we paid a rent of more than £700 a year, ($3500,) [*sic*] they were not

[13] Charles Cavendish Fulke Greville, The Greville Memoirs: A Journal of the Reigns of King George IV, King William IV, and Queen Victoria (London: Longmans and Green, 1888), 85.
[14] Ibid., 85.
[15] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6:32.

> willing to lose so large a sum, and therefore gave up their unhallowed design.

Now, however, they have conceived the idea that my preaching injures them; for the people will not come to dance and drink on week days in a place where the Word is thundered out on Sunday mornings. This, I think, is very likely to be a near guess at the truth; for two companies have been broken up since I have preached there, and a blind man can see the end of the present one. I left the place on the very day upon which it was opened for Sunday desecration.[16]

While Spurgeon would not be breaking the Christian Sabbath himself, he still could not give money to a business that did. He would not have the church meet in a venue which encouraged and provided avenues to sin through Sabbath-breaking. For him, this decision tested his character, adherence to his surname, and fidelity to the truth. "[Y]ou can therefore perceive that I should be a craven to the truth, that I should be inconsistent with my own declarations, that, in fact, my name would cease to be a Spurgeon if I yielded. I neither can nor will give way in anything in which I know I am right; and in defence of God's holy Sabbath the cry of this day is, 'Arise, let us go hence!'"[17] For this pastor, to ignore the actions of the Surrey Music Hall owners would be to renounce his family's convictions regarding the Lord's Day and to disobey God's clear command. He, therefore, fought the Sabbath-breakers by ending his lease with them.

Scottish Typesetting Sabbath Controversy

The second Sabbath controversy occurred during the spring of 1866 when the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland met in Edinburgh. At their meeting on Monday, May 28th, the General Assembly held an ecclesiastical trial for James Robertson. His church removed him from membership, because as a worker for the *Glasgow Herald*, he spent

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[16] Spurgeon, *Charles Spurgeon's Letters to the Christian Watchman and Reflector, 1859-1863*, 19. See also Justin D. Fulton, *Charles H. Spurgeon, Our Ally* (Montreal; Brooklyn, N.Y.: P. Propaganda, 1893), 103-104. He included another quotation where Spurgeon gives the same justification for leaving.

[17] Spurgeon, *NPSP*, 6:32.

Sabbath afternoons typesetting for Monday's paper.[18] Robertson appealed the Free Presbytery of Glasgow's decision to the General assembly. To defend his Sabbath labor, Robertson made several arguments. First, he only worked for part of the day and not for the whole of the day. In fact, his work did not prohibit him from regularly attending the morning service. Next, the defendant classified his employment as a work of necessity since society depended upon newspapers for information. Thus, it meets the "spirit of the Divine Law" and follows Jesus' example.[19] Moreover, the church has considered other trades as being works of necessity, so he should not be punished while servants, "bakers, brewers, manufactures of gas," drivers of carriages, letter carriers, and telegraph operators work on the Sabbath with the Assembly's blessing.[20] Given these perceived inconsistencies, the defendant works on the Sabbath with a clean conscience. He does not deny the continuation of the Christian Sabbath, but he "desires to conform to what he believes to be the spirit of its requirements."[21]

Finally, in his defense, Robertson switched to the offensive by accusing some of the ministers in the Church of hypocrisy.[22] First, some of them read the paper on Monday, even though the paper printed it on Sunday evening.[23] In his mind, Sabbatarians should not financially support the businesses that break the Fourth Commandment. Therefore, the same men who accused him of Sabbath breaking were breaking the Sabbath themselves. Additionally, through purchasing these

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[18] Douglas Brackenridge," Sunday Observance in Scotland 1689-1900" (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 1962), 210.

[19] The Scotsman, Tuesday, May 29, 1866. See also, Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of The Free Church of Scotland: Held at Edinburgh, May 1866 (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1866), 44-69.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid. Mr. Robertson confessed in his defense, "I believe in particular, and hold of perpetual obligation, every portion of that holy and venerable Decalogue in which I believe the sum and substance of the Moral Law is comprehended. Above all, I acknowledge in the essence and spiritual obligation of it, that Fourth Commandment which I am accused of transgressing. I hold it to be binding on me as a command; but still more do I appreciate and value it as a blessed privilege. As such I use it in such measure as is within my power, and as such I enjoy and observe it."

[22] *The Scotsman*, Tuesday, May 29, 1866.

[23] Pike, The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 3:172.

newspapers, it provided a greater demand for the product which forced Robertson's employer to call him into work on Sunday. Second, Robertson accused some ministers of organizing their sermons on Sunday to be printed in a Sabbatarian newspaper—*The Daily Review*.[24] These men even send their manuscript on Saturday evening or on Sunday with the intent of it being included in the Monday edition. How can these sermons be printed without typesetters working on the Sabbath to meet the deadline?

Third, due to working on the Sabbath, the same newspaper had printed Spurgeon's sermon from the previous day which took place in an Edinburgh church. The Free Church had invited Spurgeon to speak at their meeting on missions. While in town, Spurgeon preached at a local church and his message was found in the Monday edition. Considering Spurgeon's lifelong interest in and practice of the Christian Sabbath, he attended this ecclesiastical trial and observed Robertson's defense. Unbeknownst to him, the defendant would appeal to the printing of Spurgeon's Sunday morning address in Monday's paper to prove his point. *The Scotsman*, a local newspaper, recorded the scene.

> The accused, said—I see the *Daily Review* to-day has a whole column of Mr C. H. Spurgeon's sermon, delivered yesterday forenoon. (Roars of laughter, and eager looks towards Mr Spurgeon, who was present, and occupied a seat in the front side being, on the right of the Moderator.) That would give the reporters three hours' labour, and was that work done after twelve o'clock, notes must have been taken on the spot, and therefore there was a violation of the Fourth Commandment. (Cries of "No, no.") Dr Gibson has dared to say that I have not told the truth in reference to ministers sending in their manuscript on the Sabbath. It is not for me to be personal, because it is more than my situation is worth; but if any of those gentlemen to whom I refer are here, I will leave them to speak for themselves. (Laugher.)[25]

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[24] Ibid.

[25] *The Scotsman*, May 29, 1866. On Tuesday evening, May 29th, Spurgeon spoke "in connection with the Home Mission Report," *Proceedings and Debates*, 126. In his remarks, he defined missions as "the great object of it is to testify the gospel of the grace of God to every creature, in order to the bringing out and

Even though Mr. Robertson dragged Spurgeon into the Sabbath debate, Spurgeon did not respond but remained a disinterested eyewitness to the proceedings. Certainly, Spurgeon did not arrange for his sermon to be published the next day, but Mr. Robertson used this scenario involving the Prince of Preachers to bolster his case.

In the end, the accused avoided excommunication. To resolve the issue, Dr. Cavendish, one of the Church leaders, proposed a motion to set up a committee "to deal with him as if the kirk-session had made up its mind as to its being an offence, but still leaves the matter open, faithfully and tenderly dealing with Mr Robertson, with the view of his being brought to a better judgment."[26] The motion passed unanimously.

Spurgeon, however, came to a different conclusion about this fascinating case. After hearing the facts, Spurgeon found judgment against the defendant. According to Pike, "it was not a case of working merely a few hours on Sunday evening; the man worked a great part of the Sunday,"[27] In fact, he worked from 1:30 in the afternoon to 12:30 in the morning.[28] Moreover, his work "could easily have been done on Saturday, which day he preferred for his weekly holiday, however."[29] According to Mr. Robertson, some men did work three hours on Saturday and had that time taken off their required Sunday work. The prosecutor representing the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, Dr. Gibson, argued that many men in this profession chose to take all of Saturday off and work on Sunday. "Why? Because they can get trains, steamers, and all sorts of accommodation to make holiday on Saturday which they cannot get on the Sabbath Day."[30] The Sabbatarian restrictions for travel in Scotland led the defendant to observing his Sabbath on Saturday. Moreover, Mr. Robertson also left his employment with another newspaper which was closed on Sunday to join his current employer even though it required Sunday labor. Why? He felt that his former employer did not pay fair wages. He, therefore, exchanged higher pay from another newspaper even though his previous employer was closed on the Sabbath. To keep

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perfecting of the chosen.... We assert that we intend, as Christian warriors, to take the whole world by storm for the Lord Jesus," Ibid., 142.

[26] *The Scotsman*, May 29, 1866.

[27] Pike, The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 3:173.

[28] *The Scotsman*, May 29, 1866.

[29] Pike, The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 3:173.

[30] *The Scotsman*, May 29, 1866.

the spirit of the Fourth Commandment, Mr. Robertson could have stayed with his old employer or found another newspaper which did not require Sabbath work. As a result of these facts, Pike recorded, "If any error had been made, Mr. Spurgeon thought it to have been on the side of leniency."[31]

Ironically, seventeen years later in 1883, Spurgeon went from advocating for Sabbatarianism to having his readers of *The Sword and the Trowel* accusing him of breaking the Fourth Commandment. Twice, in separate months, Spurgeon acknowledged and answered the charges. To his readers, it appeared that Spurgeon broke the Sabbath every week due to the publication of his Sunday sermon in the Monday morning newspapers in America. Someone transcribed his Sunday morning sermon and sent it from London to New York via the telegraph. Despite this evidence, neither Spurgeon nor anyone associated with him condoned it. Spurgeon explained, "We had nothing whatever to do with the arrangements, and have not even been consulted upon the matter, so that we are not at all responsible for any extra Sunday labor that may be caused."[32] In his second reference to the mysterious telegraphing Sabbath-breakers, Spurgeon defended himself, "so that our friends who feared that the Sabbath would be desecrated may feel their minds relieved."[33] For Spurgeon, he affirmed his readers' conclusion that telegraphing the sermon broke the Sabbath. Thus, he pled his innocence. Besides this detail, the printed sermons themselves did not match Spurgeon's oral Sunday morning sermons. Either the transcriber or telegrapher blemished them. "In the process of transmission," wrote

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[31] Pike, The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 3:173.

[32] C. H. Spurgeon, *The Sword and the Trowel; A Record of Combat with Sin & Labour for the Lord*. 37 vols. (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1865–1902), 1883:394. Later references will be shortened to as *S&T*. Through this system "not less than a million copies of the reported sermon would be printed every week," Ibid. In contrast, a business in Scotland sold Spurgeon's sermons on Saturday, so that the people had edifying reading for the Sabbath. In one far-away village in the North the little country shop is opened on Saturdays expressly for the sale of the sermons; and what the customers want is so clearly understood that often not a word is spoken by either buyer or seller, but the people walk in, put down the penny, and march off with the sermon that is to be their Sabbath feast," *S&T*, 1883:517.

[33] *S&T*, 1883:461.

Spurgeon, "the eggs were 'broken, and the very life of them was crushed."[34] Consequently, the actions of these anonymous culprits marred Spurgeon's sermons and character.

Strome Ferry Railway Riot Controversy

The third and last Sabbath controversy happened when Spurgeon voiced his opinion on the Strome Ferry railway riot. In the highlands of Scotland, approximately two hundred men seized the railway station at Strome Ferry on Sunday, June 3, 1883. The East Coast fishermen had three successful days—Thursday, Friday, and Saturday—of catching herrings. The West Coast fishermen, in contrast, spent Thursday preparing for a demonstration and spent Friday participating in it. On Saturday, they chose not to fish. When Sunday dawned, the West Coast fishermen commandeered the railway station to stop the East Coast fishermen's catch from being transferred from two steamboats into the rail cars. The East Coast fishermen intended to have their fish to the market in England by the next morning. What motivated this riot? According to *The Scotsman*, "The ground they took up was, that Sunday labour was required to get the fish away, and that was Sabbath desecration, which they would not permit."[35] Hence, the rioters intervened to stop the Sabbath from being broken. A religious and not an economic purpose forced them to action. To make the point clear, *The Scotsman* editorialized,

> This remarkable vindication of Sabbath observance is but the logical outcome of the teachings on the subject which are provided by the stern Sabbatarians. If it be wrong to do anything on the Sunday, if there is to be a return to the strictness of the Mosaic law, then the Strome Ferry men are right. Neither steam engine nor mankind should move. Trains should be stopped; steamboats should lie idly on the sea; sailing vessels should be brought to a standstill—that is, supposing the Mosaic law is to prevail on the sea as on the land.[36]

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[34] Ibid.

[35] *The Scotsman*, June 4, 1883.

[36] Ibid. In another editorial comment, the paper posited, "There is, no doubt, much to be said for these men on the ground that they were misled by teaching of a passionate, ignorant, and tyrannical character," Ibid, August 13, 1883.

This newspaper interpreted the men's actions as unchecked religious zeal which the populace should reject.[37] The ten men arrested for this crime received the same ounce of mercy from the authorities as they received from *The Scotsman*. The jury sentenced them to four months in jail.[38]

To protest the arrests, two hundred and fifty people gathered for a conference on the beach at Strome Ferry on Wednesday, June 13th. Led by ministers of the Free Church of Scotland, this gathering protested the rail traffic on Sundays, because it broke the Fourth Commandment. The gathering met under a makeshift tent. To begin the meeting, the assembling sang Psalm 78:5ff.[39] The King James Version says,

> For he established a testimony in Jacob,
> And appointed a law in Israel,
> which he commanded our fathers,
> that they should make them known to their children:
>
> That the generation to come might know *them,*
> *even* the children *which* should be born;
> *who* should arise and declare *them* to their children:
>
> That they might set their hope in God,
> And not forget the works of God,
> But keep his commandments:
>
> And might not be as their fathers,
> a stubborn and rebellious generation;
> a generation *that* set not their heart aright,
> and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.[40]

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[37] Even though the authorities arrested ten men, on June 13, 1883, "A meeting of about 250 West Coast fishermen and crofters was held at Strome Ferry yesterday to protest against the Sunday railway traffic. They were addressed by the local clergymen, and it was resolved to obtain the opinion of counsel as to the right of the Railway Company to continue such traffic," *The Scotsman*, June 14, 1883.

[38] Ibid., August 1, 1883.

[39] Ibid., June 14, 1883.

[40] King James Version Bible (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984).

Clearly, the assembly made a connection between breaking the Sabbath through allowing railway traffic and this Psalm. They desired to obey God by teaching all of His commandments, including the Fourth Commandment, to their children. Failure to speak against the railway traffic, therefore, would disobey the 78th Psalm.

After finishing the Psalm, Rev. Mr. M'Coll continued the service by reading and explaining Nehemiah 13 to the audience. In the last chapter of the book, Nehemiah became dismayed over the Jews' Sabbath breaking. People worked and exchanged commerce within the gates. To stop the Sabbath breaking, Nehemiah ordered the gates closed on Friday night before the Sabbath began. Then he warned the merchants who camped outside the gates, since they could not enter on the Sabbath, to go home. If they did not, Nehemiah would hurt them. Connecting the lesson of Nehemiah 13 to the Strome Ferry incident, Mr. M'Coll said, "if it was the law of the land to allow Sunday work to go on, that was contrary to the law of God, and the law of God was the law on which all other laws should be founded."

Even though the Free Church ministers and crowd believed in the continuation of the Fourth Commandment in the New Testament era, they did not approve of the lawless actions by the fishermen to stop the Sabbath breaking at the Strome Ferry railway. In fact, another minister proposed a resolution which the assembly passed to that effect. It stated, "That this meeting regard the Sabbath traffic at Strome Ferry Station as contrary to God's command, and an insult to the religious feelings of the inhabitants of the district, and in no sense a work of necessity; that, while they sympathize with the views of those who try to stop the work and rejoice to see them zealous for the Lord's Day, they disapprove of the violence for that purpose."[41] The assembly, therefore, praised the fishermen's zeal for taking the Sabbath seriously, but they did not approve of their actions. They did not have the authority to stop the railway from operating on the Sabbath. As we will see soon, when Charles Spurgeon weighed in on this Sabbath controversy, he came to the same conclusion as these Scottish Presbyterian Sabbatarians.

Not everybody in Scotland came to the support of the arrested fishermen. *The Scotsman* newspaper opined against the motives and theological justification for the riot. The paper ridiculed the Sabbatarians

[41] Ibid., June 14, 1883.

who "were offering a protest against the heathenism and backsliding of the Highland Railway officials." Furthermore, the paper accused the rioters of breaking the Fourth Commandment when they intervened at the railway station, because their actions "could scarcely be defined as a work of either necessity or mercy."[42] In *The Scotsman*'s view, Sabbatarians were hypocritical religious zealots from a bygone era. Their doctrinal convictions could not coexist with the advent of modern transportation on the railways.

In London, the Strome Ferry incident even received a hearing by the House of Commons. On August 3, 1883, a committee interviewed Mr. J. B. Balfour, The Lord Advocate in Scotland about the Strome Ferry riot. Mr. Balfour brought the charges against the ten men who were arrested and convicted. Sir George Campbell and Sir Herbert Maxwell asked Mr. Balfour if Scottish law forbid the Sunday trafficking of fish. He explained,

> it is, to say the least, exceedingly doubtful whether the landing of fish and its transmission by railway on Sunday could be prevented by any law now in force, and there has been no recent instance of a prosecution on account of such Sunday work. I may point out that even under the old Scottish Acts works of necessity were excepted, and it is a question whether the conveyance to market of a large quantity of perishable human food, which would otherwise have been lost, was not such a work the police were employed to prevent mobbing and rioting.[43]

Sir Campbell and Sir Maxwell followed up to this response. Finally Sir Maxwell asked, "Is it an open question?" Mr. Balfour responded, "I so regard it."[44] Even the chief law enforcement authority in Scotland could not settle the matter. He could not answer definitively if transporting fish on Sunday would break its Sabbath laws. His testimony leaned towards approving of the conduct based upon works of necessity and the lack of precedent for prosecuting Sabbath labor. Yet, when asked directly,

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[42] Ibid., July 27, 1883.
[43] House of Commons, "Sunday Traffic (Scotland)—The Strome Ferry Riots: HC Deb 03 August 1883 vol 282 cc1482-3," https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1883/aug/03/sunday-traffic-scotland-the-strome-ferry.
[44] Ibid.

he admitted that the transportation of fish on Sunday could be against the law.

What did Spurgeon think of this incident? Would he agree with the Scottish Presbyterians, or would he show sympathy for the railway operators like *The Scotsman* newspaper did? In his magazine, *The Sword and the Trowel*, Spurgeon came down on the side of the Sabbatarian cause and he believed the jury handed down an excessive punishment for the crime committed. Hence, Spurgeon stood up for the ten men:

> We feel bound at this, our earliest opportunity, to record our protest against the continued imprisonment of the men who endeavored to prevent the public breach of the Sabbath at Strome Ferry. Whatever their error, they meant to do right. No one has ever hinted that they had any selfish or sinister motive: they conceived that God's law was about to be broken, and they stepped in to prevent it. It is true they were violating the law of the land, and going far beyond their province in trying to compel others to be as regardful of the Sabbath as themselves; but surely for this wonderful offense they have already suffered enough.[45]

Thus, Spurgeon approved of the men's convictions to protect the Sabbath, however he refused to give approbation to their methods. Instead, the men should have channeled their zeal for Sabbath-keeping into lawful avenues instead of taking authority upon themselves which the government had not granted them. Spurgeon's response mirrors the statements issued by the fishermen's supporters who met on the beach of Strome Ferry on June 13th. Moreover, Spurgeon's concerns aligned with some of the Scottish Presbyterian ministers who met at a separate meeting in Inverness. One minster at that meeting proposed, "while regretting and disapproving the methods adopted by the Strome Ferry men in giving effect to their views regarding Sabbath observance, expresses their sympathy with the Strome Ferry community in the feelings with which they regard the intrusion of Sabbath traffic into their district."[46] These men, too, thought the sentence should be commuted. Without a doubt, Spurgeon stood with the Sabbatarians as a Sabbatarian.

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[45] *S&T*, 1883:513.

[46] *The Scotsman*, August 1, 1883.

In addition, to disagreeing with the rioters' methods, he also criticized the government for issuing a jail sentence of four months and advocated "that these mistaken but true-hearted men were once set; [*sic*] at liberty."[47] In his view, the approximately two months of time served at the time of publication fulfilled the law.[48]

Why did Spurgeon even comment on this event? It took place in the highlands of Scotland and not in London. The Sabbatarians' zeal to see the Lord's Day honored, stirred a fire within him. His response to this incident showed his longing for the fervor of Sabbath zeal to spread south into England. In that same article, he penned, "We wish we had a people in England good enough to be capable of this Scotch crime—the crime of fearing God so much as to use violence for the preservation of the day of rest."[49] Like a fire that needs a fireplace to provide warmth to the residence to avoid burning the home, the rioters needed to direct their zeal for God in appropriate ways. At the same time, in Spurgeon's mind, he applauded their zeal to fear God by keeping the Sabbath. To him, this good desire outweighed the Englishmen who followed civil laws without any concern for obeying God's commands. He would rather have a fiery Scot over a damp Englishman.

Observations

Having examined three Sabbath controversies in the life of Charles Spurgeon, we will now contemplate three observations from these events. First, Spurgeon practiced and taught every person's responsibility to keep the Christian Sabbath. Today many would consider him to be a strict Sabbatarian. He adhered to the teaching found in the *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* in Article 22.[50] Since Genesis 1, God had defined a week as seven days and required humans to rest on the seventh day. Yet with Christ's resurrection, Spurgeon taught the day

[47] *S&T*, 1883:514.

[48] Spurgeon opined about the Strome Ferry riot in the September 1883 *S&T*. He would have written the article in August which was two months after the incident.

[49] *S&T*, 1883:514.

[50] To understand the full argument, see Brandon Rhea, "Charles Spurgeon's View of the Christian Sabbath as Compared to the *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith*" (PhD diss., Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021).

of observation changed from the seventh to the first day of the week which is Sunday.[51]

How did Spurgeon defend the continuation of a Sabbath into the New Covenant era? He based it upon the threefold division of the Mosaic law which consisted of the moral, ceremonial, and civil laws. In the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, Spurgeon taught the fulfillment of the ceremonial and civil laws. Thus, Christians are free to eat seafood and to wear clothes with mixed threads. Moreover, as a Baptist, Spurgeon advocated for eliminating the establishment church in England to ensure the separation of church and state. The moral law, however, which is a summary of the Ten Commandments, remains forever.[52] Consequently, all believers are bound to keep the moral law, not to be saved, but as a guide or as a definition of holy living. Since God wrote the Fourth Commandment on the tablets of stone along with the other nine, Spurgeon believed in the Christian Sabbath as observed on the Lord's Day.

How did Spurgeon observe the Christian Sabbath? In his last book before his death, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, he commented on Matthew 12:1-14. Speaking of Jesus, Spurgeon wrote, "From his example and teaching we learn that the Sabbath is not profaned by works of necessity, piety, or mercy."[53] Jesus did not teach a Sabbath of inactivity according to Spurgeon, but He demonstrated a zeal for performing holy works which honored God. These categories of Sabbath labor, therefore, act like the three legs of a stool to support Spurgeon's premise that the Sabbath should be a day of activity in service to God. The Christian, therefore, should rest from his normal labors to worship God in church, evangelize, teach Sunday School, and dedicate time to personal devotion. Moreover, based upon Jesus' example, men should show mercy to those in need by feeding them, clothing them, and helping them if they are sick. Finally,

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[51] *MTP*, 19:205. "It is with God to change times and seasons as He pleases, and He has done so for great commemorative purposes. The change of the Sabbath is on the same manner, for whereas the day of rest was formerly the seventh, it is now merged in the Lord's day, which is the first day of the week." *MTP*, 28:1-2.

[52] *MTP*, 28:280.

[53] Charles Spurgeon, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: A Popular Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (New York: The Baker & Taylor co., 1893), 166-167.

people are free to perform works of necessity including cooking, walking, and feeding livestock. Thus, considering the three Sabbath controversies, the participants broke the Sabbath in Spurgeon's view, because they dedicated themselves to works of amusement at the Surrey Music Hall, the unnecessary work of typesetting of Mr. Robertson, and the unnecessary work of transporting fish at Strome Ferry. These activities did not fall under the three categories of piety, mercy, and necessity. As a result, Spurgeon determined these actions to be a violation of the Fourth Commandment.

The second observation ponders Spurgeon's lifelong interest in the Christian Sabbath. Demonstrating his zeal for the subject, he attended the ecclesiastical trial in 1866 and voluntarily commented on the Strome Ferry incident seventeen years later. Additionally, at an 1869 Baptist Union meeting, he stood behind a resolution to petition Parliament to keep the museums closed on Sundays.[54] Furthermore, in 1871, Spurgeon encouraged fellow pastors by letter to call upon the House of Commons to give letter-carriers a day off on Sunday.[55] Besides these exhortations to political involvement, Spurgeon wrote eighteen book reviews about the Sabbath in his magazine. His long-standing fascination on the subject explains why he desired for the English to have a zeal for Sabbath keeping like the Scottish who stormed Strome Ferry. He loved to study the Sabbath and loved to keep it. Likewise, he wanted his fellow citizens to burn with the same fires of devotion to the Lord through keeping the Sabbath.

The third and last observation highlights Spurgeon's conviction for obeying the Fourth Commandment. When the Surrey Music Hall decided to host entertainment on Sunday nights, Spurgeon had to make a choice. He could have ignored it since it did not affect his Sunday morning services at the venue. In this scenario, his church would not be breaking the Sabbath, because they would not be attending or participating in the shows. Besides this consideration, no other facility provided the same capacity of 10,000. Surely for the sake of the gospel, Spurgeon could have justified remaining at that place. He, however, refused to place pragmatics over conviction. Spurgeon did not intellectually assent or sign off on adhering to a Christian Sabbath. Rather his zeal for obeying the

[54] Pike, The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 4:319.
[55] Ibid., 5:13.

Lord's commandments directed him. He, therefore, could not in good conscience pay rent to an ownership who would break the Fourth Commandment and tempt others to do the same. To be faithful to the Lord, he moved his services to a facility with 70 percent less capacity. For Spurgeon, keeping the Lord's Day holy mattered more than numbers.

Conclusion

In 2010, forty-four years after the publication of *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, Iain Murray wrote a short booklet on the Christian Sabbath.[56] In his work, Murray repeats the same theology found in Spurgeon's corpus. God established a Sabbath day in creation. This Sabbath continues to today, but it has switched to Sunday due to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He too observed the culture's and the Church's negligence in keeping the Fourth Commandment. People no longer wrestled over how to observe the Christian Sabbath, because it had faded from their memories. If one of Murray's contributions to Church history is to point us to *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, then one of Spurgeon's unnoticed contributions to the Church is to point us to the forgotten Sabbath.

[56] Iain Murray, *Rest in God: A Calamity in Contemporary Christianity* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2010).

Midwestern Journal of Theology 21.2 (2022): 42-64

Pastoral Thanatology: An Exegetical Examination of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 as a Theological Model of Ministry to the Grieving

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Introduction

A Practical Theological Model of Silent Presence versus a Theoretical Theological Model of Prophetic Proclamation

Within the constructs of pastoral ministry, there often exists a tension between practical and theoretical theology; and this conflict is especially apparent in the area of pastoral thanatology. Most often, one of two opposing models of pastoral thanatology is espoused by pastors, chaplains, and other grief counselors who seek to minister to the grieving through either a practical or theoretical theological model. Practical theology as it relates to pastoral thanatology is oriented toward the actions of pastoral ministry, which are manifested in acts of compassionate consolation. In contrast, theoretical theology as it pertains to pastoral thanatology is rooted in a right understanding of God, death, and eternity which pastors convey to the grieving as a source of hope and comfort. In his work, *Soul Physicians: A Theology of Soul Care and Spiritual Direction,* Kellemen claims that modern pastoral care which seeks to comfort the grieving is only "half-biblical" in that it neglects either the theoretical or the practical theological aspects of ministry.[1] Through an exegetical examination of Paul's words of comfort to the grieving Thessalonians, this paper will present a theological model of ministry to the grieving that embraces both a practical pastoral

[1] Bob Kellemen, *Soul Physicians: A Theology of Soul Care and Spiritual Direction*, revised and updated edition, (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2007).

presence of comfort along with a theoretical proclamation of theological truth.

Advocates of the first position focus on practical theology and the duties of a pastor as a shepherd, emphasizing a ministry of silent presence over proclamation. This concept of the "ministry of silence" began with the Desert Fathers who sought an ascetic lifestyle as a means of personal spiritual growth. While this lifestyle originally focused upon a theoretical theology of knowing God, in the modern context it has been used as an erroneous pretense for employing a practical theology of silent pastoral ministry which refrains from proclaiming theological truth.[2] Yet, historical research reveals that the Desert Fathers inherently understood that the ministry of the pastor obligated them to be personally engaged in conversation with others. In his treatise, *Silence: A Christian History,* MacCulloch notes that the ascetics routinely engaged in theological dialogue with their disciples.[3] However, modern socio-psychological methods of bereavement care seek to re-construct the ministry of silence by refraining from engaging in any type of theological discourse with the grieving. For example, Wardley believes suffering such as grief reduces theoretical theology to silence where it has nothing of value to contribute.[4]

The other proposed model of pastoral thanatology views the primary role of a minister as that of a prophet who knows God and makes Him known, and the emphasis is on a theoretical theology that seeks to proclaim and even defend God's character. According to Faber, ministers have a prophetic task beyond the role of a pastoral comforter.[5] In this treatise the term "prophet" is being defined as one who proclaims

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[2] For example, the Desert Fathers have been historically portrayed as being primarily concerned with an isolated and self-enhanced discipleship that removed them from individual or corporate pastoral care as well as prophetic encounters.

[3] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Silence: A Christian History*. New York: Viking, 2013.

[4] Kenneth Jason Wardley, "Learning to be silent: theological and philosophical reflections on silence and transcendence," *Culture and Transcendence: Shifting Religion and Spirituality in Philosophy, Theology, Art and Politics,* 28-29 October 2010, Amsterdam, unpublished conference paper, University of Edinburg School of Divinity, 2010.

[5] Heije Faber, "The Prophetic Role in Pastoral Care," *Pastoral Psychology* 29 (3):1981, 190-191.

spiritual truth on behalf of God rather than one who simply foretells the future. A biblical prophet in this sense can be defined as one who "served as the contemporary voice of God to his generation…(as) a source of specific divine guidance. Prophets confronted and counseled."[6] Conversely, the terms "pastor" and "pastoral" have been redefined and utilized in modern times in both Christian and secular counseling professions to emphasize the role of the minister as a spiritual/emotional caregiver. According to *The Concise Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, pastoral care places a strong emphasis upon the roles of nurture and support by offering a ministry of presence, an act of "being, rather than a doing or a telling."[7]

With these definitions in mind, is it possible to offer consoling compassion as a pastor and at the same time proclaim corrective theological truth as a prophet when people are wrestling with spiritual questions about God's character because they find themselves in a crisis of grief? Roussell unites these two roles by claiming that pastoral care is the act of "doing theology."[8] He notes, "We skew the relationship between our biblical tradition and pastoral counseling when we have not integrated the two….Our challenge as pastoral care providers is to integrate theological and psychological realities, bringing together the insights of both in our…pastoral action."[9]

By way of example, a young woman sat alone in a hospital waiting room just after the death of her husband. When her pastor came to console her, she looked at him and said, "Today, is our wedding anniversary! How cruel is that?" Out of her grief she unleashed a verbal assault against God with just one question, a question directed towards her pastor as God's representative and towards God Himself. Like the man afflicted in the tragedy of the Book of Job, she believed in that moment that God was being unjust, that He had wronged her. Had this pastor chosen not to speak, to instead offer a simple hug, a shared tear,

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[6] The Revell Bible Dictionary, (1990) s.v. "prophet".

[7] Glenn H. Asquith, Jr. *The Concise Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010. S. v. "Pastoral Care and Counseling (Comparative Terminology)" and "Ministry of Presence." It should be noted that Asquith describes "biblical pastoral care and counseling" as "confrontational."

[8] Jeroid O'Neil Roussell, Jr., *Dealing with Grief: Theirs and Ours* (New York: Alba House, 1999), 5.

[9] Roussell, 5.

or a bowed head, would those silent actions have ministered to her soul? As a minister, did he have an obligation to respond and come to God's defense, to speak on His behalf? Although, many minsters feel this spiritual obligation to correct theological error when God's character is questioned or challenged, modern pastoral thanatology training suggests that grief care practitioners should refrain from any type of theological discourse. Thus, there is a spiritual tension for those pastors who feel compelled to respond when grieving people begin to philosophically ponder the existence of God, or pose accusatory questions, or make erroneous theological statements.

Sadly, many pastoral practitioners have glossed over the necessity of prophetic proclamation by using the Book of Job as a formal case study for the proper role of the minister in times of grief, which they purport favors a ministry of silence. One commentator on the Book of Job asserts that, "Perhaps the best two things that the comforters do is to have compassion on Job, and then to keep quiet when they come to see him!"[10] However, Job is not the sole resource within the Word of God for discovering a proper construct for pastoral ministry to those in a crisis of grief. After the resurrection of Jesus, a new theological hope was unveiled to comfort the grieving.

Does the New Testament Speak to the Grieving?

In one sense, it could be argued that the entire New Testament is a word of hope to a grieving world. The resurrection of Jesus is the pinnacle moment of the Gospels and the foundation for the theological doctrines that are expressed in the remaining monographs of the New Testament all of which are rooted in the eschatological hope of eternal life. Grieving people have often found hope in the words of Jesus when He spoke of going to prepare a place for His followers as a reference to heaven, or in His proclamation of being the resurrection and the life for those who believe in Him.[11] Likewise, Paul's explanation in 1 Corinthians

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[10] *The Bible Panorama*, Day One Publications, 2005.

[11] Jesus tells His followers in John 14 to not let their hearts be troubled by proclaiming: "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:2-3). In John 11:25-26, Jesus tells a grieving woman, "I

15 of the manner in which the body dies and is resurrected has been an aptly used description in settling the minds of those seeking to understand the physical process of death and the afterlife.[12] Many funeral liturgies include a reading of Revelation 21:1-4 as a further attempt to comfort the grieving with its description of heaven as being a place free of pain, sorrow, and death.[13] Boersma writes, "Scripture often reflects upon death; and the way in which death connects - theologically speaking - to sin, to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and to the hope of eternal life is undoubtedly relevant to the question of how to respond to the death of people we love."[14]

Yet, upon closer examination, there is only one example in the New Testament in which the text speaks directly about a minister of God seeking to pastorally comfort people who were presently grieving. While there are certainly stories in the Gospels in which Jesus and the apostles encountered people who were grieving, in almost all of those encounters the person who died was subsequently raised back to life.[15] The brief conversations Jesus had with those who were mourning were often couched in this immediate resurrection of their loved one. Therefore, these episodes can hardly be used as a template for the manner in which modern clergy should seek to console the grieving. Furthermore, the other instances of death recorded in the New Testament do not include any type of commentary within the text concerning the manner in which Jesus or His disciples consoled the grieving.[16] For example, when the

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am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."

[12] Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:35-58.

[13] In my twenty-five years of pastoral ministry, I have had the privilege of conducting over 350 memorial services. For a list of NT passages I have frequently used in funeral services see Appendix A.

[14] Hans Boersma, "'Numbed with Grief': Gregory of Nyssa on Bereavement and Hope," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* Vol. 7, No. 1 (2014): 46-47.

[15] See Appendix B for a list of these episodes recorded in the Gospels in which Jesus encounters someone who is grieving and subsequently raises their loved one back to life.

[16] The only descriptions of individuals dying and being mentioned by name in the New Testament include John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-13 and Mark 6:17-29); James, the brother of John (Acts 12:2); Herod the Great (Matthew 2:19); Herod Antipater (Acts 12:21-23); Judas Iscariot (Matthew 27:1-5 and Acts 1:15-18), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11); Theudas (Acts 5:36); and Judas, the

disciples of John the Baptist informed Jesus that John had been killed, Jesus withdrew privately to a remote place with no dialogue recorded between the two parties. One could thus argue that Jesus employed a ministry of silence to the bereaved. However, this assertion fails to encapsulate the overarching message of resurrection hope that Jesus not only proclaimed verbally but demonstrated through His resurrection miracles. Therefore, a construct of pastoral thanatology cannot be fully developed by examining the response of Jesus to those who were filled with the sorrow of death.[17] Therefore, we must examine the singular place in the entire New Testament, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, in which there is clear evidence of pastoral ministry occurring on behalf of people who were in a crisis of grief.

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians reveals his desire to minister to the believers by way of instruction and encouragement. These two concepts are intricately linked and form the foundation of this present thesis: a theoretical prophetic proclamation of theological exhortation in addition to a practical pastoral presence is the primary means for offering effective encouragement to those who are grieving. In 1 Thessalonians 3:2, Paul indicates that he sent Timothy to "encourage" the believers in

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Galilean (Acts 5:37). Since all but two of these people (John the Baptist and James) were depicted as sordid individuals, there is no textual evidence of any type of bereavement care being offered. There is also the account of the two thieves on the cross; and while Jesus ministers to one promising him eternal life, He does not console the other who has rejected Him as the Messiah. Likewise, His response from the cross to His grieving mother was for John to console her (John 19:26-27). While He also speaks to the women following Him to the cross who are "mourning and wailing for him" (Luke 23:27), his response can hardly be described as consolatory: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then "'they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"' (Luke 23:28-30).

[17] One could possibly argue that Jesus presents a paradigm for bereavement ministry in his last words to His disciples in John 14-16 (cf. John 16:20 – "Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy."). However, the text also indicates that these words were not fully understood by the disciples, primarily because they were not yet in a crisis of grief (cf. John 16:18 – "They kept asking, 'What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand what he is saying.'").

Thessalonica, and he intimates this desire three additional times in his letter (4:18, 5:11, and 5:14). Best acknowledges that the practice of offering encouraging words of hope is one of the marks of a "good pastor."[18] Thus, the remarks of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 serve as a template for pastoral grief ministry.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
A Template for Pastoral Ministry to Those in the Crisis of Grief

According to Acts 17, the Apostle Paul, along with Silas[19] and Timothy, spent between two and three weeks (three Sabbaths) in the Jewish synagogue in the city of Thessalonica "reasoning from the Scriptures" and "explaining and proving" that Jesus was the Messiah.[20] The result of their evangelistic efforts was that "some of the Jews were persuaded" along with "a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women" (Acts 17:4). Unfortunately, a group of antagonistic and unbelieving Jews drove Paul and his companions from the city after only this "short" interaction with the people of Thessalonica (see footnote 20 below). However, Paul indicates that he had developed a special connection and bond with these new believers.[21] Out of compassion and concern, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to ensure that the new believers were growing in their faith (1 Thessalonians 3:1-5). Paul states in 3:6 that Timothy had returned with news about the believers in Thessalonica and their continued spiritual

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[18] Best, 134.

[19] Silas is first introduced in Acts 15:22 as one of the men chosen by the church in Jerusalem to serve as a fellow missionary and traveling companion with Paul. He is referred to as Silvanus in 1 Thessalonians 1:1. See the Scofield NIV note on 1 Thess. 1:1: Greek *Silvanus*, a variant of *Silas*.

[20] Cf. Acts 17:1-4. However, Malherbe makes a strong case that Paul and his companions may have remained in Thessalonica two or three months working to support themselves and further establishing the foundation of a Christian congregation. (Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011) 13. Cf. Best, Utley and Shepherd who also support this view.

[21] Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8.

growth. In turn, Paul then writes two letters to the believers in Thessalonica as a further means of ministering to them.[22]

Utley states that First and Second Thessalonians are invaluable resources for understanding Paul's pastoral ministry.[23] After an extended greeting and words of affirmation in chapters one through three of First Thessalonians, Paul delineates several "matters" (4:1) and "instructions" (4:2) in the subsequent last two chapters (4 and 5) as reinforcing exhortations by which these new believers can grow "more and more" (4:10) in their faith. Through these *paraeneses*, Paul ministers to these new believers pastorally as he consoles them concerning the death of other believers, and he instructs them with theological truth in how to live faithfully in the interim as they await their own resurrection.

Contextual analysis of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 reveals that these new Christians were confused about the nature of death and the subsequent resurrection of Christian believers. Paul writes in 4:13, "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope."[24] Thus, Paul, in his pastoral ministry, sought to comfort those who were in a crisis of grief. Therefore, by examining the model of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, a theological construct concerning the role of the minister as a silent pastor or proclamative prophet in times of grief can be developed.

"We Do Not Want You to be Ignorant" 1 Thessalonians 4:13
An Argument Against Silence

The Latin philosopher Seneca introduced the phrase "*Curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent*" which is oft repeated in many biblical

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[22] There is a consensus among scholars that 1 Thessalonians was Paul's first known epistle that remains preserved today. However, the date of writing would have been late in Paul's ministry and his theology well developed. Although earlier letters may have been composed, none are in existence or have been discovered archeologically to date. Scholars are divided concerning the authorship of 2 Thessalonians with some proposing it was written by a later student of Paul's ministry. C.f. M. Eugene Boring, *I & II Thessalonians: A Commentary, The New Testament Library* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 7-9.

[23] Bob Utley, *Paul's First Letters: Galatians and 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Bible Lessons International, 2013), www.freebiblecommentary.org.

[24] 1 Thessalonians 4:13.

commentaries.[25] This phrase and its subsequent exposition by biblical commentators implies that as the level of grief increases, the amount of dialogue should decrease. Many pastoral thanatologists have embraced this mantra as an axiom for appropriate soul care. Exell says, "Mere word-condolers are soul-tormentors. Then be silent in scenes of sorrow; overflow with genuine sympathy, but do not talk."[26] However, not all commentators see these silent actions as positive. Ash concurs by stating, "To refuse to speak a word to a sufferer…is not comforting."[27] According to Faber, ministers "have a double responsibility, one for the people with whom they communicate and one for the task of a minister, for the message which they must bring."[28]

Likewise, Paul understood his pastoral obligation to proclaim the theological truths of the resurrection emphasizing their immediate and eschatological benefits as a means of providing comfort to those in Thessalonica who were grieving. Two important factors concerning Paul and the Thessalonian church are worth noting as key considerations in the pastoral approach found in 4:13-18. First, Paul was extensively trained in the traditions of the Jews, and one must assume that this training was not fully abandoned as he ministered to the Thessalonian church.[29] Acts 17:4 indicates that some of the Jews living in Thessalonica "were persuaded" that Jesus was the Messiah.[30] Therefore, any assessment of Paul's pastoral approach to grief must consider the Jewish mindset and practices concerning death and mourning. According to Rabbi Kolatch the Jewish principles of *kevod ha-met* (respect for the dead) and *kevod he-chai* (concern for the grieving) dictate the ways in

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[25] Lucius Seneca, *Tragedies,* Loeb Classical Library Volumes, Trans. Frank Justus Miller (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1917), translated as "light cares speak, great ones are silent."

[26] Exell, 1908.

[27] Christopher Ash, *Job: The Wisdom of the Cross,* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014, 62.

[28] Faber, 191.

[29] Cf. Philippians 3:4-6.

[30] Ernest Best notes that while there is no archeological, literary, or historical evidence of a Jewish colony in Thessalonica outside the biblical account in Acts, this absence in no way discredits the likelihood that a Jewish presence existed. Ernest Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians.* Black's New Testament Commentaries (Peabody, MA: Continuum, 2003), 1.

which Jewish people mourn.[31] Kolatch notes, "Jewish law and custom mandate that the feelings of the survivors of a deceased should never be ignored. Their anxieties must be eased."[32] Therefore, as a devout Jew, Paul would have been compelled to comfort the Jewish Thessalonian believers who were grieving.

Acts 17:4, however, also indicates that a large number of "God-fearing Greeks" also believed the gospel, and these individuals would have comprised a large portion of the Thessalonian congregation. Malherbe argues that Paul incorporated the methods of the first century Greek moral philosophers by implementing the techniques of persuasive speech as a means of bringing the grieving Thessalonians comfort and solace. Malherbe further notes that this method would later become the standard for Christian preaching, one that is still practiced today.[33] This method of persuasive prophetic proclamation was the primary method used by Paul as the means of providing pastoral care to the grieving Thessalonians.

Paul begins this section (4:13-18) with the phrase "we do not want you to be ignorant," a common idiom used by Paul when introducing a doctrinal truth.[34] The phrase denotes more than just a knowledge of information, but rather a mental assent and conviction concerning the validity and implications of the information. Paul's desire to present a theological dialogue reveals that he believed that true soul care involves more than offering emotional comfort through a pastoral silent presence, but rather ministers have a spiritual obligation to call the grieving to a right theological understanding of their grief through a proclamative prophetic role. Paul is certainly aware of the benefits of a pastoral presence as is evident in 2:17-3:5 in which he expresses his desire for a personal encounter, and ultimately, he sends Timothy as a

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[31] Alfred J. Kolatch, *The Jewish Book of Why*. Rev. and enl. ed. (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 2000), 49.

[32] Ibid., 50.

[33] Malherbe, 28. Malherbe notes that Paul seeks to distinguish himself from the Greek Sophist philosophers by way of his content rather than his method.

[34] 1 Thessalonians 4:13, New International Version, "uninformed." Cf. Rom. 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; and 2 Cor. 1:8.

pastoral representative to strengthen and encourage the Thessalonian believers.[35]

According to Best, Paul's primary purpose in writing to the Thessalonians was not to teach doctrine, but rather to strengthen and encourage the recipients by way of proclaiming doctrine.[36] Best expounds on this idea when he writes, "Paul writes as a pastor rather than as a theologian, but all good pastoral counselling is based on, and contains, theological teaching and is not mere consolation."[37]

When the church father Gregory of Nyssa was confronted with the death of his brother, Basil, and then shortly thereafter, the imminent death of his sister, Macrina, he claims that he was "numbed by grief."[38] Gregory writes of his visit with Macrina on her deathbed in his treatise *On the Soul and the Resurrection*:

> She, like an expert equestrian, allowed me briefly to be carried away by the torrent of my grief. Then she endeavored to bridle me with words and to steer with the bit of her own reasoning the disorder of my soul. The apostolic saying put forward by her was: "*One ought not grieve for those who have fallen sleep*, for this is the passion only of *those who have no hope*" (cf. I Thessalonians 4:13).[39]

According to Boersma, Gregory has been viewed as being pastorally conflicted between the emotional passions of grief and the intellectual reasons of theology.[40] By his own admission, Gregory acknowledged that

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[35] Paul's desire was that he could offer a more personal verbal expression of hope through a face-to-face encounter, but instead he was forced to offer a written correspondence due to the persecution that prevented him from returning to Thessalonica. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:18.

[36] According to Boring, "The letter is not a didactic letter. Had Paul been intent on providing theological instruction, biblical citation would have been more appropriate." (Boring, 27). However, citing the work of Donfried, he adds that the letter serves as a *paracletic* letter, "offering comfort, encouragement, and consolation, a *consolatio*." (Boring, 33).

[37] Best, 180-181.

[38] St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection,* trans. by Catherine P. Roth (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993), 27.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Boersma, 56.

he had shared in the desperation of sorrow alongside his parishioners. Yet, Boersma also notes there was "a point of transition that marks the end of Gregory's sympathizing with his congregation's grief and the beginning of his attempt to lead them out of their grief toward a stance of genuine hope."[41] This foundation of hope was the motivating catalyst for Paul's discourse on the future bodily resurrection of those who had put their faith in Jesus and who had subsequently died. Although a silent sympathetic presence may initially appear to be comforting, if it is void of a positive pastoral voice of redemption, the grieving will be left hopelessly lost in their sorrow. The issue is not whether the minister should remain silent in times of crisis, but rather that when he speaks, that he speaks the right words of God.

> "We Do Not Want You…to Grieve Like the Rest of Men, Who Have No Hope."

1 Thessalonians 4:13

The Purpose of Soul Care and Pastoral Consoling

The primary emphasis of pastoral thanatology is upon "soul care" which according to Mutter, "involves the spiritual care provider or counsellor in a process by which they engage the person as a bio-psycho-social-spiritual whole. Thus, the work of soul care requires attention to the intricate relationship between the external and internal life of the person and may be provided by a member of the clergy, a chaplain, or a counsellor."[42] As such, the pastoral thanatologist is concerned with more than the psycho-emotional well-being of the sufferer as a pastor, but also the spiritual and intellectual health of those they seek to guide prophetically through theological proclamation.

Paul's pastoral purpose of soul care is clearly conveyed in 4:13 when he expressly states that he does not want the Thessalonian believers to remain in a hopeless state of grief.[43] Boring states, "This section (4:13-

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[41] Ibid.

[42] K. F. Mutter, "The Practice of Mindfulness in Spiritual Care," in *Psychotherapy: Cure of the Soul,* edited by Thomas St. James O'Connor, Kris Lund, and Patricia Berensden (Waterloo, ON: Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, 2014), 132.

[43] The NIV translates the end of verse 13 as, "like the rest of men, who have no hope." Berry's *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* translates the phrase

5:11) offers pastoral care for a grieving community."[44] Those "who have no hope" refers to all those who are without hope with regards to the resurrection because they either do not know or have refused to believe the theological truths of the gospel. "The Biblical concept of hope is not mere expectation and desire, as in Greek literature, but includes trust, confidence, (and) refuge in God, the God of hope (Rom. 15:13)."[45] Reese notes that first century pagans had no hope for the dead body and little hope for the departed soul.[46] Therefore, Weatherly claims that Paul's purpose was not just to address the Thessalonian believer's grief, but rather to provide soul care by eliciting a change in their understanding of grief by presenting a theological truth.[47]

For this reason, pastoral comforters must always point mourners to the gospel of Jesus. This prophetic proclamation of hope is expounded in greater detail by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 which he specifically refers to as "the gospel."[48] Therefore, it is imperative that ministers of God, as pastoral comforters, proclaim the gospel of Jesus to those who need the certain hope of eternal life.

"For We Believe" 1 Thessalonians 4:14
A Proclamation of the Gospel

Paul reminds the Thessalonian believers in 4:14 of the foundational truths of the gospel they had previously heard and accepted by faith. Many scholars (Bruce, Wanamaker, Weatherly, et. al.) believe the words

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as, "even as others which have no hope." (George Ricker Berry, *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, Fifteenth printing (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 533). Mounce renders the same phrase in his *Reverse-Interlinear* with the English translation, "as others do who have no hope." William D. Mounce, *The Mounce Reverse-Interlinear™ New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011) 1 Thessalonians 4:13, https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+4%3A13&version=MOUNCE.

[44] Boring, 154.

[45] The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary (1968), s. v. "hope."

[46] Gareth L. Reese, New Testament Epistles: 1 & 2 Thessalonians, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary (Moberly, MO: Scripture Exposition Books, 2020), 63.

[47] Jon A. Weatherly, *1 & 2 Thessalonians,* The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1996), 152.

[48] C.f. 1 Corinthians 15:1-2.

of 4:14 were part of an early creedal statement utilized among first century Christians. Therefore, Paul offers a prophetic proclamation of divine truth as the foundation for the believer's hope in their own bodily resurrection.

The Scottish theologian James Orr insists that every generation of mankind has believed in some type of life-after death experience in which the soul continues to exist after the death of the body.[49] However, the gospel that Paul had presented to the Thessalonians included an eschatological element in which the Messiah would return to establish a physical and literal kingdom for the believer.[50] The Thessalonian Christians were confused about the state of those who died before Christ's return since their souls had been separated from their bodies. Orr presents a strong argument concerning the question of immortality by asserting that the gospel as presented by Paul was not just for the continual existence of the soul, but rather for a resurrected body in which soul and body would be reunited.[51] This hope of a bodily resurrection is rooted in the physical resurrection of Jesus (cf. 4:14). Utley claims that the Greek word (εἰ) which begins verse 14, translated as "for" (NIV) or "for if" (KJV), is a first-class conditional word which could be translated as "Since we believe Jesus died and rose again," and it provides veracity

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[49] James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World,* Ninth ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), 200.

[50] Cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:5 – "when I was with you I used to tell you these things," and 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10. Note that Paul emphasizes that both the living and the dead (i.e. awake and asleep) will live together with the risen Jesus.

[51] In contrast, Ellicott believes that the Thessalonians were distraught due to a misunderstanding of the timing of the resurrection, believing that the dead in Christ would not experience the full benefits of the eschatological kingdom of God during the millennial reign of Christ. He writes, "We here learn what was the exact nature of the Thessalonians' anxiety concerning the dead. They were full of excited hopes of the coming of that kingdom which had formed so prominent a part of the Apostles' preaching there (Acts 17:7); and were afraid that the highest glories in that kingdom would be engrossed by those who were alive to receive them; and that the dead, not being to rise till afterwards, would have less blessed privileges….The negative in this clause is very emphatic in the Greek, and throws all its force upon the verb: 'We shall certainly not get the *start* of them that sleep;' *i.e.,* if anything, we shall be *behind* them; they will rise *first.*'" (Charles John Ellicott, ed. *A New Testament Commentary for English Readers,* III vols. (London: Cassel, Petter, and Galpin, n.d.), III, 141).

to the claim as being a statement of fact. Furthermore, Utley notes that the verbs ἀπέθανεν (died) and ἀνέστη (rose again) are both aorist active indicatives "which reflect historical facts."[52] According to Orr, "the biblical proclamation of the Gospel rests upon this central truth that since Jesus died and physically rose again, we can also believe that God will physically resurrect believers who die before His return." [53] As a pastor who cared deeply for the Thessalonians, Paul sought to solidify their faith through the repeated proclamation of the gospel, so that what they knew in their minds would be felt in their hearts.[54]

"According to the Lord's Own Word" 1 Thessalonians 4:15
The Use of Prophetic Proclamation in the Care of Souls

Paul employs in 4:15 the divine/prophetic words of Jesus as the source of comfort to the grieving: "According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep." Since these words are not recorded in any of the Gospels, Best believes the quotation is an "agraphon," (i.e., a saying of Jesus not retained in the canonical accounts).[55] Weatherly insists that Paul is offering a summation of Jesus' teaching on His *parousia* and the subsequent resurrection of all believers. Boring suggests that the saying was a divine oracle delivered by an earlier Christian prophet that became well-known among the Christian congregations.[56] In any case, whether from Jesus Himself or by way of a prophetic revelation, the statement is a divine proclamation now utilized by Paul for the encouragement of those who were grieving. Best furthermore notes that while prophets foretell the future, they also "instruct and console believers," and Paul uses these prophetic words for that very purpose.[57] Stott rightly concurs by noting, "only knowledge could inspire true Christian hope."[58] In contrast, the ministry of silence, a ministry void of prophetic utterances that enlightens the mind and

[52] Utley.
[53] C.f. 1 Thessalonians 4:14, Orr, 199.
[54] C.f. 1 Thessalonians 2:8.
[55] Best, 190.
[56] Boring, 164-165.
[57] Ibid., 191.
[58] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, The Bible Speaks Today Commentary (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 95.

offers encouragement to the heart, is severely deficient in ministering to the soul of the grieving.

Many Christian ministers see the refusal to speak as a missed opportunity in shaping the souls of humanity. Dostoevsky warned that silence was equivalent to apathy.[59] Pastor Lawrence White proclaims:

> When we profess to speak for God let us be absolutely certain that it is God's will we express, not our own inclinations or opinions. But where God's will does speak, on the fundamentals of life, morality, and family, there God's pastors must address the issues. On the basis of Scripture, without equivocation, and without hesitation.[60]

Johnson calls ministers to reclaim their prophetic role rather than hesitating to speak, blaming the silence on a recent shift in pastoral theology. He asserts, "Psychology has commandeered theology; psychobabble has replaced repentance; motivational talks have shoved aside exegesis; and theology proper has been overtaken by therapy."[61] In response, Moriichi contends that the quality that elevates the role of the pastor, in contrast to all other professional caregivers, is the ability to speak pastorally.[62] When Paul heard of the Thessalonians grief, he felt compelled to write to them in hopes of encouraging them with the divine words of the gospel. His words were both prophetic and pastoral offering not only doctrinal truth but also practical application to console and comfort those in a crisis of grief.

"Therefore Encourage Each Other with These Words" 1 Thess. 4:18

The Purpose of Prophetic Proclamation

As has been thoroughly highlighted above, Paul sought to provide soul care to the Thessalonians through the prophetic proclamation of the Gospel. Ash concurs by affirming, "Prophecy is not only possible (in

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[59] Rowan Williams, *Dostoevsky: Language, Faith and Fiction*, Continuum, 2008 as referenced by Wardley.

[60] Laurence White, "The Sin of Silence: A Message to American Pastors and their Congregations," Family Research Council, Digital.

[61] John E. Johnson, "The Prophetic Office as Paradigm for Pastoral Ministry," *Trinity Journal* 21NS (2000): 61.

[62] Moriichi, Shuji, "Re-Discovery of Silence in Pastoral Care," *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* vol. 63, no. 1–2 (Spring 2009): 6.

providing soul care) – prophecy is necessary."[63] Malherbe views Paul as a Christian philosopher by noting, "the philosopher is represented as a physician who through his speech operates and cauterizes…always adapting the cure to the condition of the patient."[64] Ellicott asserts that Paul had provided the "balm for the (Thessalonians) sorrow."[65] In a sermon from 1 Thessalonians 4 Charles Spurgeon would begin by declaring, "We know that these words are full of consolation…dictated by the Holy Spirit the Comforter, to be repeated by the saints to each other with the view of removing sorrow from the minds of the distressed."[66] He also referred to Paul's words of hope as a handkerchief for the mourner's tears and a calming medicine to the brokenhearted.[67]

Therefore, Paul concludes his discourse by calling upon the Thessalonian believers to encourage each other with the words of hope contained in the gospel of Jesus' resurrection. He uses the word παρακαλεῖτε in 4:18, translated as "encourage" (NIV) or "comfort" (KJV), which is derived from the root καλέω (i.e., "to vocally call out to someone") suggesting that we are to verbally offer consoling words to those who are grieving.[68] Jesus used this same word to describe the Holy Spirit (παράκλητος) who would comfort the disciples by speaking to them words of truth.[69] Thus, the divine method of consolation can only

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[63] Ash, 333.

[64] Malherbe, 23.

[65] Ellicott, 142.

[66] Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "For Ever With The Lord" September 16, 1877, M*etropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* Volume 23 (Bohemia, New York: Pilgrim Press, 1973), 517.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Otto Schmitz, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* ed. By Gerhard Friedrich, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1967), 6:776, s. v. "παράκλητος".

[69] Cf. John 16:13. Furthermore, the Latin Vulgate translates "encourage" in 4:18 with the word *consolamini,* a present active imperative of *conselor* in which we derive the English words counsel and counselor. *Consolamini* is a compound word (*con+solor*) with *solor* meaning "to comfort" combined with the prefix *con* which is used in Latin compounds to indicate the act of completeness or perfection. (S. Edgar and Angela M. Kinney, *The Vulgate Bible: Douay-Rheims Translation* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010).

be accomplished through a prophetic proclamation of the Word of God. Pastoral counselors cannot remain silent and effectively console.

Concluding Observations

Prophetic Proclamation alongside Pastoral Presence as the Method of Pastoral Ministry to those in the Crisis of Grief

There are those who maintain that the ministry of silence is sufficient for bringing comfort to those in the crisis of grief. They argue that ministers who attempt to offer verbal theological underpinnings of support may inflict greater spiritual damage upon the grieving. In reflecting on his own experience with grief, C. S. Lewis initially opined that those who offer trite scriptural responses to the grieving fail to understand the true depths of grief upon the soul and do nothing more than offer a spiritual band aid to a mortal emotional wound.[70] For his part, Paul stressed the importance of a pastoral presence that exemplified compassionate concern and care for others in addition to his prophetic proclamation.[71] In 1 Corinthians 13 he noted that prophetic proclamation void of compassion is nothing more than a resounding noise.[72] Yet, it is in those moments of emotional crisis when the truth of God's Word is spoken compassionately that the hearts of the grieving can be truly comforted.[73] Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14:3, "the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and *comfort.*"[74]

In contrast, recent pastoral thanatology training is often void of this theological model of prophetic proclamation. Freud, whose psycho-analysis of the human experience was purely naturalistic, interpreted the verbal exchange between pastoral counselors and the grieving as minimally significant by observing, "Nothing takes place between them except that they talk to each other."[75] Freud sought to develop a new

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[70] C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1961), 23.

[71] C.f. 1 Thessalonians 3:10.

[72] C.f. 1 Corinthians 13:1-2.

[73] After further contemplation, even Lewis acknowledged that he had to first align his thinking with the theological truths of God's Word before comfort was truly possible.

[74] Italics mine.

[75] Sigmund Freud, *The Question of Lay Analysis,* trans. J. Strachey, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 6.

profession of counselors who were secular ministers of the soul. Modern pastoral thanatology training encourages ministers to embrace this Freudian approach which applauds the use of silence as a therapeutic practice. Scott laments that current seminary training is also deficient in providing a theological construct of soul-care to the grieving. "(Seminaries) do not equip the pastor on how to privately minister the Word....(Thus, pastoral students) are instructed to simply refer their sheep outside the church to those who have been trained under secular constructs and have engaged in very little or no formal theological studies."[76] Thus, Freud's aspirations of a "secular minister of the soul" are coming to fruition.

There are some quasi-theologians and secular pastoral care advocates who encourage modern pastors to refrain from making theological proclamations when ministering to people in grief. [77] Roussell suggests that "Caregivers who feel strongly about their convictions being right, cannot force them on others assuming that their personal, cultural or religious values should be imposed as normative for all."[78] Instead, he encourages pastoral caregivers to embrace a universalistic approach to soul care in which each person's religious views are valid. In like manner, Barnes makes the following observation concerning Job's pastoral comforters:

> They had come to sympathize with him, and to offer consolation...(however) they now saw that their maxims would by no means furnish consolation....How often do similar cases occur now - cases where consolation seems almost impossible, and where any truths which might be urged, except the most abstract and unmeaning generalities, would tend only to aggravate the sorrows of the afflicted![79]

This belief, that there is no real power in the Word of God to console the heart of the grieving, reveals the real cruelty of all miserable pastoral

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[76] Stuart Scott, "More Than Preachers: The Solas and Soul-Care of the Reformers," *The Journal of Biblical Soul Care* 1 (2017).

[77] The concept of secular pastoral care is in my estimation an oxymoron.

[78] Roussell, 66.

[79] Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament Explanatory and Practical: Job Vol. 1*, ed. Robert Frew (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950), 122-123.

comforters. How cruel that God's appointed pastors would believe that the inspired Word of God is not a healing balm for the heart and soul! How cruel that a minister of the Gospel would silently observe someone enduring the deepest emotional pain when all the while they hold in their hands the living word of hope. How cruel that theologians like Barnes believe silence is the best a Christian pastor can offer. He laments, "How often is the Christian friend constrained to close his lips in silence, or utter only 'torturing' general truths that can give no consolation, or refer to facts which will tend only to open the wound in the heart deeper! To be silent at such times is all that can be done…."[80]

Yet, like the Apostle Paul, pastoral comforters must proclaim the Word of God during times of great sorrow if they are going to offer any true solace. Therefore, Christian ministers cannot offer adequate pastoral care without also assuming the role of a proclamative prophet. A ministry without words is as Job described like a spring without water, a mirage, a useless exercise in pastoral care that offers no real comfort or lasting hope.[81] Paul concurs, describing those who grieve without the benefit of the prophetic proclamation of the resurrection gospel as those "who have no hope." Pastors must use words, albeit the right theological words, or we too will be nothing more than "miserable comforters."[82]

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[80] Albert Barnes, Critical, Illustrative, and Textual on the Book of Job: with a New Translation and an Introductory Dissertation, VI ed., ed. John Cumming (London: G. Routledge & Co., 1854), 41.

[81] C.f. Job 6:15-20.

[82] C.f. Job 16:2, ""I have heard many things like these; you are *miserable comforters*, all of you!" and 1 Thessalonians 4:13, "Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, *who have no hope*." (Italics mine).

APPENDIX A
New Testament Passages Frequently Used in Funeral Liturgies[83]

Corinthians 1:3-4 – I often begin the memorial service with these verses which describe God as the "Father of compassion" and the "God of all comfort who comforts us in all our troubles." These words remind the grieving that God comes alongside them in their time of sorrow to lovingly comfort them in their hour of grief.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 – In almost every funeral service I will use this passage as Paul intended, to offer words of encouragement to the grieving by giving them three great truths of hope: 1) because of Jesus' resurrection those who have put their faith in Him will also rise again, 2) the believers who are still alive at the coming of the Lord will also be taken up in new spiritual bodies for a great heavenly reunion with their deceased loved ones, and 3) we will be with the Lord forever.

John 11:25-26 – Aside from the two passages above, I always incorporate these words from Jesus as they convey the gospel of the resurrection. "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" I always ask those in attendance if they believe in Jesus as their only resurrection hope, and I encourage them to pray a prayer of faith and confession as a means of securing their assurance of eternal life.

John 14:1-3 – In these words of Jesus He encourages His followers to not be troubled by assuring them that He is preparing a heavenly dwelling for them, and He will return to take them with Him so they may abide together forever. In John 14:18 (KJV) He says, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

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[83] As noted in the body of this research, the entire New Testament could be used as a word of hope to a grieving world. However, these are some of the most frequently used passages from the NT that a proclamative prophet might utilize in seeking to comfort the grieving.

1 Corinthians 15:37-44 – Paul uses the illustrations of botany, biology, and astronomy to describe the resurrection body. In the agriculturally based community where I have served as pastor for over twenty-five years these words resonate with understanding.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 – Paul writes his own eulogy describing his life as a race and the reward he will receive from God for his faithful endurance. These words are a meaningful memorial to a faithful follower of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:6-10 – These verses have been used to support the idea that at the moment of death the spirit of the believer is in the presence of God.

1 Corinthians 2:9 and **Revelation 21:1-4** – These two passages describe the unimaginable glory of heaven and the blessings of eternal life.

There are certainly other passages, including many from the Old Testament, that express the comfort of God in times of grief, that affirm the resurrection from the dead, and offer the hope of eternal life in heaven for those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus.

APPENDIX B
Resurrection Episodes in the New Testament[84]

The only son of a widow in the town of Nain – Luke 7:11-17. While the text indicates that His heart was moved with pity and compassion, Jesus' only words to this grieving mother before He raised her son from the dead were, "Don't cry."

The daughter of Jairus, a leader in the Capernaum synagogue[85] - Luke 8:40-55. When Jairus receives the news that his twelve-year-old

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[84] This list does not include the resurrection of Jesus as His experience was different from all others as the first to rise from the dead and not return to a mortal body, but rather to a resurrected body that would not subsequently die a second death. (C.f. 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

[85] Capernaum is the most likely location, or perhaps another coastal town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. The events of Luke 7 occur in Capernaum, then at the beginning of Luke 8 Jesus begins to travel from town to town, at one

daughter has just died, Jesus tells him to not be afraid and only to have faith. When Jesus later addressed those who were crying and mourning, He said to them, "Stop wailing. She is not dead but asleep" (Luke 8:52); then, He raised her back to life.

Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha and close friend of Jesus – John 11:1-44. While this story is most often used by pastors as a passage of hope during times of sorrow, that hope must point to a deferred resurrection rather than the type of joy experienced by Mary and Martha. However, the words and actions of Jesus do serve as a model of pastoral ministry when encountering people who are overcome with sorrow and theological questions. Jesus empathizes with them and shares their sorrow, yet He also speaks prophetically concerning the hope of the resurrection.

An unknown number of "holy people" buried in Jerusalem came back to life when Jesus died on the cross – Matthew 27:51-53. These people came out of their tombs and walked into the city, appearing to many people. However, no conversations are recorded with these individuals or their family members that could be used as a paradigm of bereavement ministry.

Tabitha/Dorcas – Acts 9:36-42. When Tabitha (Greek – Dorcas), a devout woman living in Joppa, dies, the believers send for Peter who subsequently arrives and raises the woman from the dead. The conversation Peter has with the grieving women at her deathbed appears to be conciliatory although no actual dialog is recorded.

Eutychus – Acts 20:7-12. After Eutychus falls from a third story window and dies, the Apostle Paul throws himself on the young man and declares, "Don't be alarmed. He's alive!" (Acts 7:10).

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point crossing the Sea of Galilee to the district of the Gadarenes. When the story of Jairus begins in 8:40 it says, "Now when Jesus returned," presumably referring to Capernaum.

Midwestern Journal of Theology 21.2 (2022): 65-83

Protecting the Sheep of Goat Yard Chapel: John Gill's Doctrine of Church Discipline

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Introduction

"The absence of church discipline is no longer remarkable – it is generally not even noticed."[1] Church discipline is a biblical doctrine that has left, or had never entered, the conscience of many Protestant churches around the world.[2] The doctrine of church discipline speaks to the Jesus-instituted actions churches are charged to undertake in order to restore church members to repentance or rid the membership of unrepentant sin. The biblical mandate to discipline is featured most prominently in Jesus's words recorded in Matthew 18:15-20.

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[1] Albert Mohler Jr., "Church Discipline: The Missing Mark," in *Polity: Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life*, ed. Mark E. Dever (Washington: Center for Church Reform, 2001), 43.

[2] In a 2015 article written for Religion News Service, and then picked up by the Washington Post, Jonathan Merritt suggests that church discipline has been on the rise in America because of ministries like 9Marks and what was Mars Hill. He offers little evidence other than how churches and organizations like Grace To You and Acts 29 have willfully chosen to associate with 9Marks. 9Marks is a modern proponent of building healthy churches, and church discipline is one of their nine marks of a healthy church. Merritt's article seeks to discredit the value of biblical church discipline, while disparaging the supposed growth of the practice. However, despite Merritt's claims, affiliation with the 9Marks organization does not correlate directly with the practice of church discipline. See "Shepherds or shamers? The rise of church discipline in America (ANALYSIS),"
Jonathan Merritt, https://.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/shepherds-or-shamers-the-rise-of-church-discipline-in-america-analysis/2015/06/04/b2737116-0afc-11e5-951e-8e15090d64ae_story.html.

Restoration is central to discipline. The sin of the wayward son, according to Matthew 18:15-20, must be met with the firm hand of restoring love; a hand that does not tolerate sin, yet desires the sinner to return to Christ. The absence of loving discipline from churches is cause for concern. Without it, what is to stop false teaching, sin, and other errors from entering the church?[3] The solution to correcting sin and error is a healthy understanding and practice of church discipline.

Unlike many churches today that have little category for church discipline, John Gill (1697-1771) had a healthy understanding of the doctrine. Gill was an English Calvinistic Baptist minister in London during the eighteenth century who pastored at the Goat Yard Chapel in Horsleydown, and later at the meeting house in Carter Lane. Not only did Gill have a biblical and theological understanding of church discipline, but he practiced it in his church. If ground is to be reclaimed for understanding and practicing church discipline, a helpful place to start is to survey the doctrine in the thought and practice of one of the most prominent Baptists scholars to ever live, John Gill.[4] This paper will argue that John Gill's understanding and practice of church discipline offers a helpful corrective for churches today. To do this, this paper will offer a broad overview of Gill's ecclesiology, and will then place his understanding and practice of church discipline within that ecclesiological framework.

John Gill's Ecclesiology

Church discipline is an ecclesiological doctrine. In order to grasp the place of church discipline in the life of the church, a healthy understanding of the doctrine of the church should be pursued. That said, the study of Gill's ecclesiology, and of his thought in general, is

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[3] Discernment bloggers and keyboard warriors are not the solution. To demonstrate the danger of anonymous voices unaccountable to a local church, see, "Denominational Discourse & the Future of the SBC," Jason K. Allen, https://jasonkallen.com/2020/01/denominational-discourse-the-future-of-the-sbc/.

[4] Gill was the first Baptist to write a commentary on every verse of the Bible, was one of, if not, the first to write a complete systematic theology, and is the only Baptist to have done both. He was an active champion of orthodoxy throughout the long eighteenth century. However, modern Baptist scholarship has all but forgotten Gill.

desperately lacking.[5] As a result, the finer points of Gill's ecclesiology have had little interaction amongst modern scholars. Gill wrote

[5] Gill was and is a polarizing figure. The accusation against him of Hyper-Calvinism has caused many theologians to turn away from his work entirely. See David Rathel, "Was John Gill a Hyper-Calvinist? Determining Gill's Theological Identity," *Baptist Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (2017): 47-59 for a helpful survey of the controversy. As a result, it is clear that Gill has become a relative boogey man given his exclusion from monograph studies and biographies. Though James Boswell is largely credited with writing the first English biography, written on Samuel Johnson in 1791, Rippon credits Augustus Toplady's paragraphs on Gill from 1772 to be the first English biography. Rippon wrote, "We terminate this imperfect Memoir with the subsequent brilliant paragraphs; furnishing what we flatter ourselves will be considered one of the first pieces of Biography that has ever appeared in the English language. We are indebted for it to the pen of that elegant forcible writer, the Rev. Augustus Montague Toplady, A. B. written July 29, 1772." Rippon, *Life and Writings of the Rev, John Gill, D.D.*, 136. Gill's present absence overshadows the reality that he may have been the subject of the first words of English biography. Furthermore, there are few works dedicated to Gill, and fewer still are those works that are without complications themselves. Jerad File's work, *John Gill's Ecclesiology with Reference to His Work: An Exposition of the Book of Solomon's Song Commonly Called Canticles*, is educational in his survey of Gill's ecclesiology from Solomon's Song, yet it remains to be seen whether or not this ThM thesis turned self-published monograph withstands the test of academic scrutiny. See Jerad File, "John Gill's Ecclesiology with Reference to His Work: An Exposition of the Book of Solomon's Song Commonly Called Canticles," (ThM thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010). To complicate the matter more, Gill's most prolific commentator, George Ella, is himself embroiled with controversy because of his own Hyper-Calvinistic and antinomian tendencies. Ella does Gill no favors in this regard. Wade Burleson, in his introduction to Ella's *Justification from Eternity* tries to defend Ella of such claims but does so unconvincingly. See George Ella, *John Gill and Justification from Eternity: A Tercentenary Appreciation*, (Cumbria: Go Publications, 2018), 11. Other than works by these authors, the only two published stand-alone works on Gill are John Rippon's *Life and Writings of the Rev. John Gill*, and Michael Haykin's edited compilation *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697-1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*. See John Rippon, *Life and Writings of the Rev, John Gill, D.D.*, (Harrisonburg: Sprinkle Publications, 2006) and *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697-1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Leiden: Brill Press, 1997). This point considers the published work on Gill that is popularly accessible to the public. There have been several non-

numerous pages on the doctrine of believer's baptism, and many of these works are compiled in the 650-page tome *Gospel Baptism.*[6] Therein, he wrote against those arguing for infant baptism, and argued for believer's baptism by immersion to be the normative and ancient model for baptism. Yet, due to Gill's historic association with hyper-Calvinism and the eighteenth century controversy therein, contemporary literature surveying the doctrine is silent on Gill.[7] For the same reason, there is a contemporary silence on Gill concerning the Lord's Supper as well. Rippon, Gill's successor and biographer, said that "if any part of [Gill's] pastoral work he excelled himself, it was at the Lord's Supper. Here he was solemn, sententious, and tender."[8] Again, modern scholarship,

published PhD dissertations on Gill that forward the discussion on Gill in areas including his Trinitarian thought, views on marriage, Hyper-Calvinistic tendencies, etc. Most popular works that approach Gill do so from a position of caution and utilize him as a negative point of reference. See Bill J. Leonard, *Baptist Ways: A History,* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2003), 99-100, and also David K. Stabnow, *Churchfails: 100 Blunders in Church History (& What We Can Learn From Them),* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), Kindle Location, 126-127. According to Stabnow, "Gill was proud of the fact that he never invited sinners to repent." Rarely does interaction with Gill occur that moves beyond simple reference to inspecting his work and reflecting upon it. Timothy George and David S. Dockery, *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition,* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2001), 11-33; Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1771-1892: From John Gill to C.H. Spurgeon,* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2006), 3-15; and Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and For His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life,* (Cape Coral: Founders Press, 2006), 21-54 offer helpful insights into the life of Gill that interact honestly, and at points differently from one another, with Gill's life and work.

[6] John Gill, *Gospel Baptism,* (Paris: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 2006).

[7] See Thomas R. Schreiner & Shawn D. Wright, *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant,* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006) and Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age,* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), 81-130 to see Gill's absence from the modern baptism discussion amongst conservative Baptists. It is worthy to note that Gill is quoted on baptism by David Allen in *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches.* David Allen, "'Dipped for the Dead': The Proper Mode of Baptism" in *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches,* eds. Jason G. Duesing, Thomas White, and Malcolm B Yarnell, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 104.

[8] Rippon, *Life and Writings of the Rev, John Gill, D.D.*, 128.

whether intentional or not, has largely overlooked Gill and his thoughts on the matter.[9] The same can be said about Gill's understanding of preaching, church offices, public reading of Scripture, corporate singing, and church discipline.[10]

Thankfully, Gill's ecclesiology has been overviewed in three works: Timothy George's essay *The Ecclesiology of John Gill*, John Woolman Brush's essay *John Gill's Doctrine of the Church*, and File's aforementioned thesis.[11] Though these surveys do not discuss Gill's doctrine of church discipline at any great length, they provide helpful categories for Gill's ecclesiology that frame the discussion of his understanding of church discipline. While George and File have overall positive outlooks on Gill, Brush takes a more negative position.

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[9] See Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford, *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ Until He Comes*, (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010) and Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age*, (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), 81-90, 131-163.

[10] It is important to note that Shawn Wright has written on Gill's view of church leadership. Wright suggests that Gill was sympathetic to the single pastor model for church leadership, an assertion he makes on the basis of Gill's usage of the singular "pastor" throughout his body of Divinity. Wright writes that "throughout his discussion of pastoral ministry he simply referred to the 'pastor' in the singular as a given entity." However, Gill utilizes the singular and the plural form throughout his *Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity.* See Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity,* 864, 870. It is clear that Gill did not have any other elders at his church, and that he did not desire a co-pastor. However, Gill did not believe that Scripture rejected the idea, but rather he believed that "Scripture is entirely silent" regarding elder plurality. See Rippon, *Life and Writings of the Rev, John Gill, D.D.*, 130. For Wrights argument, see Shawn Wright, "Baptists and a Plurality of Elders" in *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*, ed. Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 249-281.

[11] Timothy George, "The Ecclesiology of John Gill" in *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697-1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Leiden: Brill Press, 1997), 225-236, and John Woolman Brush, "John Gill's Doctrine of the Church" in *Baptists Concepts of the Church: A Survey of the Historical and Theological Issues which Have Produced Changes in Church Order*, ed. Winthrop Still Hudson (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959), 53-70.

George wrote that, "John Gill was a theologian of the church and his theology of grace must be seen in the light of his ecclesiology."[12] George recognizes that Gill's entire body of work must be seen through the lens of his local church ministry. In his essay on Gill's ecclesiology, George outlines the ecclesiological underpinnings of Gill's ministry. For example, George shows that "the fundamental impulse of Gill's Reformed Baptist ecclesiology issued from a peculiar correlation of the two principal concerns of Reformation theology, ... the basis of saving faith and the locus of the true visible true."[13] In other words, the starting place of Gill's ecclesiology was the constitution of the invisible church. Gill writes that "Christ is sole head, king, and lawgiver in his house and kingdom, and no man, nor set of men, have a power to set up a church-society, but what is by direction and according to the rule of his word,"[14] and that "all the elect of God, that have been, are, or shall be in the world; and who will form the pure, holy, and undefiled Jerusalem-church-state, in which none will be but those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life; and this consists of the redeemed of the lamb, and is the church which Christ has purchased with his blood."[15] The elect (in eternity) constitute the invisible church, the elect (in time) constitute local, visible churches, and Christ is the head of it all. Gill saw his ministry as an endeavor to call out and edify the elect toward their head.

Furthermore, Gill saw true "gospel-churches" as congregational.[16] The members of these congregational churches must be regenerate, baptized believers who desire to covenant together.[17] In practice of this belief, Gill led his church to adopt a covenant that amended the covenant installed by his predecessor, Benjamin Keach, that "united faith and practice together."[18] For Gill, all matters of true, visible, congregational churches take place in the context of a body of baptized believers who have covenanted together.

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[12] George, "The Ecclesiology of John Gill," 226.
[13] Ibid.
[14] John Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, (Paris: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 2007), 886.
[15] Ibid., 853.
[16] Ibid.
[17] George, "The Ecclesiology of John Gill," 229-232.
[18] John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 9 vols., (Paris: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 2016), 1.xxxiv.

File outlines the three main elements of Gill's congregational ecclesiology as: baptism, the Lord's Supper, and preaching.[19] He also notes how Gill demonstrates other ecclesial elements in his understanding of the church, namely singing, prayer, and confession, though File does not interact with these three elements as he did the previous three.[20] Regarding the ecclesial elements, Brush, File, and George speak with relative uniformity. Brush, despite his overall negativity towards Gill, says, "the least the present writer can do here is to commend John Gill as still worth reading on baptism and the nature of the Church."[21] He recognizes Gill's argument against paedobaptism and for credobaptism as thorough and persuasive.[22] Furthermore, as File notes, baptism is a prerequisite for the Lord's Supper, and that it should be repeated frequently throughout the life of the believer for spiritual nourishment.[23] Lastly, George says this on Gill's view of preaching: "The primary work of pastors is to feed the church of God committed to their care. 'An unpreaching pastor,' Gill says, 'is a contradiction of terms.' To this end, pastors should be not loiterers but laborers in the Lord's vineyard, addicting 'themselves to the study of the sacred scriptures.'"[24] The conclusion of Gill's ecclesiology up to this point is that the church is formed by Christ, and its membership has requirements (regeneration and baptism) and expectations (participation in the Lord's Supper and submission to the preached Word of God).

The remaining ecclesial consideration is that of church offices, wherein there is discrepancy between the authors views on Gill's understanding of the matter. Though the only office necessary to consider at this time is that of the pastorate. Brush understands Gill's strong leadership as bishop-like, even to the point where he compares Gill to Cyprian, saying, "Gill's pastor seems to have the same clear title to rule in the disciplinary field as Cyprians bishop."[25] This refers to Gill's

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[19] File, *John Gill's Ecclesiology with Reference to His Work: An Exposition of the Book of Solomon's Song Commonly Called Canticles*, 18.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Brush, "John Gill's Doctrine of the Church," 70.
[22] Ibid., 65-69.
[23] File, *John Gill's Ecclesiology with Reference to His Work: An Exposition of the Book of Solomon's Song Commonly Called Canticles*, 51.
[24] George, "The Ecclesiology of John Gill," 232.
[25] Brush, "John Gill's Doctrine of the Church," 65.

practice of church discipline, and has implications for his demeanor as an elder as well, but as catchy as the quip may be, it bears no historical weight. As is demonstrated more fully in the section to follow, Gill did not see himself as a ruling elder free to make unilateral decisions without considering the congregation, nor did he function that way. George and File both demonstrate Gill as an elder who lead the church, as opposed to ruled the church.[26] Regardless of this unique position on Gill's pastoral office, like George and File, Brush maintains that Gill's ecclesiology "held much that we may still consider fairly normative for the Baptist position."[27]

All of the above terminates in Gill's understanding of the "gospel-rule." File notes that, for Gill, "when one member falls into sin, he is to be pursed according to the gospel-rule in hopes of restoration. In this regard, Gill also urges that church members must be patient and forgiving toward one another especially when one does repent."[28] This conclusion represents a taste of Gill's understanding of church discipline, despite the categorical absence of church discipline in File's work. The reconciling work of the gospel knows no distinction, and Gill's congregation was encouraged to pursue their wayward brothers and sisters with love. Brush unfortunately sees Gill in a different light. He suggests that reading Gill "leaves no doubt, however, that the work of discipline – as indeed all that concerns the acceptance and dismissal, and the rejection or excommunication of its members – is held firmly in the pastor's hands"[29] and is irrespective of the membership. Meaning, Brush viewed Gill as an authoritarian who held absolute power in the church. This is not an accurate representation of Gill's understanding or practice on the matter, as is shown in the following sections. Lastly, George contrasts Brush in saying that Gill believed pastors were responsible "to lead the congregation in exercising loving, remedial discipline, and to exhibit by word and deed a concern for the spiritual good of the flock, guarding them against busybodies within and false teachers without."[30]

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[26] George, "The Ecclesiology of John Gill," 232-233, and File, *John Gill's Ecclesiology with Reference to His Work: An Exposition of the Book of Solomon's Song Commonly Called Canticles*, 74-83.
[27] Brush, "John Gill's Doctrine of the Church," 57.
[28] Ibid., 26.
[29] Ibid., 65.
[30] George, "The Ecclesiology of John Gill," 232.

The overviews of Gill's ecclesiology by George, File, and Bush are offered without a specific category for church discipline, though they each address the matter in brief, and George has more detailed discussion of the matter. Why the authors approached this element of Gill's ecclesiology so differently is unclear. Gill in his *Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* specifically lists church discipline as an aspect of worship, and his *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* clearly addresses the doctrine whenever the Scriptures addressed the matter.[31]

Having shown the ecclesial categories that Gill espoused (the nature of the church, the ordinances, and church discipline) and the broad movements contained therein, it is clear that a survey of Gill's doctrine and practice of church discipline is warranted.

John Gill's Doctrine of Church Discipline

Church discipline was a wide-ranging spectrum for Gill. George defined Gill's understanding of church discipline in this way: "The purpose of church discipline, including this final measure of excommunication, is to serve these four ends: (1) the giving of glory to God; (2) the purging of the church; (3) the eradication of false doctrines; (4) the repentance and restoration of those who have received disciplinary sanctions of the church."[32] George is right to describe excommunication as a final measure for Gill. Excommunication for Gill was more than removal from membership or treating someone as an unbeliever, excommunication also entailed the active shunning of an individual. In this way, Gill has a rather different understanding of the church discipline texts than that of many modern church discipline proponents.

For example, Gill's interpretation of Matthew 18:15-20 is not a hermeneutical predecessor to that of the 9Marks position on the matter. Gill recognizes first that "gentle reproofs are to be made use of" for the good of the individual caught in sin.[33] The difference for Gill is not how sin should be confronted according to this passage, but after confrontation, if sin abounds, what is the punishment given to the

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[31] Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 886-895, and Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 7.182-187; 7.204-207; 8.628-630; 9.244; 9.362-363.

[32] George, "The Ecclesiology of John Gill," 234.

[33] Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 7.204.

unrepentant sinner? Gill sees no grounds for excommunication from Matthew 18:15-20. He writes that "this is not a form of excommunication to be used among Christians, nor was there ever any such form among the Jews; nor could Heathens or publicans, especially such publicans as were Gentiles, be excommunicated, when they never were of the Jewish church… But one that was never of a religious society could never be driven out."[34] Meaning, if sin abounds, let the individual be treated as an outsider or an unbeliever, but they are not to be shunned by the community.

This attitude toward sin in the church is closely connected to Gill's understanding of the keys of the kingdom from Matthew 16:19. Gill associates the keys of the kingdom with the preaching of the gospel, not with church discipline.[35] Jonathan Leeman, on the other hand, suggests that the keys of the kingdom grant authority to the church to assess doctrine and believers to ensure that the gospel is not perverted.[36] Leeman's perspective suggests the keys of the kingdom grant the church authority to exercise church discipline. In this way, Gill's understanding of the keys of the kingdom and Matthew 18:15-20 differ slightly from the more modern view of discipline among Baptists. However, Gill viewed the preaching of the gospel as an act that "bound" and "loosed" certain practices i.e., forbidding circumcision and observance of festivals, and permitting civil correspondence between Jews and Gentiles and the eating of food previously unclean.[37] In this way, the preaching of the gospel functions in a preservative manner similar to Leeman's view. Though, the preservation for Gill, comes from the passive act of communication, teaching, and preaching, not that active act of congregational voting.

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[34] Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 7.206; and Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 888-889.

[35] Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 887.

[36] Leeman is the editorial director for 9Marks, his position is the normative position among the organization, though some in the organization are softer in their definitions of "regular" and "irregular" churches. To see his broader discussion on this issue, see, Jonathan Leeman, *Don't Fire Your Church Members: The Case for Congregationalism*, (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 73-81.

[37] Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 887-888.

Another example where Gill differs from the modern view is seen in his interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5: 3-5. Here, Paul exhorts the Corinthian church to deliver a sexually immoral man over to Satan. Gill does not see this as excommunication either. For Gill, removal and delivery of a member to Satan are distinct and separate actions. Removal is excommunication. Delivery unto Satan is akin to the affliction Job felt when he was struck with boils. To be delivered unto Satan, for Gill, is to be shown the heinousness of the sin and the church is to "admonish him as a brother" that he may be found as a partaker in the hope of the gospel, and not as an enemy.[38]

Lastly, Gill addresses Titus 3:10 as another passage where excommunication is often wrongly inferred. When the passage speaks of an individual who "stirs up division" and must be warned multiple times of their offense, Gill suggests that the Pauline admonition to "have nothing more to do with him" is directed solely at Titus, and not to the church. Meaning, Paul is suggesting that Titus, and Titus alone, have nothing to do with the individual stirring up division. Gill makes this claim on the basis of the word παραιτοῦ, which the King James rendered as *reject ye* instead of the more appropriate *reject thou*.[39]

This does not mean Gill had no category for excommunication. He writes at length on excommunication in his *Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, saying:

> But in cases of atrocious public crimes, and notorious heresies, subversive of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, no time should be lost, or trifled away with admonitions; but for the honour of Christ, the credit of religion, and for the removal of the odium brought on Christianity, such a person should be removed from the communion at once; nay, even as some think, though he may seem to have some sense of his evil and repentance for it.[40]

The distinction Gill draws between "removal" and "delivery unto Satan" is clearly in view. Gill believed that only example of

[38] Ibid., 889.
[39] Ibid., 890.
[40] Ibid.

excommunication in Scripture is that of the incestuous, sexually immoral sinner in 1 Corinthians 5:1-2.[41]

For Gill, the act of excommunication is an extreme, though at times, necessary action. As opposed to offering a wide gate for exit, Gill offers a narrow gate for entrance. Meaning, Gill is careful to admit individuals into membership. Gill offers eight guidelines for admittance into the communion of the saints: 1) do not simply let any person become a member, 2) ensure the individual voluntarily desires to join the community, 3) ensure the individual is a believer, 4), ensure they have repented of their sins and have professed faith in Christ, 5) ensure they understand and are able to confess the gospel, 6) do not discredit them because of struggles with sin, yet allow for grace to mend their brokenness, 7) encourage the individual to share their testimony before the membership, and 8) ensure the membership desires for them to enter into the community.[42] This eightfold model of church membership, helped Gill establish expectations for church members. In this way, Gill was able to guard his people from sinful onlookers who might selfishly desire the communion of the saints for ungodly reasons.

Once admitted into membership, Gill gave further expectations to his people as a way to guard against hypocrisy. Members were expected to witness to and participate in the ordinances of the church, namely baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the preaching of the Word. Lack of participation in the ordinances in Gill's eyes was "very unbecoming of members of churches."[43] Furthermore, the membership was expected to love the Lord, his law, and his people, and to offer gentle admonition to brothers and sisters caught in sin, hoping they be restored to repentance by the grace of Jesus Christ.[44]

This cautiousness to admit members into the flock of God, and the weightiness of expectations that rested with the members therein, made excommunication only necessary in extreme cases. Again, Gill saw excommunication as the final, last resort of church discipline. It was to be pursued by the church after all other measures of reconciliation had been exhausted. If, after all precautions were established and

[41] Ibid., 890.
[42] Ibid., 891.
[43] Ibid., 892.
[44] Ibid., 892-893.

expectations recognized, a member were found in an extraordinarily grievous and public sin, Gill would mobilize his church to excommunicate them. For Gill, excommunication includes avoidance, shunning, and most importantly, purging them from the fellowship of the saints.[45] Regarding the communal action and its authority, Gill says, "the authority of executing [excommunication] lies in the elders, with the consent and by the order of the church; as the directions to the churches concerning this matter testify."[46]

Yet, despite Gill's willingness to excommunicate members when necessary, the normative form of church discipline for Gill is represented in the concluding remarks to the confession he led his church to adopt, The Goat Yard Declaration:

> Now all, and each of these doctrines and ordinances, we look upon ourselves under the greatest obligations to embrace, maintain, and defend; believing it to be our duty to stand fast, in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel. And whereas we are very sensible, that our conversation, both in the world and in the church, ought to be as becometh the Gospel of Christ, we judge it our incumbent duty to walk in wisdom towards them that are without, to exercise a conscience void of offence towards God and men, by living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. And as to our regards to each other, in our church-communion, we esteem it our duty to walk with each other in all humility and brotherly love: to watch over each other's conversation; to stir up one another to love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as we have opportunity, to worship God according to his revealed will; and, when the case requires, to warn, rebuke, and admonish one another, according to the rules of the Gospel.[47]

Discipline on Display in John Gill's Church

Rippon writes that "in the course of his ministry he had some weak, some unworthy, and some very wicked persons to deal with."[48] Rippon went on to show that Gill "had his share of sorrows, as the records of his

[45] Ibid., 894.
[46] Ibid., 894-895.
[47] Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 1.xxxvi.
[48] Rippon, *Life and Writings of the Rev, John Gill, D.D.*, 123.

faithful church-discipline evince."[49] This tendency in Gill, to bear his people's burdens with them, is born out of his understanding of the restoring love of Christ. Gill saw discipline as restoration first and excommunication second. The overwhelming testimony in his *Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* is that repentance should be pursued gratuitously. The grace of Jesus has superabounded for us, therefore our grace for others should superabound likewise. However, as noted above, Gill believed that excommunication was at times necessary.

There are two occasions worthy of note regarding the act of excommunication in Gill's church. This first instance where excommunication was brought before the church dealt with the doctrine of regeneration. There was a small movement among Gill's people where the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit was being denied. As a result, Gill gathered his people to discuss the matter. At the conclusion of that meeting Gill wrote the following in the church ledger:

> Agreed, that to deny the internal sanctification of the Spirit, as a principle of grace and holiness wrought in the heart; or as consisting of grace communicated to and implanted in the soul, which, though but a begun work, and as yet incomplete, is an abiding work of grace, and will abide, notwithstanding all corruptions, temptations, and snares, and be performed by the author of it until the day of Christ, when it will be the saints' meetness for eternal glory; [this denial] is a grievous error, which highly reflects dishonor on the blessed Spirit and his operations of grace on the heart, is subversive of true religion and powerful godliness, and renders persons unfit for church communion. Wherefore it is further agreed, that such persons who appear to have embraced this error be not admitted to the communion of this church; and should any such who are members of it appear to have received it and continue in it, that they be forthwith excluded from it.[50]

At the meeting, two members present aligned themselves with the condemned doctrine, and one absent member did the same, and they were subsequently excommunicated from the congregation. The

[49] Ibid., 125.
[50] Ibid., 125-126.

expectation of doctrinal orthodoxy was an unflinching expectation from Gill that was evident in the life of his people as they "agreed" that this error, and others, were significant enough to warrant excommunication.

The second occasion of such unanimous agreement to excommunicate a member from the congregation is rather infamous. In 1768 Gill wrote a pamphlet titled *A Dissertation Concerning the Eternal Sonship of Christ.* The purpose of this pamphlet was to correct some wanderings from orthodox Trinitarian thought. Gill said that "it is easy to observe, that the distinction of Persons in the Deity, depends upon the generation of the Son; take away that, which would destroy the relationship between the first and second Persons, and the distinction drops."[51] The pamphlet was born out of a Trinitarian controversy that found its way into Gill's church.

This Trinitarian controversy had massive implications for Trinitarian doctrine in the eighteenth century. Throughout the eighteenth century different dissenting communities began questioning orthodox Trinitarian doctrine. At one significant moment during the controversy, a conference was held where orthodox Trinitarian thought regarding the eternal generation of the Son of God was in question. During this meeting, only two Particular Baptists rejected the orthodox view, while all but one General Baptist rejected the orthodox view. On this issue among the dissenting communities in the eighteenth century, Raymond Brown wrote that "resistance to subscription [to the orthodox view of the Trinity] became the prelude to heterodoxy. People who refused to sign the articles came eventually to deny them and those General Baptists who were theologically uncertain ultimately became committed Unitarians."[52] To this George writes that "while few Particular Baptist churches became Unitarian, Gill was well aware of the dangers that confronted all orthodox Christians on these cardinal tenets of the faith."[53]

Thus, when a member of Gill's church named Isaac Harmon admitted that he disagreed with the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ, Gill

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[51] Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, 142. Gill originally published this in his *Body of Doctrinal Divinity* which was published one year after his pamphlet on eternal sonship.

[52] Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*, (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1986), 23.

[53] George and Dockery, *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, 23.

was rightfully alarmed. It was not that Harmon was ignorant of the doctrine, in fact, Harmon would go on to publish his own tract titled *The Creed of the Eternal Generationists, Compiled from the Writings of Some of Those Sensible, Consistent, and Orthodox Gentlemen.*[54] Harmon's rejection of the eternal Sonship of Christ led Gill to mobilize his church to excommunicate Harmon. Gill feared that Harmon would fully slide into Unitarianism, and again, the church unanimously "agreed" to excommunicate an individual from their membership on the basis of heterodox doctrine.[55] This controversy in Gill's church is what ultimately compelled him to publish the pamphlet on eternal generation.

Though this type of discipline is necessary in extreme cases, these two instances do not represent the normative practice of church discipline in Gill's church. An onlooker of these two instances in the life of Gill's church might assume that Gill's congregation worshipped in fear, and that the membership might be excommunicated from the congregation should they unwittingly lack in an area of theological orthodoxy. However, the overwhelming testimony of discipline in Gill's church is that of loving instruction, correction, and restoration.

> The Doctor not only watched over his people, "with great affection, fidelity, and love," but he watched his pulpit also. He would not, if he knew it, admit any one to preach for him, who was either cold-hearted to the doctrine of the Trinity, or who denied the divine filiation of the Son of God; or who objected to conclude his prayers with the usual doxology to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as three equal Persons in the one Jehovah.[56]

Rippon also wrote that "[Gill] really 'bore with their weaknesses, failings, and infirmities,' and particularly when he saw they were sincerely on the Lord's side."[57] Even after performing the heart-rending

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[54] Isaac Harmon, *The Creed of the Eternal Generationists, Compiled from the Writings of Some of Those Sensible, Consistent, and Orthodox Gentlemen,* (London: J. Johnson, 1768).

[55] Stephen Tshombe Godet, "The Trinitarian Theology of John Gill (1697-1771): Context, Sources, and Controversy," (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 250.

[56] Rippon, *Life and Writings of the Rev, John Gill, D.D.,* 127.

[57] Ibid., 123.

duty of church discipline, Gill's church maintained great respect for their pastor.[58] The congregation rightly admired their pastor as Gill labored to love, instruct, correct, and guide them through his teaching, preaching, and writing. File aptly recognizes the character of Gill's writing when he says that "Gill wrote as a pastor who loved Christ and his Church."[59]

This is not to say that Gill was without his firmer, Luther-esque, moments. On one afternoon after preaching, Gill was accosted by one of his ruder members. The cynical gentleman began berating Gill, repeatedly asking, "Is this preaching?" At first, Gill kept his demeanor, but after the gentleman continued and remarked, "'Is this the great Doctor Gill?' The Doctor, immediately with the full strength of his voice, looking him in the face, and pointing him to the pulpit, said, 'Go up, and do better – Go up and do better.' This was answering a fool according to his folly. And the answer afforded gratification to all who heard it."[60] Gill knew how to lead with a firm hand when needed.

Lastly, the instruction and correction Gill offered throughout his ministry is attested to in his writings and publications. Throughout his ministry Gill completed over ten thousand pages of writing.[61] He preached multiple times a week[62] and spoke regularly at interdenominational gatherings that his members would frequently attend.[63] Gill wrote not as an scholar writing primarily to other scholars, though he interacted greatly with the Protestant Scholastics of his day; Gill wrote for his church. His *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* came to being first as sermons,[64] and selections of his "treatises on *The Trinity*, *Justification*, [and] the first two parts of *The Cause of God and Truth*" were born out of "his weekly preaching engagement at Great

[58] Ibid., 126.
[59] File, *John Gill's Ecclesiology with Reference to His Work: An Exposition of the Book of Solomon's Song Commonly Called Canticles*, 93.
[60] Rippon, *Life and Writings of the Rev, John Gill, D.D.*, 125.
[61] Anon, "Memoir," in *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, xxxi.
[62] Rippon, *Life and Writings of the Rev, John Gill, D.D.*, 130.
[63] Robert Oliver, "John Gill (1697-1771): His Life and Ministry" in *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697-1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Leiden: Brill Press, 1997), 36-39.
[64] Oliver, "John Gill (1697-1771): His Life and Ministry," 114-115.

Eastcheap."[65] Gill preached, lectured, wrote, and disciplined his flock that they might have been kept from stumbling and presented "blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy."[66]

Conclusion: John Gill as Churchman

Gill was first and foremost a pastor. He was truly the Baptist pastor-theologian par excellence. All of his theological endeavors were to the end of edifying the church. Whether by preserving orthodoxy through his teaching, or by guarding the sheep by moving them to exclude individuals deemed a threat to the cause of Christ or the membership of the church, Gill protected the hearts and minds of his people. To dissociate Gill's ecclesiology from his broader corpus of theology would be an effort in misunderstanding. Gill's ecclesiology was a loving and pastoral conclusion of his theology. Gill believed that "Doctrine and practice should go together in order both to know and do the will of God, instruction in doctrine and practice is necessary; and the one being first taught will lead on to the other."[67] His understanding of church discipline was no exception. By offering multiple interpretations of historically excommunication-oriented texts, Gill showed that exclusion from the body need not be the church's first reaction to sin in its midst, but truly it should be the last. In this way, Gill modeled the longsuffering necessary to be a pastor, deacon, or member of a church.

In conclusion, consider this analogy. Veli-Matti Karkkainen wrote this in his book *Pneumatology*:

> The times are gone when it was commonplace to say that the Holy Spirit is the Cinderella of the Trinity; when the other two "sisters" went to the ball, Cinderella was left at home. Nowadays, it will not do to speak about the Holy Spirit as the *theos agraptos* – the God about whom no one writes – as did Gregory of Nazianzus in the fourth

[65] Ibid., 37, and John Gill, *The Cause of God and Truth*, (Paris: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 2000). To further show the magnitude of Gill's work, see Rippon for a helpful historiography of Gill's publications, Rippon, *Life and Writings of the Rev, John Gill, D.D.*, 20-122.

[66] Jude 24, (ESV).

[67] Gill, *Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*, xxxv.

century, or as the "forgotten God," as did Catholic theologians of the nineteenth century.[68]

There has been a breadth of scholarship written on the Holy Spirit in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Therefore, it is no longer appropriate to speak of the Holy Spirit as "forgotten." Unfortunately, Gill remains a Baptist about whom few scholars write. To say he is a "Cinderella" among the Baptists would be an understatement. This is true for him broadly, and about his understanding and practice of church discipline in particular. Hopefully in the coming decades, as church discipline becomes even more paramount in an increasingly secular age, churchmen and scholars alike will turn to Gill as a convictional and steadfast example to follow.

[68] Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 16.

Midwestern Journal of Theology 21.2 (2022): 84-110

A Biblical Vision for Theological Higher Education [1]

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God predestined Christians "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:29).[2] This truth clarifies the need for Christian education, since, as John Kilner notes, "humanity's creation in the image of God concerns what people can become, based on who they are now."[3] With this, Jesus's call to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30) further calls for Christian education and justifies the concept of the theological college. From this perspective, Nathan Finn asserts:

> Christian higher education is a uniquely academic form of Christian discipleship that builds on and extends the formation that happens in local congregations, directing its application into many of the disciplines and professions to which believers are called. As such,

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[1] The author presented an earlier form of this address to the leaders of Rift Valley Theological College in Shashamene, Ethiopia, May 15, 2021. On the increasing priority of Christian education and theological colleges in non-Western contexts, see Joel A. Carpenter, Perry L. Glanzer, and Nicholas S. Lantinga, eds., *Christian Higher Education: A Global Reconnaissance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014). I thank my research assistants Brandon Benziger, Tyler Hall, and Charles Musil for their feedback and suggestions on this essay.

[2] Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural translations are from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007).

[3] John F. Kilner, "Made in the Image of God: Implications for Teaching and Learning," in *Christian Higher Education: Faith, Teaching, and Learning in the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. David S. Dockery and Christopher W. Morgan (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 103; cf. John F. Kilner, "Humanity in God's Image: Is the Image Really Damaged?," *JETS* 53 (2010): 301–17; John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).

> our schools are part of the mission of the triune God to redeem the lost and restore the created order to its original and ultimate intention to glorify him.[4]

Against this framework, the twenty-first century is experiencing a theological famine, even among professing evangelical churches.[5] Some estimate that eighty-five percent of church leaders worldwide today have no theological training, which usually invites false teaching, corruption, and shame.[6] Yet Paul's charge remains: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). Similarly, Jesus called his church to "make disciples of all nations," part of which includes "teaching them to obey all that I have commanded" (Matt 28:19–20).

Theological higher education is one of God's means today for helping local churches equip new generations of leaders who themselves can train others to treasure Christ and make him known throughout the world (2 Tim 2:2). Theological colleges (or seminaries) are also strategic mobilizing centers for worldview formation by which men and women become equipped with knowledge and wisdom to proclaim Christ's kingdom through word and deed in the domain of darkness (Eph 3:8–10; Col 1:13; 2:1–3).[7] These schools may be accredited or unaccredited, and

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[4] Nathan A. Finn, "Knowing and Loving God: Toward a Theology of Christian Higher Education," in *Christian Higher Education: Faith, Teaching, and Learning in the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. David S. Dockery and Christopher W. Morgan (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 55.

[5] David Bebbington synthesizes evangelical distinctives as biblicism (the authority of Scripture), conversionism (the need for regeneration), crucicentrism (cross-centerdness), and activism (esp. mission as disciple making). David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, 1st ed. (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2003), 1–19; David W. Bebbington, "About the Definition of Evangelicalism . . .," *Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals* 83 (2012): 1–6. See also the essays by Albert Mohler and Kevin Bauder in Andrew David Naselli and Collin Hansen, eds., *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

[6] Figure taken from https://trainingleadersinternational.org/85.

[7] This study uses the category of "theological college" for all post-secondary institutions (certificate, undergraduate, and graduate) centered on God's Word to equip Christians, train ministers, and clarify how God holds all things

they may be independent, denominational, or local church based. Regardless, faithful theological higher education can benefit Christ's universal church and serve as as an agent for extending the church's mission on earth. This conviction drives this study, which addresses the following six areas:

1. The place of theological higher education in church history
2. Scripture as the foundation of theological education
3. The supreme goal of theological higher education
4. The process of theological education
5. Objectives and assessment within theological education
6. Theological higher education and the church's mission

1. The Place of Theological Higher Education in Church History

Nathan Finn helpfully defines *theology* as "thinking rightly about God and his world for the sake of living rightly before God in his world."[8] The psalmist captures the essence of theology when he asserts his desire to dwell in Yahweh's house "to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and inquire in his temple" (Ps 27:4). By its nature, theology is different than any area of inquiry, for the study is less about investigating and more about receiving for a greater good. As Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), Prime Minister of the Netherlands, notes:

> Theology is a science which ... is distinguished from all other sciences by this fundamental point, that it does not occupy itself with the knowledge of the creature, but of the Creator; hence of a God who, as creator, cannot be included in the range of the creaturely.... In all other sciences man observes and thoughtfully investigates the object, and subjects it to himself, but in theology the object is active; it does not stand open, but gives itself to be seen; does not allow itself to be investigated, but reveals itself; and employs man as instrument only to cause the knowledge of its Being to radiate.... In giving us theology, God ... wills that the knowledge

together in Christ and the implications of this truth. People today commonly use the term "seminary" for graduate education devoted to training ministers of God's Word; the title comes from the Latin term meaning "plant nursery" (*seminarium*), which implies a breeding ground for fruitfulness.

[8] Finn, "Knowing and Loving God," 41.

> of his Being shall be received by us; and that, having been cast into the furrows of our minds and hearts, it shall germinate; and, having germinated, that is shall bear fruit to the honor of his name.[9]

The term "college" comes from a Latin term meaning "partnership" (*collegium*). From early days in the Medieval Era, colleges were educational organizations made up of people who partnered together to train for a common task or in a common discipline. In contrast, the term "university" derives from the Latin term meaning "the whole" (*universitas*), and the ancients originally linked the university to the study of God's universe in all its aspects. Already in the Middle Ages those in the West considered theology to be the queen of the sciences and the theological college (or seminary) to be at the center of the greater university.[10] The reason relates to the nature of revelation.

Specifically, to think rightly about God requires considering his two spheres of revelation––his works and words, the world and the Word. The Word is part of the world even as the theological college is part of the greater university. Yet always and properly the theological college ought to remain at the center of every other academic field because Jesus, the living Word, "fills all in all" (Eph 1:23) and "in him all things hold together" (Col 1:17) and because God's written Word most clearly and infallibly clarifies why this is so and what the implications are for every other aspect of reality––whether mathematics, science, music, philosophy, history, literature, or the like. Theological schools seek to train students to know and love the most important thing about every

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[9] Abraham Kuyper, "The Biblical Criticism of the Present Day," trans. J. Hendrik de Vries, *BSac* 61.243 (1904): 410–11.

[10] Bruce Shelley writes, "The supreme task of the [medieval] university was to understand and explain the light of God's revealed truth.... The chief doctrines of the Christian faith were regarded fixed. The purpose of discussion was to show the reasonableness of the doctrines and to explain their implications." Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 5th ed. (Nashville: Nelson, 2021), 66–67. Moreover, John Kilner helpfully observes: "Bringing Christ into the picture renders a Christian university a true university, in away that a secular university is not; for a true *univers*ity must be equipping students with a full *universe* of ideas rather than leaving out of consideration something as crucial as the one who holds the universe together (Col. 1:17)." Kilner, "Made in the Image of God," 113.

discipline––God, from whom, through whom, and to whom are all things (Rom 11:36).

With respect to God's works, Nehemiah praises: "You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you" (Neh 9:6). Yahweh declares, "I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God.... I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things" (Isa 45:7). In view of God's bigness, the Preacher urges: "Consider the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him" (Eccl 7:13–14). Right now, Jesus is speaking all things into being––the most distant stars and the smallest grains of barley, every rose petal and a swallow's song––indeed our every breath. "He upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Heb 1:3). If he stopped speaking, creation would stop existing (cf. Job 34:14–15).[11]

As for God's words, Jesus prays, "Sanctify them in your truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). Similarly, the apostles recognize that "all Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Tim 3:16) and that within the biblical text "men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 2:21). All God's words are "perfect ... sure ... right ... pure" (Ps 19:6–8). "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35), and by his precepts God gives life (Ps 119:93).

Only through God's Word do creatures rightly understand God's perspective on the world. Therefore, God's Word must stand at the center of theological higher education, informing all disciplines and embodying the highest priority of administrative, faculty, study, and financial resources. While so much education in our world has departed from God's Word as the central and unifying element to all disciplines, the warning of Martin Luther (1483–1546), seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation, continues to matter today:

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[11] On God's overarching sovereignty over his creation, see John Piper, *Providence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020).

> I would not advise anyone to send his son to a place where the Holy Scriptures do not come first. Every institution where the Word of God is not taught regularly must fail.... I greatly fear that the universities, unless they teach the Holy Scriptures diligently and impress them on the young students, are wide gates to hell.[12]

2. Scripture as the Foundation of Theological Education

Scripture must stand at the center of the theological school's curriculum and community, for Scripture is the only infallible guide for all human faith (doctrine) and practice (ethics).[13] As John Woodbridge attests, "Scripture, the central focus of which is Christ, constitutes a *norma normans* ('the determining norm'). It rules over all human opinions, church traditions, church doctrines, creeds, and academic disciplines ('science,' or natural philosophy; liberal arts)."[14] In Wayne

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[12] Martin Luther, *To the Christian Nobility* (1520), in *Luther's Works*, vol. 44, *Christian in Society I*, ed. James Atkinson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 202. For a number of overviews of how Luther's words have proved true, see James Tunstead Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2020); George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University Revisited: From Protestant to Postsecular* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[13] The "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy" (1978) states: "*Infallible* signifies the quality of neither misleading nor being misled and so safeguards in categorical terms the truth that Holy Scripture is a sure, safe, and reliable rule and guide in all matters. Similarly, *inerrant* signifies the quality of being free from falsehood or mistake and so safeguards the truth that Holy Scripture is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions. We affirm that canonical Scripture should always be interpreted on the basis that it is infallible and inerrant" (http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html).

[14] John D. Woodbridge, "The Authority of Holy Scripture: Commitments for Christian Higher Education in the Evangelical Tradition," in *Christian Higher Education: Faith, Teaching, and Learning in the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. David S. Dockery and Christopher W. Morgan (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 61.

Grudem's words, to speak of Scripture's authority means that "all the words of Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God."[15]

God's Word must be the core of theological higher education, for through it alone does Christ build his church (Matt 16:18) by enabling people to know God and to live for him in his world. Scripture is necessary for every stage of the Christian life in this age––rebirth, sanctification, and perseverance.

1. *Only through his Word does God grant rebirth in Christ, making saints out of sinners* (cf. Ps 119:93; Gal 3:2; Jas 1:18). Paul says, "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). Similarly, Peter tells his believing audience, "You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Pet 1:23).
2. *Only through his Word does God empower saints to greater holiness* (cf. Ps 119:50; 2 Pet 1:4). Thus, Jesus prays, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). Paul also notes how God's breathed-out Scripture is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16–17).
3. *Only through his Word does God sustain saints to glory* (cf. Deut 8:3; Rom 1:16; 2 Tim 3:15). Paul tells the Ephesian elders, "Now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

John Sailhamer has helpfully termed the theological school a "textual community."[16] He writes, "The central task of the seminary always remains the same––the interpretation of Scripture."[17] He adds, "By

[15] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 62.

[16] On the term "seminary," see footnote 7.

[17] John H. Sailhamer, "The Nature, Purpose, and Task of a Theological Seminary," in *The Seminary as a Textual Community: Exploring John*

viewing the written Word of God as a component in a larger whole of the seminary text-community, … all departments which participate in the seminary curriculum share the same theoretical task (interpretation of texts) and differ only with respect to the aspect of the social structure (text-community) where it is applied."[18] Significantly, a right and full understanding of Scripture is only possible when "spiritual people" engage the "spiritual truths" it embodies (1 Cor 2:13–14). That is, as Paul notes regarding the unbelieving Jews inability to read Moses's old covenant material rightly, "Their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away" (2 Cor 3:14). The theological college (or seminary) must be a truly *Christian* community.

Institutions of theological higher education serve the church and families for the sake of the broader world, all under God's Lordship in Christ. Because the church is the guardian of Scripture (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12, 14) with the principal responsibility of making disciples of Jesus (Matt 28:18–20), the theological college (or seminary) is accountable to the church to maintain theological faithfulness and to mobilize for the greater global mission of kingdom advance.[19] Furthermore, because local congregations provide context to see family instruction flourish and to see it completed into adulthood (e.g., Deut 6:6–7, 20–25; Ps 78:5–8; Eph 6:1–4), the theological school rightly supplies a context for aiding the most central components to Christian maturity, all within the broader academy and world. Figure 1 attempts to show how the theological college, centered on Scripture, serves both the church and wider world.

Sailhamer's Vision for Theological Education, ed. Ched Spellman and Jason K. Lee (Dallas: Fontes, 2021), 14–15; cf. 24.

[18] Sailhamer, "The Nature, Purpose, and Task of a Theological Seminary," 4; cf. 11.

[19] See Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011).

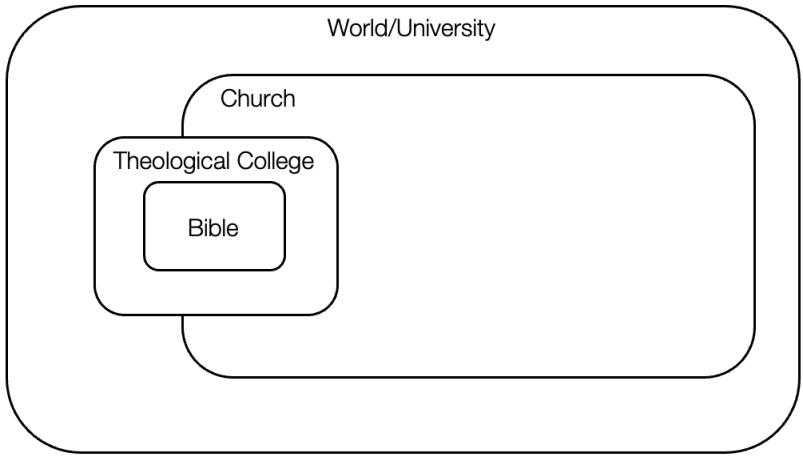

Figure 1. The Theological College (or Seminary) in Relation to the Church, World, and Scripture[20]

Finally, in a day when so many local congregations have untrained leaders, theological higher education bears the vital task of training new generations of ministers. Amid the rising waves of Protestant liberalism in the West and writing about the role theological schools to equip the church's ministers, Benjamin B. Warfield (1851–1921), Professor of Theology at Princeton Seminary, claims, "A low view of the functions of the ministry will naturally carry with it a low conception of the training

[20] A similar figure appears in Sailhamer, "The Nature, Purpose, and Task of a Theological Seminary," 27. Sailhamer writes, "The model of a seminary intersecting with the church rather than embedded within it is not only more flexible but also provides a wider base for fulfilling the seminary's legitimate commitments to other realms, such as Academia." Ibid., 39–40. Sailhamer's perspective stands against that of Philip R. Davies, *Whose Bible Is It Anyway?*, 2nd ed. (London: T&T Clark, 2004). For helpful responses to Davies, see Francis Watson, "Bible, Theology, and the University: A Response to Philip Davies," *JSOT* 21.71 (1996): 3–16; Mark W. Hamilton, "The Bible and the Common Good: Meditations on Teaching Scripture in the Christian University," *ResQ* 52 (2010): 193–206; George H. Guthrie, "The Study of Holy Scripture and the Work of Christian Higher Education," in *Christian Higher Education: Faith, Teaching, and Learning in the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. David S. Dockery and Christopher W. Morgan (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 84–88.

necessary for it."[21] If ministers are to be merely overseers of religious programs, agents designed to advance modern culture, or inspirational speakers, then certainly an intimate knowledge of Scripture is unnecessary. But if ministers are called to be specialists in God's Word and winsome advocates for the truth, everything changes. As Warfield says,

> If the minister is the mouth-piece of the Most High, charged with a message to deliver, to expound and enforce; standing in the name of God before men, to make known to them who and what this God is, and what his purposes of grace are, and what his will for his people [is]—then, the whole aspect of things is changed. Then, it is the prime duty of the minister to know his message; to know the instructions which have been committed to him for the people, and to know them thoroughly; to be prepared to declare them with confidence and with exactness, to commend them with wisdom, and to urge them with force and defend them with skill, and to build men up by means of them into a true knowledge of God and of his will, which will be unassailable in the face of the fiercest assault. No second-hand knowledge of the revelation of God for the salvation of a ruined world can suffice the needs of a ministry whose function it is to convey this revelation to men, commend it to their acceptance and apply it in detail to their needs.... For such a ministry ... nothing will suffice for it but to know; to know the Book; to know it first hand; and to know it through and through. And what is required first of all for training men for such a ministry is that the Book should be given them in its very words as it has come from God's hand and in the fulness of meaning, as that meaning has been ascertained by the labors of generations of men of God who have brought to bear upon it all the resources of sanctified scholarship and consecrated thought.[22]

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[21] Benjamin B. Warfield, "Our Seminary Curriculum," in *Benjamin B. Warfield: Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. John E. Meeter; 2 vols. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2001), 1:369 (orig. published in *The Presbyterian* [Sept 15, 1909], 7–8).

[22] Warfield, "Our Seminary Curriculum," 1:372.

Similarly, serving as Professor of New Testament at Princeton Seminary, J. Gresham Machen (1881–1937) stresses that a preacher is true to his calling only if he succeeds "in reproducing and applying the message of the Word of God."[23] That is, the Bible "is not merely one of the sources of the preacher's inspiration, but the very sum and substance of what he has to say. But if so, then whatever else the preacher need not know, he must know the Bible; he must know it first hand, and be able to interpret it and defend it."[24]

The living God has given the trustees, administrations, and faculty of theological colleges the sacred task of training leaders who can serve both the church and broader world by knowing God, by valuing him and those made in his image, and by faithfully proclaiming God's Word, guarding the truth, and shepherding God's flock. With respect to an elder in the church, Paul stresses how he "must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (Tit 1:9). Paul also tells Timothy, "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). Paul trained Timothy, whom the apostle commissioned to train others, who in turn would be equipped to train others. Four generations of teachers are mentioned in this single verse, and theological schools must serve churches by assisting in training "faithful men" who can train others also.[25]

Paul clarifies part of what he means by "faithfulness" later in the chapter: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2:15). There is a right way and a wrong way to handle God's Word,

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[23] J. Gresham Machen, "The Minister and His Greek Testament," in *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writers*, ed. D. G. Hart (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 211 (orig. published in *The Presbyterian* 88 [Feb 7, 1918]).

[24] Machen, "The Minister and His Greek Testament," 212.

[25] The apostles also rejoice in seeing Christian women equipped in God's Word. While stressing the need to maintain complementary roles within corporate worship (1 Cor 14:34–35; 1 Tim 2:12), they celebrate how Priscilla and Aquilla together taught Apollos in private (Acts 18:26), how Timothy's Jewish mother and grandmother trained him as a child in the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Tim 3:15; cf. 1:5), and how older women were to teach younger women (Tit 2:3–5).

and if you handle it in a way that God does not approve, you will be ashamed at the final judgment.[26]

Peter also says, "There are some things in [Paul's letters] that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures" (2 Pet 3:16). Institutions of higher theological education bear the high task of equipping men and women who are neither ignorant nor unstable but who wrestle hard with God's Word until they understand it. Peter further asserts, "Whoever speaks, [do so] as one who speaks oracles of God" (1 Pet 4:11). Christian teachers have authority only in so far as their words derive from, explicate, or apply God's Word––never going "beyond what is written" (1 Cor 4:6). Otherwise, the result will be our own destruction. As James warns, "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (Jas 3:1).

The Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is authoritative because "all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). In the prophetic writings, "men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1:20–21), and therefore the very words and not just the ideas come from God (1 Cor 2:13). And because the very words of the living God fill the Scriptures, every part "endures forever" (Ps 119:160) and is "pure" (12:6), "true" (119:142), and "right" (119:172). Part of the role of the theological college is to equip men and women who can declare "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), unveiling God's purposes culminating in Christ from creation to consummation.[27]

There is no greater need in this age than to faithfully proclaim and live out God's authoritative and inerrant Word. The Bible is foundational to all of life, and this demands that theological colleges (or seminaries)

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[26] Every minister does not need to study the Scriptures in the original languages, but some ministers in every generation must to preserve the integrity of the truth. For more on this, see Jason S. DeRouchie, "The Profit of Employing the Biblical Languages: Scriptural and Historical Reflections," *Them* 37 (2012): 32–50; cf. Enoch Okode, "A Case for Biblical Languages: Are Hebrew and Greek Optional or Indispensable?," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 29.2 (2010): 91–106.

[27] For more, see Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020).

have robust confessions of faith that root the school in the great evangelical Christian tradition, that clarify the common doctrine that is treasured, and that set the perspectival guard rails that no faculty member can cross.[28] The administrators and professors must be those whose teaching and scholarship aligns with Paul's resolve: "We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor 4:2). In service to Christ's church, theological institutions must "guard the deposit" God has entrusted to his disciples and avoid the type of "irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called 'knowledge'" (1 Tim 6:20; cf. 2 Tim 1:14).[29]

3. The Supreme Goal of Theological Higher Education

The Bible is foundational to theological training and is the means for seeing souls saved and sanctified. Yet the highest goal of theological education must ever remain to know Christ, be conformed into his likeness, and make him known. Paul says of his own mission: "We have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of [Christ's] name among all the nations" (Rom 1:5). The

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[28] Historically, the central tenets of the Great Tradition as testified to in the Nicene Creed (381), the Chalcedonian Definition (451), and, more recently, the Lausanne Covenant (1974) have supplied a unifying expression of core Christian doctrine. For an overview, see Finn, "Knowing and Loving God," 44–56. Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary where I teach is strongly a confessional institution that embraces the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*, the *Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, and the *Nashville Statement on Human Sexuality*. Theological colleges will help preserve doctrinal fidelity by hiring faculty whose ministries already prove their joyful and convictional affirmation of such statements of faith and by ensuring regularly that the faculty continue to joyfully uphold them.

[29] For more on Scripture's authority and place in all Christian education, see D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, eds., *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983); David S. Dockery, *Christian Scripture: An Evangelical Perspective on Inspiration, Authority and Interpretation* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995); D. A. Carson, ed., *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

mission of making disciples exist because worship doesn't.[30] One day there will be no more need for theological higher education, but worshiping Jesus––"for the sake of his name"––will last forever.

Education is a foundational aspect to all human existence. As those made in God's image, we are born to learn, to discover, to grow, and to know––all to display God's glory in Christ by resembling, representing, and reflecting him in this world. And all education should be Christian education, for learning, as with everything else, finds its source, context, and goal in Christ. "For by [the Son] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities––all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col 1:16–17). We are to "take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor 10:5), his word is to dwell richly in our hearts (Col 3:16), and we are to do all our words and deeds in his name (3:17). John Kilner rightly warns, "Teaching with no mention of Christ cultivates in students the view that there is secular truth and there is Christian truth, with Christ having no necessary relevance to secular truth."[31] Yet such is not the case.

Jesus holds everything in this world together––birds and bees, wind and waves, trash and transportation (Col 1:17). The quest to know what is true, therefore, is a quest ultimately to know more of Christ, who "upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Heb 1:3).

> Every star in the sky, every note that is sung,
> every bird that flies, and every game that is won ...
>
> Every business transaction made, every news broadcast recorded,
> every brick that is laid, and every sock that is sorted ...
>
> Jesus reigns at the bus stop and at the stop light,
> in the hospital and over the bomb-filled night.
>
> Whether on the playground or in the lab,
> in the bedroom or in the cab,

[30] Adapting a phrase from John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 15.
[31] Kilner, "Made in the Image of God," 112.

> Jesus Christ is preeminent, upholding and guiding everything. And because of this, knowing him is of surpassing worth.

Because Jesus is supreme over all things, Paul justly and necessarily approached all of life as Christian education: "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil 3:8). This quest did not separate him from the real world, but rather compelled him to see all things through Jesus. "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). On this verse, D. A. Carson writes:

> This does not mean that this was a new departure for Paul, still less that Paul was devoted to blissful ignorance of anything and everything other than the cross. No, what he means is that all he does and teaches is tied to the cross. He cannot long talk about Christian joy, or Christian ethics, or Christian fellowship, or the Christian doctrine of God, or anything else, without finally tying it to the cross. Paul is gospel-centered; he is cross-centered.[32]

The "whole counsel of God" that Scripture discloses magnifies the majesty of Jesus over all things. All history (Mark 1:14), the Mosaic law-covenant (Rom 10:4), and many prophetic predictions (Acts 3:18) point to Jesus, and in him every promise becomes Yes (2 Cor 1:20). Keeping God's word central requires that the theological college, and indeed the broader university, also keep Christ central since only through beholding his glory are we "being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (3:18).

Paul would say that coffee and peach cobbler supply opportunities to praise the Giver of what is good (1 Tim 4:3–4). "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31). Similarly, the apostle would say that life's pressures and worries become opportunities to thank God and pray. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phil 4:6). Furthermore, Paul would tell us that suffering enables us to rejoice in Christ's power to sustain. "But

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[32] D. A. Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 37–38.

[the Lord] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor 12:9). John Piper rightly notes:

> God created the world and inspired the Scriptures and is guiding history to its consummation for one ultimate purpose, namely, to share with his creatures the ultimate pleasure that he has in admiring his Son, the radiance of his own glory (Heb 1:3). Therefore, the ultimate reason that [theological education] exists is to live and teach in such a way that students will see Jesus in every subject as infinitely admirable and thus to share in the pleasure that God has in admiring the glory of his Son, and then be equipped to spread that everywhere.[33]

The educational task of higher theological education must be more than giving people tools that will enable them to live, as if something in this temporary earthly sphere was the ultimate end. No, *the Lord establishes theological institutions to provide students with those things that make life worth living*––to give them a biblical vision of reality for Jesus's glory, to help them grasp the treasure of the gospel in their jar of clay, and to empower them through skill training, instruction, and modeling to study, practice, and teach God's Word throughout God's world in a way that will honor the One who has spoken and mobilize others to do the same.[34] Faculty must teach students to think about truth, values, and worldview in relation to Christ, and from this framework to consider how any subject matter bears on people's lives. As

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[33] John Piper, "The Consummation of History and the Admiration of Christ," Inaugural Convocation Address, October 3, 2010, Bethlehem College & Seminary, https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-consummation-of-history-and-the-admiration-of-christ.

[34] Speaking out against the secularization of Christian education, Machen declared in 1918, "The real trouble with the modern exaltation of 'practical' studies at the expense of the humanities is that it is based upon a vicious conception of the whole purpose of education. The modern conception of the purpose of education is merely intended to enable a man to live, but not to give him those things that make life worth living." Machen, "The Minister and His Greek Testament," 211.

Dockery notes, "Faculty … should be encouraged to explore how the truth of the Christian faith bears on all disciplines."[35] He continues:

> The Christian faith, informed by scriptural interpretation, theology, philosophy, and history, has bearing on every subject and academic discipline. While at times the Christian's research in any field might follow similar paths and methods as secularists, doxology at both the beginning and ending of one's teaching and research marks the works of believers from that of secularists.[36]

Only with such a perspective will the theological college truly strengthen the church and be part of extending Christ's kingdom.

4. The Process of Theological Education

Every theological college must develop in at least three spheres, as represented in the resolve of the priest-scribe Ezra. In Ezra's day, as in our own, there was a great need for spiritual leadership. We are told that Ezra was "a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses" (Ezra 7:6). We then read that the Persian king granted Ezra's every request and that his ministry flourished "because the [good] hand of the LORD his God was upon him" (7:6, 9). Ezra 7:10 then provides the reason for this divine favor: "For Ezra had set his heart to study and practice Yahweh's law, and to teach both statute and rule in Israel" (author's translation). Study → Practice → Teach … in that order. This was the nature and process of Ezra's approach to education, and each stage grew out of his commitment to God's Word.[37]

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[35] David S. Dockery, "Christian Higher Education: An Introduction," in *Christian Higher Education: Faith, Teaching, and Learning in the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. David S. Dockery and Christopher W. Morgan (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 30.

[36] Dockery, "Christian Higher Education," 33.

[37] The discussion that follows develops the three stages of Ezra's resolve using six habits of mind and heart found first in John Piper, *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 191–98. These include observing, understanding, evaluating, feeling, applying, expressing. I have adapted them here and linked them to the order of Ezra's resolve. See also Guthrie, "The Study of Holy Scripture and the Work of Christian Higher Education."

Study

Institutions of theological higher education must seek to equip men and women *to study* God's Word. If theology concerns thinking rightly about God to display God faithfully, Dockery is correct that a key task of theological schools is to nurture "Christian thinking and thinking Christianly, learning to think carefully, creatively, and critically, seeking to engage the academy and the culture."[38] The principle object of inquiry is Scripture, and professors must teach students how to observe carefully what the text says and how it says it. Then one must understand rightly and evaluate fairly. These three elements of study––observing, understanding, evaluating––should guide all spheres of education, whether the object of inquiry is the Word or the broader world. Yet in relation to Scripture, these three activities involve a movement from exegesis to theology.

In exegesis, one assesses the genre, structure, grammar, and historical and literary contexts of a given passage. Then in shaping theology, one considers how the passage contributes to the Bible's storyline climaxing in Christ (biblical theology), what the passage teaches with respect to doctrine (systematic theology), and how the passage relates to today (practical theology).[39] Study is about observing carefully, understanding rightly, and evaluating fairly, and professors across the range of theological disciplines must create assignments that help students study well.

Practice

Next, the theological college (or seminary) must equip men and women *to practice* the truth of God's Word by helping them feel appropriately in accordance with the truths they have studied and apply wisely all that has been observed, understood, and evaluated. Jesus regularly tagged the religious leaders of his day "hypocrites" (e.g., Matt 15:7; 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29, 51) because "faith apart from works is useless" (Jas 2:20). John Kilner affirms that "character development and

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[38] Dockery, "Christian Higher Education," 29.

[39] For more on this process, see Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017); Andrew David Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017).

faith formation must have their place alongside intellectual growth as aims of Christian higher education."[40]

For example, Paul says, "Note then the kindness and severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off" (Rom 11:22). Paul's words are a warning, and having studied them, our first step in applying them is feeling appropriately. We should fear the Lord, and then we must flee from wickedness. God takes sin seriously, and so should we!

The psalmist declares, "[Yahweh's] delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love" (Ps 147:10–11). Can you stand in awe of the fact that the God who made heaven and earth would take pleasure in you? And having felt this awe, may you fear him, hoping in his unchanging and never-ending love.

Teach

Finally, the theological college must equip men and women *to teach* the truths of the Word to a world in need. This teaching can come through sermons, but it also appears in books, podcasts, Sunday school lessons, counseling appointments, coffee meetings, etc. Students must learn to express in speech and writing all that they have studied and practiced and to do so in ways that others can know and enjoy the accuracy, clarity, truthfulness, preciousness, and helpfulness of the truths.

Synthesis

Paul elevates character traits in his requirements for the "noble task" of overseer/elder in God's church:

> Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's

[40] Kilner, "Made in the Image of God," 109.

> church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (1 Tim 3:2–7).

Paul supplies a similar account in Titus 1:6–9. Considering this, George Guthrie is correct that Christian higher education must seek "to advance the kingdom of God through thinking and living Christianly in and about the world. Faithful teaching should lead to faithful being, both for the teacher and the student in Christian higher education."[41]

Far too many teachers engage in their task before having adequately studied, often resulting in them speaking things God never said and thus elevating their authority over God's. Others start teaching before having personally applied God's Word, and by this they become hypocrites promoting holiness with their lips when their own hearts are far from God. Still others apply without having studied, and by this they allow their own definitions of right and wrong to guide their conduct rather than God's revealed Word.

The Lord's good hand gave favor to Ezra because he studied, practiced, and taught God's Word. This pattern of theological education has long guided my own approach to ministry, and I commend it here. The theological college (or seminary) must help students (1) observe carefully, (2) understand rightly, (3) evaluate fairly, (4) feel appropriately, (5) act wisely, and (6), express effectively.[42]

5. Objectives and Assessment within Theological Education

As noted, local churches complement family discipleship and extend it into adulthood, and theological institutions serve churches in this task. Because the human family provides a pattern for the household of God (e.g., 1 Tim 3:4–5, 15), God's instructions to the kingdom-community at large can help clarify the function of the theological school.

Theological education needs biblically grounded objectives that provide measures for assessing students' growth. Psalm 78:5–8 supplies

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[41] Guthrie, "The Study of Holy Scripture and the Work of Christian Higher Education," 99.

[42] See Piper, *Think*, 191–98 for a development of all six of these habits of heart and mind.

four such objectives and provides a helpful starting place for education seeking Christ's glory.

> [Yahweh] established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, *so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers*, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God. (Ps 78:5–8)

With a vision of equipping generations to know what is true and the One who is truth, Psalm 78:7–8 declares that parents should teach youth God's instruction so that they would (1) set their hope in God, (2) remember the works of God, (3) follow the ways of God, and (4) remain faithful to God. In seeking the obedience of faith for the sake of Christ's name among all the nations (Rom 1:5), theological colleges must seek to develop students who hope, remember, follow, and remain faithful.

Hoping in God

Paul says, "Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom 15:4). Left to itself, the world is without hope, but in God through Christ there is living hope (1 Pet 1:3). All the promises of God are "Yes" in Jesus (2 Cor 1:20), and all authority in the universe belongs to Jesus (Matt 28:18). Therefore, *all things* are possible with God. Reconciliation after a broken relationship is possible *because of Jesus*. Healing can come after deep loss *because of Jesus*. Sustaining grace in suffering can be found *because of Jesus*. In every theological school, professors must enter the classroom with the Bible open to help students gain hope in God, and to instill with them a message of hope for a broken world.

Remembering the Works of God

God gives his Word so that we can know and remember what he has done. History manifests God's works, and his Word is the inspired and authoritative guide for understanding rightly how to perceive them. Both

the Word and the world are essential for knowing God, and remembering his works is central to who we are to be as humans. Judges warns how quickly people can forget God: "And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel" (Judg 2:10). God's call to theological institutions, therefore, is to train men and women who know who God is and what he has done. "Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor 10:11). "Consider the work of God!" (Eccl 7:13).

Our eternity rides on whether we recognize and delight in God as Creator, Judge, and Redeemer. When we forget that God designs trees and trout and taxi cabs to get us to Jesus, we put ourselves in danger, for Paul declares that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who ... did not honor ... God or give thanks to him" (Rom 1:18, 21). When we fail to embrace that God purposes tsunamis and tumors and torture to get us to Jesus, we miss that Christ's power is magnified in our weakness (2 Cor 12:9–10) and that "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21).

The theological college (or seminary) must determine to raise up a generation of men and women who remember their Creator (Eccl 12:1)––the "God who makes everything" (11:5)––and honor him accordingly.

> Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Rom 11:33–36)

Following the Ways of God

Theological students must follow God's ways. "As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet 1:15–16). As the theological school assists Christ's church in making disciples, the college (or seminary) faculty must teach students to obey all that Jesus commanded (Matt 28:20). The goal is not merely to instruct; we instruct to see people obey. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). Jesus prays, "Keep them from the evil one," and then he

says, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:15, 17). Holiness grows as we connect with the Word of truth, and the enemy is overcome through the Word of truth.[43] Through Scripture we encounter Jesus, and as we behold his glory, we "are transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18). Through their lives and profession, may faculty members proclaim to their students: "This is the will of God: your sanctification" (1 Thess 4:3). And may we all live with the recognition that there is a "holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14).

Remaining Faithful to God

Finally, the psalmist urges readers not to be like their "stubborn and rebellious" fathers "whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God" (Ps 78:8). Moses confronted his generation who continually complained amid suffering and longed to return to the "ease" of slavery in Egypt. He declares to them, "You are a stubborn people," and then asserts, "From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD" (Deut 9:6–7). Jesus notes how some "hear the word," "endure for a while," and "then when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away" (Mark 4:16–17). Still others "hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful" (4:18–19).

Thanks be to God that "you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers … with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet 1:18–19). In Jesus, new trajectories are set, such that "our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brough to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin" (Rom 6:6).

The history of Christianity is wrought with failures of leaders like Demas who, "in love with this present world" (2 Tim 4:10), fall away just as "the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire" (2 Pet 2:22). "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us" (1 John 2:19).

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[43] See Jason S. DeRouchie, "Greater Is He: A Primer on Spiritual Warfare for Kingdom Advance," *SBJT* 25.2 (2021): 21–55.

In contrast, faculty and administrators of theological schools must, with Moses, choose "to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin" (Heb 11:25). Moses "considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward" (11:26), and this should be the witness and the charge of every Christian educator. The author of Hebrews urges,

> Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. (Heb 3:12–14)

With this, "[God] has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire" (2 Pet 1:4). "Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life" (Rom 6:22). May institutions of theological higher education be tenaciously committed to remaining faithful to God, preserving truth, nurturing love, and valuing integrity that seeks Christ's glory above all else.

6. Theological Higher Education and the Church's Mission

In "making disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19), the church's quest is "to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of [Christ's] name among all the nations" (Rom 1:5).[44] Missions for the sake of the Messiah's glory is a key goal of "the gospel of God … concerning his Son" (1:1–3), and it must be a core component not only within the curriculum but also in the fabric of the faculty of any theological college (or

[44] The phrase "the obedience of faith" probably means "the obedience that always flows from faith" progressively over time. So, e.g., Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 79–82; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 40; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, NICNT, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 50–51.

seminary).[45] As Bruce Ashford remarks, "Higher education should be treated as a significant part of the Christian mission and a strategic component of Christian cross-cultural missions."[46] Students in theological colleges should be awakened to God's heart for the nations for the sake of worship in courses devoted to biblical and theological studies, church history, biblical counseling, preaching, ethics, music, *and* missions.

By his blood Christ "ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). Believing this truth, theological colleges must instill a Christological global vision within students marked by the conviction that to "understand the Scriptures" testifies to a message of the Messiah and missions: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sin should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:45–47; cf. Acts 26:22–23).

Every theological institution's academic program should develop a rich theology of tribulation that equips men and women to "rejoice" in suffering for the sake of the church, to "toil" to "make the word of God fully known," and to proclaim Christ by "warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom" so as to "present everyone mature in Christ" (Col 1:24–29). The curriculum should motivate some to become Paul-like frontier missionaries (Rom 15:2; cf. 2 Cor 10:16), others to be Apollos-like follow-up missionaries (1 Cor 3:5–6; cf. Acts 18:27–28), and still others to be Timothy-like long-term discipling-shepherd missionaries (1

[45] Making disciples of Jesus (Matt 28:19) and bearing witness to him (Acts 1:8) comprise the church's distinctive mission. See Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); cf. Timothy Keller, "The Gospel and the Poor," *Them* 33.3 (2008): 8–22. See also Jason S. DeRouchie, "By the Waters of Babylon: Global Missions from Genesis to Revelation," *MJT* 20.2 (2021): 6–30.

[46] Bruce Riley Ashford, "Missions, the Global Church, and Christian Higher Education," in *Christian Higher Education: Faith, Teaching, and Learning in the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. David S. Dockery and Christopher W. Morgan (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 525–26.

Tim 1:3; cf. Acts 16:1).[47] Yet still others should be motivated to help shape local churches that are mobilizing centers that send others "in a manner worthy of God" and "support" them (3 John 6b–8). Such support includes helping missionaries through advocacy and financial provision (Rom 15:24; 1 Cor 9:11; Gal 6:6; Tit 3:13) and contributing financially to the needs of those they are serving (Rom 15:25–27; 2 Cor 8:1–5; 9:2, 6–15). Through such means churches and missionaries become partners in the gospel (Phil 1:5) and "fellow workers for the truth" (3 John 8).[48] Faithful theological higher education must embrace God's heart for the nations and awaken within ministers-in-training a recognition that they will be goers, senders, or disobedient.

Conclusion

Theology ever remains the queen of the sciences, and theological educational institutions maintain their vital place in partnering with local churches in equipping men and women who can train others to treasure Christ and make him known. The theological college (or seminary) must be an educational institution guided by studying, practicing, and teaching God's Word before a world in desperate need of its life-changing power. Students must learn to study by observing carefully, understanding rightly, and evaluating fairly. They must then practice by feeling appropriately what they have observed, understood, and evaluated, and then by acting wisely. Finally, they must teach what

[47] Paul planted the church in Corinth (Acts 18:1–17), and after he left, Apollos ministered there (19:1; cf. 1 Cor 3:5–6). In Ephesus, Apollos showed up first (Acts 18:24–28) and was followed by Paul (19:1), whose ministry resulted in "all the residents of Asia hear[ing] the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (19:10). That Paul stayed in Ephesus for three years (Acts 20:31), declaring the kingdom and proclaiming the whole counsel of God (20:25, 28) shows that his goal was not simply reaching but teaching to "present everyone mature in Christ" (Col 1:28). Such truths must color our understanding of his driving vision for frontier missions (Rom 15:2), which itself must include the planting of healthy churches (Eph 4:11–14). In contrast, Timothy left his home in Lystra (Acts 16:1), traveled with Paul for a time doing missionary work in various places (16:3–5), and then with Paul's encouragement settled away from his home in Ephesus to shepherd the young church (1 Tim 1:3) after its founding with its own outreach (Acts 19:10) and elders (20:17).

[48] See John Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission: Promoting the Gospel with More Than Our Lips* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

they have observed, understood, evaluated, felt, and obeyed, and they must do so in compelling and faithful ways. And you will know that your educational process is effective as you see students hoping in God, remembering God's works, following God's ways, and remaining faithful. May Christ's church be the frontrunner in seeking to curb this world's theological famine, and may God raise up or reform many institutions of theological higher education to aid churches in seeking the obedience of faith for the sake of Christ's name among all the nations.[49]

[49] In my first pastorate, I created and oversaw a non-accredited theological institute within a local church; to consider what this could look like, see J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B&H Books, 2020). I also was a founding faculty member at Bethlehem College & Seminary, which is a church-based, accredited school; for its biblical foundations, see Piper, *Think*, and https://bcsmn.edu/. My present institution, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, is part of the Southern Baptist Convention and has undergone its own reboot and reformation; for the story, see Jason K. Allen, *Turnaround* (Nashville: B&H Books, 2022).

Midwestern Journal of Theology 21.2 (2022): 111-119

The One and Only?

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In the early 1990s Chesney Hawkes famously sang: 'I am the one and only / Nobody I'd rather be / I am the one and only / You can't take that away from me.' These lyrics could easily serve as the anthem of modern culture. They describe a philosophy—a belief—imbibed by every person. We are our own gods. We all like to think that we are the one and only. More, we all act as if we are the one and only.

According to the biblical worldview, however, a single voice should be permitted to declare 'I am the one and only', and it is not Chesney Hawkes's—it is God's. Nevertheless, Chesney Hawkes's lyrics effectively summarize the content of Deuteronomy 4:32–40. In this segment of Deuteronomy God, through Moses, communicates that he alone is the One and Only. It is expressed explicitly twice. In verse 35 Moses declares that 'the LORD is God; there is no other besides him', and in verse 39 this sentiment is elaborated slightly as Moses explains: 'the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.' In other words, Moses is declaring that God is the One and Only. In fact, it may be argued that this is not simply the message of this passage, but the book of Deuteronomy in its entirety.[1]

The aim in this article is to apply this reality to the relationship between a pastor and his congregation. As much as we may wish to pretend, pastors are not above the temptation to believe: 'I am the one and only for this church.' Perhaps that thought is formulated verbally in an interview, or uttered behind closed doors. But the danger is real. It is, however, equally present for a congregation, especially one searching for a pastor. In attempting to attract a new pastor (or keep a good pastor)

[1] Mark Dever, The Message of the Old Testament: Promises Made (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 156, 'In Deuteronomy, God's uniqueness shines out. This book is about the only God who is.'

congregations undoubtedly put their best side forward. Whether audibly or inaudibly they are communicating that they are the one and only. I have known both of these temptations having served as a pastor and now as a lay elder in a congregation seeking a pastor. I found two truths in Deuteronomy 4 extremely helpful in recalibrating my desire to be the one and only, and in the remainder of this article they will be applied to this temptation.

This article originated as a sermon I preached at a pastor's induction service. In the knowledge that I would find myself standing before a freshly minted pastor and his excited congregation I wanted to offer biblical wisdom for maintaining a good and godly relationship. What is the most important thing that both parties needed to hear? My answer came from Deuteronomy 4: God is the One and Only.

God is the One and Only Source of Salvation

The first truth that Deuteronomy 4 asserts is that the God of the Bible is the one and only source of salvation. In a Christian context this assertion may appear somewhat obvious. It is all too frequently forgotten, however. Often God's people live as if it is not true. For this reason it is not surprising to find that the climax of Moses's first speech in Deuteronomy reasserts that God alone is the source of salvation.[2]

The passage begins with Moses drawing attention to a 'great thing': 'For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of' (Deut. 4:32). The climax of Moses's first speech in Deuteronomy offers an invitation for his hearers and readers to explore 'the whole panorama of human history, within the limits—but to the extremities—of time and space, to see whether anything similar to Israel's experience of God had been known before.'[3] Moses's hearers and

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[2] On reading Deuteronomy as consisting of speeches by Moses see, William S. LaSor, David A. Hubbard, and Frederic W. Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 111–13; Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, Second Edition (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007), 102.

[3] Peter C. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 142.

readers are invited to engage in a research project truly cosmic in scale.[4] The implication is clear, however, that no matter how high and low, long and deep, fervent and frequent the search, nothing comparable to this 'great thing' can be found.

Moses does not permit his hearers and readers to get lost in this expansive search. He offers a number of pointers to aid the task of identifying it. He points out that this 'great thing' resulted in God taking a nation for himself (v. 34). It included being rescued from slavery by being brought out of Egypt (v. 37). Finally, it culminates in the granting of a land to this nation brought out of Egypt (vv. 38, 40). Given these indicators it is unmistakable that Moses is referencing Israel's redemption from Pharaoh's grip in Egypt—the Exodus. At the very least, then, the 'great thing' that Moses draws attention to here encapsulates the Plagues, the Red Sea, the Ten Commandments, the erection of the Tabernacle and the Wilderness Wanderings. As even a cursory survey of the biblical narratives of these events evidence, 'Israel's experience of salvation is without parallel or analogy in all of human history.'[5]

Noteworthy is the reality that Israel's experience is not good fortune or delightful coincidence. It is a direct result of a conscious decision by God himself. Moses makes this much clear: 'And because he loved your fathers and chose their offspring after them and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence' (v. 37). God both loved and chose Israel. He then acted. These verbs suggest that among all the great things that God has done for his people, the greatest is the giving of himself in relationship with them. He is both the source and goal of their salvation.

The relevance of this truth in Deuteronomy 4 to the relationship between a pastor and his congregation has been painfully illustrated in Christianity Today's podcast *The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill*.[6] Christian media outlets, social media and the podcast world was set alight in the summer of 2021 with the release of this podcast that traced the story of Mars Hill Church, Seattle which was founded, led and eventually dissolved by Mark Driscoll. While Driscoll was the foil for the storytelling, the aim of the podcast did not appear to be to attack an

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[4] Cf. Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, NIBCOT (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 55: 'A research project is proposed of truly cosmic scale'.
[5] Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 142.
[6] Mike Cosper, 'The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill', 2021, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/podcasts/rise-and-fall-of-mars-hill/.

individual but rather hold up a mirror to the wider evangelical world. The provocative question it posed was: 'Why do we consistently seek out and celebrate deeply flawed Christian leaders?'

I would push the question a little further: why do Christians persist in empowering and trusting celebrity pastors for our salvation? This is not to suggest that people prayed to Driscoll or acknowledged verbally that he possessed any salvific power. Nevertheless, Driscoll's placement on a pedestal before his demise communicated the subtle mindset that as long as Driscoll is kept front and centre everything at Mars Hill will be fine.

Perhaps that last sentence cuts a little close to home. Maybe during a period of vacancy it has been said that things will move along once there is a pastor in place—once a pastor arrives everything will be fine. Deuteronomy 4 is a helpful passage in recalibrating this kind of thinking. It challenges its reader about where their ultimate trust is placed.

Congregation, your pastor is not your saviour. It is a good thing to have a pastor. It is a blessing to employ a godly and gifted man to set aside time to pray and preach for a congregation, to visit and counsel people—to shepherd the sheep. Indeed, it is likely to bless and benefit the church, grow ministries and spread the gospel. In the end, it is God's design for a local church (cf. 1 Tim. 5:17–18). But the pastor is not your saviour. To treat him as such will ultimately break him and ruin the congregation. Deuteronomy 4 would counsel congregations to temper expectations of what a pastor can do. God is the one and only source of salvation, and he remains so whether or not a congregation has a pastor.

Equally, pastor, it is necessary to repeat that you are not the congregation's saviour. Although it is tremendous that after spending time, money and effort in training for ministry, and that after such an investment a church confirms the internal call with an external call, it remains dangerous territory. It is far too easy for a messianic complex to develop in a pastor.[7] Any pastor, therefore, would do well to remind themselves that they are not their congregation's saviour. Pastors do not have the ability to draw people out of darkness into Christ's kingdom of light; pastors do not have the ability to sanctify people, making them

[7] As Jared C. Wilson, *The Pastor's Justification: Applying the Work of Christ in Your Life and Ministry* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 60 highlights, 'Pride is a poison most effective in pastors.' Cf. the chapter entitled 'Self-Glory' in, Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: The Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 167–81.

holier. Meditating on this truth and its implications will do two things for pastors. First, it will foster humility. Second, it will offer release from the pressure to make things happen.

The one and only source of salvation, for both pastor and congregation alike, is the God of the Bible. This is a precious truth that is distinctive to Christianity. 'The concept that God has actually entered into history is a unique biblical doctrine.'[8] Moses makes this argument in Deuteronomy 4 by pointing back to the paradigmatic Old Testament image of salvation: the Exodus. Today the argument can be made by pointing back to God come in the flesh, giving his life for ours on a cross. As Peter declares: 'there is salvation in no one else' (Acts 4:12). Truly the God of the Bible is the one and only source of salvation; truly God is our one and only source of salvation. It is therefore imperative in the dynamic between pastor and people that this truth in Deuteronomy 4 is recalled.

The One and Only Source of Truth

The second truth that Deuteronomy 4 asserts is that the God of the Bible is the one and only source of truth. Among all religions Christianity has one of the most sophisticated doctrines of Scripture. Christians contend that our Holy Book enjoys dual authorship (human and divine), has been composed across thousands of years and in a variety of geographical locations and yet tells one story of one God redeeming one people for his own glory. This sophisticated doctrine of Scripture holds true not just for Christians today, but also for the people of Moses's day. Craigie highlights that 'The knowledge of God for the Israelites sprang from God's revelation of himself in word and in deed.'[9]

In the first section of this article God's deeds have been given attention—the 'great thing' referenced in Deuteronomy 4:32. Now attention must be given to the way in which Moses emphasizes God's words. Moses reminds his hearers that they have heard the voice of God (vv. 33, 36). In this climax to Moses's first speech, then, the people are reminded of one of Israel's greatest privileges: belonging to a God who speaks. Moreover, Israel's God not only speaks but they have heard what he had to say—and live to testify! This is a privilege all too often taken

[8] LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 124–25.
[9] Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 143.

for granted, as evidenced by the Bibles gathering dust on our bookshelves.

The privilege does not end with the mere utterance of words, however. In this passage Moses clearly connects the word of God to the presence of God. It was out of the fire that the voice was heard (vv. 33, 36). Fire is symbolic of God's presence.[10] Throughout the Old Testament fire repeatedly symbolizes God's presence: Moses hears God's voice at the burning bush (Exod. 3); Israel are led through the wilderness by God in the Pillar of Fire (Exod. 13:22); the altar holds fire (Lev. 1:7); and, fire frequently accompanies appearances of the Angel of the LORD (cf. Jdg. 6:21). In the New Testament tongues of fire appear over the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, again symbolizing God's presence (Acts 2). God's presence is symbolized by fire throughout Scripture.

In pastoral conversations I am often asked what should be done if God tells an individual to do something that is contrary to God's word. My answer to this question is: he won't. God is present in his word. Do not misunderstand, the physical book is not divine. The words it contains, however, are the very words of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). The presence of God's very words establishes the presence of God himself.

Together, in Deuteronomy 4, the word of God and the presence of God result in demonstrations of power:

> has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? . . . And because he loved your fathers and chose their offspring after them and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power, driving out before you nations greater and mightier than yourselves, to bring you in, to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is to this day. (vv. 34, 37–38).

The one and only source of salvation explains and demonstrates that he is also the one and only source of truth. When running an ongoing evangelistic ministry in church for young teenagers I ensured that there was a gospel presentation each week. The young people complained that

[10] Cf. Block, *Deuteronomy*, 143.

they were tired of hearing the same old thing every week. Some of the older volunteers wisely replied that given the gospel is the most important thing these young people would ever hear we would unashamedly continue to tell them the same old thing every week. The truth of the gospel was reiterated week on week.

For the pastor the temptation is to intrigue the congregation with wonderful things in the Bible they see, some of them put there by you and by me. Given God is the one and only source of truth, pastors should never tire of giving their congregation the Bible. Week after week the congregation need the same thing: God's word. In Deuteronomy God's word is not only audible, but written: 'In Deuteronomy the word of God is authoritative and it is written.'[11] Furthermore, 'God's word in the book is not only the written documents that govern life under the covenant; it is also the authoritative preaching and teaching of Moses and those who would come after him.'[12] No matter how funny, engaging, intelligent or thoughtful a pastor is, his words are not enough. Just as we would not feed a goldfish with dog food, so pastors should not feed congregations with their own musings.

One commentator suggests that the very structure of Deuteronomy 4:32–40 offers something of a blueprint for preaching. Block observes:

This passage offers pastors a paradigm for preaching, not only in its content, but also in its proportion. In a text consisting of 163 words, Moses uses 109 to tell the story of Israel's historical experience of grace; he uses 26 to reflect theologically on those events; and then he concludes with 26 words of application. This paradigm contrasts with much contemporary evangelical preaching, which, in its drive to be practical, fails to develop the story of God's gracious redemption (or tells it in hurried and passionless tones) and consequently also fails to show the theological implications of that story. Instead we spend our time on pointed but trite and facile application.

This text reminds us that our ethic must derive from our theology, which in turn derives from the memory of God's gracious intervention in human history.[13]

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[11] Longman III and Dillard, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 116.
[12] Longman III and Dillard, 116.
[13] Block, *Deuteronomy*, 147.

Pastor, never tire of re-telling the old, old story of Jesus and his love.

For the congregation the temptation to develop itching ears must be actively combatted—never tire of hearing the same thing again and again. As your pastor opens God's word week by week resist the temptation to complain like the children of Israel: the pastor gives us nothing but manna—nothing but the miraculous provision of God! Do not encourage your pastor to pursue every new fad or trend. Do not encourage him to offer commentary on every news story. Call your pastor to teach God's word. God is the one and only source of truth and he has given it to us in Scripture.

Of Primary Importance

Paul describes the gospel 'as of first importance' (1 Cor. 15:3). This passage in Deuteronomy is delivered by Moses on the edge of the Promised Land. After the excitement of the Exodus, the weariness of the wilderness and the eagerness to enter the Promised Land, God's people are finally going to experience all for which they have longed. Before the joy of entering this Promised Land, however, Moses delivers that which is of primary importance: Israel's God is the one and only source of salvation and truth. This is the gospel of first importance in Old Testament form.

When it comes to the relationship between a pastor and his congregation, especially a new pastor commencing a new ministry, these key truths from Deuteronomy 4 need reiterating. The headline over any ministry should be that God is the One and Only. He is the one and only source of salvation and the one and only source of truth. In short, together a pastor and his congregation must be looking constantly to Jesus and Scripture. If either of these ingredients are missing disaster beckons.

It is quite possible that given the complexities of pastoral ministry and human relationships that all of this sounds somewhat simplistic. To that end let Benton's comments illuminate the profound effect such simplicity may have: 'Things which seem pathetic at the time, under God's gracious hand, bear fruit.'[14] A church and a pastor that do nothing else but grasp Jesus and the Bible may at first glance appear a little

[14] John Benton, 'Out of the Blue', *Evangelicals Now*, 2021, https://www.e-n.org.uk/2021/08/regular-columns/out-of-the-blue/.

pathetic, out of touch, irrelevant even. But under God's gracious hand might bear much fruit. God's salvation and truth are of primary importance

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***Go Now To Shiloh: A Biblical Theology of Sacred Space*. By N. Blake Hearson. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020. 174 pp. $29.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8054-4883-2.**

The topic of sacred space is a concept of great importance in Old Testament Theology and is examined from a biblical theological standpoint in Blake Hearson's book, *Go Now to Shiloh: A Biblical Theology of Sacred Space*. Hearson, who holds a Ph.D. from Hebrew Union College and currently serves as a professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has published other material on sacred space previously and contributes this book as an additional resource for both academicians and lay-persons alike.

In this book Hearson describes sacred space as the parameters within which God and humanity can interact with an elevated emphasis on the idea of "communication." Beginning with the Garden of Eden and the fall of man, the ease of communication is disrupted because of sin and becomes subject to God's self-revelation (p. 6). In passages like Exodus 20:24, God instructs the Israelites to wait on Him to initiate communication through the places where He causes His "name to be remembered" (p.17). This template highlights the complicated nature of human communion with YHWH as they were strictly limited to His designated places and timing. Furthermore, sacred spaces did not always fit an identical pattern as some were temporary locations for one-time use, some were permanently rooted to fixed locations for repeated interaction with God, and others were portable for on-the-go communion. Hearson uses the analogies of telegram, phone booth, and cell phone to illustrate how these various sacred spaces functioned.

To illuminate the set criteria set forth in the opening chapters, Hearson moves through several examples in the Old Testament where sacred spaces operated as described. Moses' burning bush encounter and the appearance of the Angel of the Lord to Manoah and his wife in Judges 13 serve as examples of the telegram since neither location served as a meeting point beyond the initial encounter. Bethel, Beersheba, Shiloh, and Gilgal represent the phone booth motif as each of these places had ongoing significance beyond God's initial revelation. The temple in Jerusalem ultimately serves as the centralized phone booth for Israelites during the early Monarchy. Finally, the tabernacle serves as the portable "cell phone" example, where God's presence was experienced from the

inner sanctum of the Most Holy Place. Above the ark of the covenant, God manifest Himself whenever He caused the tabernacle to be set up. The physical location of the tent of meeting was insignificant as God's presence was linked to the tabernacle instead of a geographical place.

Hearson spends a chapter discussing the finite nature of sacred spaces and their ability to be divinely rejected. Since sacred spaces are set up by God's own choosing, their on-going significance is also linked to God's choosing. The Old Testament demonstrates how many of these sacred spaces are improperly perceived as continuous portals to the heavenly realm when in fact God has cut them off as a means of communication with Himself. Bethel serves as one example where the Israelites circumvent the prescribed sacred space of Jerusalem and attempt to access God through the sacred space of Jacob's time. In this futile attempt, the destruction of those places and the nations who have turned to these profane methods of worship is revealed by God's prophets. Shiloh, and eventually Jerusalem during the Babylonian destruction, encounter similar fates as God rejects these locations as sacred spaces for human-divine interaction, a rejection that is linked to the sinfulness of God's people (p. 105).

In the concluding chapters, Hearson explains the shift of sacred space that takes place in the New Testament. Jesus becomes the way God meets with humanity, and in the person of Christ, the divine-human communion problems are resolved. Though humanity still awaits a physical restoration of the New Heaven and Earth, the church is currently provided a cell phone for communicating with God in the gift of the Holy Spirit which indwells every believer. This book is an excellent treatment of sacred space and successfully demonstrates the centrality of the topic within Scripture. It exposes the biblical theological thrust of sacred space and demands an appreciation for a topic that is too-often ignored. The bookends of Scripture, creation and culmination, are frequently being used to shape a biblical trajectory and Hearson taps into this trend to provide a teleological angle to his argument. The benefit of this for the modern reader is that it provides a sense of relevance and practicality, though the majority of the study was contextually ancient. Not only does the book shape the modern reader's image of man and God, but it also beatifies Christ by positioning Him as the solution to a problem many do not realize they have without Him.

One of the strongest elements of this book is the historical tracing of the various sacred space sites. In casual Bible reading, these locations are often missed as places of significance, and even if they are grasped, they are forgotten by the time the reader gets very far away from the text that establishes the area as special. As the reader progresses through the text, recalling names of places and their significance often take a back seat to the people and the events of scripture that are being portrayed. By the time the reader makes it from Genesis to Amos, the significance of Bethel is forgotten and the connection is lost. However, this book draws strong lines of connection between the establishments of sacred space and their multiple appearances within the biblical storyline. This contribution provides texture for the reader's hermeneutical lens.

Aside from the theology and the applications above, it is worth noting that the book is well written and very easy to follow. The arguments are simple to understand and the footnotes provide a nuanced look at the pivotal arguments lying beneath the surface. Hearson does not shy away from transparency when a point, argument, or even conclusion may be in doubt and presents an honest tone of academic humility. Yet, the book is not lacking in informational potency as his experience and expertise come through in his writing.

One area of significance that could have been examined would be regarding general prayer in the Old Testament. While Hearson does vaguely address the notion that God certainly could hear an individual's prayer outside of sacred space parameters, he goes on to suggest that it was less certain (p.136). That leaves the reader wondering how? How were people like Job able to commune with God? If God's appearing to Job became a "telegram" sacred space account, to what extent was this normative for common prayer?

Though instances like these are few, and often outside the author's articulated scope, the desire for more information does arise occasionally, perhaps indicating a need for a follow up work in some areas. Regardless, this is a great resource for those desiring to see how the Old Testament connects to the New and for anyone interested in tracking the movement of sacred space from Eden to Shiloh to New Jerusalem.

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Analytic Christology and the Theological Interpretation of the New Testament. **By Thomas H. McCall. Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. 226 pp. $73.23, Hardback. ISBN 978–0–19–885749–5**

Theological Interpretation of Scripture (TIS) seeks to understand the Bible holistically, each passage more than a sole unit of study in a particular historical context. TIS provides points of intersection with various domains of study, including philosophy. McCall writes, "Theological interpretation of Scripture seeks to interpret the Bible theologically; it looks, that is, to see what the Bible teaches about God (and all else as it is related to God). It does so in respectful dialogue with the insights of modern and contemporary biblical studies, and it also seeks to learn from the deep and broad Christian tradition of exegetes and theologians" (p. 113). When philosophers investigate Scripture or theologians go about their work with the tools of philosophy, their work can be labeled Analytic Theology (AT) (pp. 1-2). McCall notes that figures like Michael C. Rae and John Webster have shaped how TIS establishes a framework for specific AT endeavors (pp. 2-3).

Since TIS (a) questions the sufficiency of historical-critical exegesis and many of the presuppositions of the critical, post-Enlightenment foundation upon which it rests, and (b) views the Bible as a whole, prioritizes canonical influence on any single passage of Scripture, and values pre-critical interpretation, then (c) avenues of study consistent with (b) can be employed to understand God better and His word. Stated differently, since TIS sets to the bookshelf resources used to study words and historical contexts of Scripture in isolation—the tasks many critical scholars undertake—then space is available on the desk for different tools, those that will yield the fruit of (b).

In this volume of collected essays, McCall articulates Christology not by tracing מָשִׁיחַ in the Old Testament, χριστός in the Septuagint and the New Testament, or related concepts (Son of David, Son of Man, Branch, etc.) throughout the Bible, but by investigating specific New Testament texts or themes known to have Christological implications. In chapter 1, McCall examines Paul's proclamation of union with Christ in Gal 2:20. Chapter 2 is a reconsideration of the genitive construction πίστις Χριστου in Rom 3:22, 26; Gal 2:16 [2]; 2:20; 3:22; and Phil 3:9. In chapters 3-5, McCall takes up themes with intra-Trinitarian implications,

the incarnation, Jesus's submission to the Father, and Jesus's communion with the Father. Due to the space limitations of this review, I will discuss chapters 1 and 3.

In chapter 1, McCall examines the concept of union with Christ in Gal 2:20. McCall compares his AT of union with Christ to findings offered by modern apocalyptic interpreters of Paul. While McCall appreciates that apocalyptic readings of Paul emphasize union with Christ as a phenomenon experienced in this life and the next, McCall proposes that philosophical categories of ontology and metaphysics provide broader insight into what it means for a human to be united with Christ. On the desk of the AT interpreter is the category of self-understanding. Concepts of joint attention and narrative identity, rooted in AT, help the interpreter grasp the implications of union with Christ. To be united with Christ involves both diadic dimensions of sharing between Christ and the believer and triadic dimensions of the believer's and Christ's shared and individual commitments to the other persons of the Trinity (pp. 34-35). Narrative identity studies note that Paul's presentation of himself in Galatians 1 and Gal 2:19-20 survey his transformation from enemy to union partner. Paul's story subverts the story of estrangement from God that results from the sin of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 and shows the way that God would have the worst of sinners fellowship with Him through Jesus.

By the end of chapter 1, I have already gained insight from McCall and AT. But McCall's analysis lacks any interaction with Gal 2:11-14, the immediate pre-text and situation that leads Paul to his proclamation of union with Christ. In Gal 2:19a, Paul states that he died to the law. This statement must be considered when the interpreter analyzes Gal 2:19b, where Paul says that he has been crucified with Christ, and Gal 2:20a, where Paul proclaims his union with Christ. Paul's point in Gal 2:15-21 is that one cannot be united with Christ and live by the socio-historical dimensions of the Jewish law. Paul's statements in Gal 2:15-21 are the solution to the problem he has with Peter when Peter submits to these socio-historical norms of the Jewish law and pulls away from table fellowship with Gentiles. To be crucified with Christ is more than just a new self-understanding articulated by AT; it is to have a new social identity that unites the believer with Christ and with others united with Christ—despite all socio-historical boundaries that one must sever to do so. TIS has a legitimate beef with critical scholarship, and AT provides

new avenues of thought. Still, if TIS and AT (or any other discipline building upon TIS) are not sensitive to the logical flow of the passage of Scripture in view, philosophical tools prove only so helpful.

In chapter 3, McCall investigates Jesus's submission and suffering in Heb 5:7-10. McCall consults observations from Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth as conversation partners. He notes that Barth views Jesus's subordination as more than economic, rooted in the ontological relationship of the Son to the Father. Aquinas argues that Jesus's submission and obedience refer to the mission the Son undertakes in His incarnation. It is a voluntary and temporal submission. After interacting with the exegetical conclusions of critical-era scholars like F.F. Bruce, Harold W. Attridge, William L. Lane, and Gareth L. Cockerill, McCall states concerning Jesus, "There is no hint here that obedience is constitutive of his Sonship. Hebrews does not lead us to conclude that the filial relationship is based upon that obedience, or even that it entails that obedience. He is obedient although he is Son" (p. 128).

McCall's fluidity with the Christian tradition and critical-era scholars demonstrates that TIS and the discipline of historical-critical interpretation are not at odds in every case. I teach Greek grammar, Biblical Studies, and Theology. My training is in grammar and exegesis. Over the last few years, I have read TIS methodology and appreciated its influence and capacity to connect with other disciplines. Sadly, many TIS and historical-critical scholars are far more either/or than both/and. I hope that this review will demonstrate the latter. If interpreters allow TIS and historical-critical tools to sit on their desks—as McCall does in chapter 4—they would see that these disciplines are not mutually exclusive at every point.

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***Finding Our Voice: A Vision for Asian North American Preaching*. By Matthew D. Kim and Daniel L. Wong. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2020. 187 pp. $17.99, Paperback. ISBN: 978-1-68359-378-2.**

Finding Our Voice is a book about Asian North American (ANA) preaching that argues for a distinct homiletical voice. The author Matthew D. Kim (PhD, University of Edinburgh) is professor of preaching and ministry, director of the Haddon W. Robinson Center for Preaching, and director of mentored ministry at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Massachusetts. Kim has previously served as the president of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, as well as serving as a youth pastor, college pastor, and senior pastor of Asian-American congregations. He has written a number of books, including *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence*. Daniel L. Wong (DMin, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is the coauthor and serves as associate professor of Christian ministries at Tyndale University in Toronto. Wong has served in English ministry in Chinese churches for many years.

The book is divided into five chapters. The authors each write two chapters with the final chapter written collaboratively. Each chapter begins with a quote related to the chapter and ends with reflection questions. The book concludes with two appendices, Appendix 1 – worksheet for ANA preaching and Appendix 2 – sample sermons.

In chapter one, Wong describes the experiences that shape ANA identity. He posits that the kind of identity questions ANA encounters every day are "tied to immigration history" (p. 26). He also observes that parental expectations have bearing on the ANA experience. Church identity is another key element. The "the silent exodus," of many ANA children from the church in which they were brought up and the role of women are two factors related to church identity. Furthermore, Wong bemoans ANA's erroneous identification as a "model minority" (p. 42) and "perpetual foreigner" (p. 43) which has frequently resulted in prejudice and discrimination (p. 40).

Chapter two focuses on ANA hermeneutics. Here, Kim establishes the rationale for ANA hermeneutics when he asks, "Do we need an ANA hermeneutic?" (p. 51). He answers, "Absolutely!" (p. 52). Kim explores the common Western and Eastern approach to hermeneutics and contends for "a hybrid contextualized hermeneutics that considers both worlds and is faithful to Scripture and yet culturally sensitive for ANA

listeners" (p. 61). Thus, according to Kim, apart from observation, interpretation, and application, *experience* and *understanding* are two necessary elements in ANA hermeneutics.

In chapter three, Kim contends for "a contextual [ANA] theology that takes into consideration both Asian and North American cultures" (p. 79). Thus, he appeals to the approaches of various forms of Liberation/Majority/Third-World theologies. According to Kim, the approach to doing ANA theology is to focus on four topics, namely, a theology of identity and the image of God, a theology of marginalization, a quadrilateral theology – Asian heritage, migration experience, American culture, and racialization – and a theology of incarnational duality.

Chapter four addresses ANA preaching today. Wong begins with the question, "What is the flavor of ANA preaching?" (p. 104). Wong's contention here touches on the thesis of the book: "Growth in our voices means we have something to preach that comes out of our own experience with God and our encounter with the word and Holy Spirit" (p. 107). He proposes "a more focused approach to ANA preaching … [which is] a more intentional exegesis of the text, the congregation, and ourselves" (p. 138).

In chapter five, Kim and Wong discuss the distinctives and developments of ANA preaching. They contend that ANA preaching "should be distinct in the areas of hermeneutics, illustrations, applications, delivery, and the choice of topics to address" (p. 142). They also propose "five areas for continuous development among ANA homileticians and preachers" (p. 155), namely, preaching in a prophetic voice, preaching in a multiethnic/multicultural context, re-envisioning ANA worship, building a racial and ethnic bridge, and envisioning the possible selves of ANAs.

Finding Our Voice is a short and easy-to-read book with insightful content. It is primarily written for ANA preachers, but it contains many practical insights and wisdom from which other preachers can benefit. The purpose of the book is "to seek to name the hermeneutical, theological, and homiletical distinctives of ANA preaching to help preachers understand the specific characteristics and challenges that distinguish preaching in ANA contexts" (p. 12). The authors succeed in accomplishing what they attempt to do. Overall, the book is well-written, but a couple of observations are in order. The first observation concerns

the book's format. Despite numerous citations and footnotes in the text, there is no bibliography, causing the book to end abruptly. There is also an insertion of extra pages from 149 to 156 for which the publishers should be held accountable.

Another point to consider is the approach to the argument of the book. The authors, for example, attempt to strike a delicate balance between their loyalties to evangelical theology and their appeal to liberation theologies. However, they appear to be sympathetic to the hermeneutics of Liberation Theology/Asian theologies. This is clear when Kim and Wong use ANA experience/identity as a starting point for interpreting the Bible (chap. one). The authors, like Liberation theologians, recognize Western/European hegemony in the interpretation of Scripture (pp. 75-76). This charge makes one ask why hermeneutics complaints are centered on Western/Europe rather than tracing the history of interpretation back to the first-century Judeo-Christians. Furthermore, when they appeal to marginalization, alienation, and minority, their approach to contextualization is largely influenced by Liberation Theology (chap. three). However, their proposals and advice for ANA preaching are in alignment with evangelical tradition, as Kim says, "My desire is not to dismiss Western theology, but to call for a more fluid conversation concerning the strengths and limitations of each theology…" (p. 83). While the authors are right that "no one preaches in a cultural vacuum," at issue is their argument for a "contextual hermeneutics" (p. 51), which may suggest that context or the ANA experience should determine the meaning of the text.

In this volume, the authors discuss hermeneutics and theology, but the book's main focus is on contextualized preaching, or culturally sensitive preaching. *Finding Our Voice* is a proposal for an ANA voice in the world of homiletics. In spite of the shortcomings observed, the book offers many helpful suggestions for ANA preachers and teachers of the Word, but the advice for culturally sensitive preaching to ANA audiences will also benefit others.

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The Global Church: The First Eight Centuries. From Pentecost to the Rise of Islam. **By Donald Fairbairn. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2021. 373 pp. $39.99, Hardcover and 3 DVD set. ISBN 9780310097853.**

In *The Global Church,* Donald Fairbairn (PhD, Cambridge) sets out a bold case to shift the focus of church history from one with a focus on the west to one with a broader view. Fairbairn has written extensively on church history, and a summary work covering a broad section of church history fits well in his corpus. Fairbairn notes that he has written with special attention to Protestant evangelical readers, both pastors and laypeople, who would greatly benefit from a serious engagement with those outside of the branch of the church that led to the Protestant Reformation. The book seeks to broaden the Western-centric nature of much of contemporary scholarship. Fairbairn's goals are to examine the global extent of patristic church history and to explain how it is a single story rather than stories of a specific sect of Christianity (p. xi).

Fairbairn frames the book according to three periods, Pentecost to 300, 300-600, and 600-800. Fairbairn argues that this offers a cleaner division than many other histories since it allows one to divide along a more logical progression in Christian history (p. xv). He also argues that it helps to accomplish the goal of situating Christianity as a global story rather than one so fixated on western development (p. 8). The common ideas that the church declined rapidly, upon gaining political power, or that there was never any true orthodoxy to begin with, should be set aside for a more appropriate understanding of history. Fairbairn rightly notes that all history is complex. The history of the church is no different. The approach taken, Fairbairn argues, allows for one to acknowledge any bias toward the historical data one might have and allows "the material of history to reshape our perspective where needed" (p. 11).

After setting out his prolegomena, Fairbairn begins engaging the historical content. Each section addresses the major people, places, ideas, and doctrines necessary for the reader to understand the role of the church in the given period. He addresses the church in both the East and the West to varying degrees. Each chapter concludes with a reflection on how modern American Protestants should consider understanding the issues of history. For Fairbairn, history is not simply a list of people and places to be memorized. Instead, these facts help the reader better

understand the contemporary setting. From there, the student can apply the concepts and methods of history to our own context in a way that is honoring to God in thought, word, and deed.

Fairbairn's work has several strengths. First, the approach in trying to tell a more global story of church history is commendable. As noted, American Protestantism has had an inordinate focus on its own formation. This focus often keeps pastors and lay people reading Western late medieval and Reformation histories and missing an entire branch of the church. Fairbairn rightly argues that in many cases, western Christians "ignored and continue to ignore much of the patristic period" (p. 261). Instead of offering a critical, yet charitable analysis, the West has instead ignored those Christians it did not desire to engage. This leads, Fairbairn argues, to a focus on different theological issues than what loomed largest and a sort of cherry picking of sources to drive home the church's support of whatever topic the reader finds most important (pp. 281-2).

Another strength of the work is Fairbairn's clear writing style. The work is very accessible. The accompanying lectures also allow the reader to hear Fairbairn's voice and that carries into the text. There were few, if any, pieces of the text where Fairbairn was difficult to follow. Fairbairn clearly presents the key issues in ways that all readers will appreciate.

While there are many strengths, the work does have one primary weakness. This weakness is due, in part, to Fairbairn's aim. As he attempts to tell the one story of Christianity, the text bends back and forth between the East and West. This is not an easy goal given the vast geopolitical differences between the empires in which Christians found themselves. In many chapters, Fairbairn picks one side of the church on which to focus while ignoring the other. For the earliest period, Fairbairn's primary focus in on the West. This may be because of the number of available sources from the second and third centuries, but the focus is most certainly there rather than on the global church.

In other chapters, Fairbairn seems to counter this by focusing primarily on the East. He does this most prominently in the chapters "God and Country" and "Still Foreigners and Exiles." In "God and Country," Fairbairn presents a clear picture of the how the church became the official religion of Armenia, Georgia, and Ethiopia all around the same time as the Roman Empire. As it's arranged, one would think that the non-Roman nations became Christian first, but that is not the

case. These nations converted around the same as the Roman empire, and some after such as Mirian, early fourth century king of Georgia, request priests to be sent by Constantine makes this clear (p. 143).

Fairbairn's goals are hard to accomplish. With the number of contemporary texts written to laypeople or those with an interest in history, he has much competition. Standard introduction texts such as Everett Ferguson's *Church History: Volume One From Christ to the Pre-Reformation* (Zondervan, 2013) and Justo Gonzalez' *The Story of Christianity: Volume One The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (HarperOne, 2010) are strong, well-entrenched texts. However, given that they place their focus primarily on the ideas that led directly to 16th century, or the development of Western Christian thought, there is a gap Fairbairn's text fills. While addressing these periods from a Protestant perspective, Fairbairn guides his readers through the passage of time without either losing his Protestant identity or falling into the easy trap of being overly critical of those on whose shoulders Christians today stand. This text would be an excellent introduction to church history book for pastors, laypeople, and students alike.

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***Evil and Creation: Historical and Constructive Essays in Christian Dogmatics* (Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology). Edited by David J. Luy, Matthew Levering, and George Kalantzis. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2020. 280 pp. $29.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1683594345.**

David Luy (ed.) is associate professor of biblical and systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and he has previously authored monographs on the Christology of Martin Luther. Matthew Levering serves as Chair of Theology at Mundelein Seminary, authoring works on exegesis, the doctrine of creation, and the theology of the patristics. George Kalantzis is professor of theology at Wheaton College, who has

likewise written on the patristics in various formats. This present work is a compilation of a series of essays contributed by fourteen scholars of various theological backgrounds, originally delivered at the Chicago Theological Initiative in 2018.

Although *Evil & Creation* engages with the doctrine of evil, it is not intended as a work of apologetics or theonomy as such. Though the essays focus on the presence of evil within the doctrine of creation, engaging the problem of evil itself is not the focus of this work. Instead, *Evil & Creation* attempts to render a theological account of evil, a goal which is quite different from a response to the problem of evil (though it may, and does, include some similar aspects; p. 1). Writing on the perspective which fueled this joint study, Luy and Levering reflect their aim to avoid preoccupations with the "so-called problem of evil" that have served to overshadow recent centuries of theological accounts of evil (p. 5). Reacting against modern atrocities of war and destruction brought by natural disasters, most modern advances into theological accounts of evil have reacted against the "collapse of the medieval synthesis" by trying to account for intelligibility and meaning (which response is essentially a philosophical challenge; p. 5).

These essays theologically consider evil within the foundational doctrine of creation (p. 9) while drawing on historical Christian testimony. That is, the authors seek to provide philosophical and theological reflections while affirming the self-revelation of God, as well as "God's personal presence and solidarity" with those who suffer due to evil in this world (p. 7). A classic work of theodicy might mount a defense or vindication of God in response to the problem of evil, while this present work resists imposing solutions to this question without revelatory warrant (p. 7). In so doing, this collection of essays is meant to correct an imbalance by rendering a theological account of evil, as opposed to examining the philosophical problem of evil as in many such works (p. 8).

Evil & Creation begins with an overarching examination of the writings of early Christian sources relating to evil (Part I). Constantine Campbell makes the case that although evil has corrupted creation, there is glory to be found in the establishment of the new creation, realized through the judgment of evil (p. 30). Campbell maintains that creation will be renewed, and not replaced, observing that the New Testament language referring to replacement sounds more rhetorical than literal

(and thus, in keeping with the renewal of the body). Paul Blowers follows with a discussion of the Preacher of Ecclesiastes and how these biblical writings were used by patristic interpreters to deal with the issue of evil. In Campbell's estimation, early Christian interpreters of Ecclesiastes made efforts to construct a theory of evil that Scripture did not afford them (p. 35). Campbell is followed by Paul Gavirlyuk's contribution on the progression of approach to the problem of evil, ranging from ancient sources to modern scholarship. Gavirlyuk posits that there are large areas of discontinuity between premodern and modern approaches to evil (p. 50), while the way forward is to form a synthesis of patristic analysis with modern sensitivities to evil and suffering in this world (p. 66). Han-luen Kantzer Komline addresses the contention that a traditional response to evil (so Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin) will not rush to issues stemming from Christology but will instead employ natural theology (p. 67). To answer this challenge, Komline examines Augustine's approach to evil, concluding that there are limits to natural theology in the study of evil, exposing the need for responsible Christology to flank evil on either side (creation and new creation; pp. 69, 79). Gavin Ortlund lends a chapter on animal death, pulling from Augustine's view to inform current evangelical debate while observing Augustine's stress on the goodness of the created order and the *telos* of creation (p. 109).

Part II of *Evil & Creation* engages with contemporary explorations into the doctrine of evil, beginning with an inclusion by Michel Barnes on the trauma that is imbibed through evil that occurs beyond one's control (p. 114). Barnes contends that pain and evil must be observed first as trauma before recognizing evil as a "problem to be solved" (p. 114). The following submission is a paper by R. David Nelson on the "polarizing debate" regarding the apocalyptic turn in modern theology (p. 135). Nelson contends that the apocalyptic turn brings fresh air and vivid insights into wide-ranging theological circles (p. 136), while it also has uncovered some scholarship gaps in the process (p. 137). Kenneth Oakes examines the intersection of God, creation, providence, and evil as evidenced in the novel *The Crossing* by Cormac McCarthy (p. 164). Drawing from the precedence of C.S. Lewis, Marc Cortez follows Oakes with a discussion of animal pain, particularly addressing the no-animal-suffering position (p. 184), which he concludes is not a viable path forward in theodicy (p. 200). Daniel Houck discusses the purported incompatibility between modern evolutionary theory and a traditional

Christian understanding of a historical fall (p. 201), finally siding with a defense from the work of Thomas Aquinas (p. 203) and what he terms a "new Thomist view" (emphasizing disordered desires; p. 205). Jared Ortiz concludes Part II with a moving and personal reflection on the Sabbath structure of the human person (p. 220).

This work was an eclectic gathering of representative scholarship addressing a particular dogmatic issue, which by design produces a wide variety of perspectives that can be rewarding to engage and yet challenging to navigate. Various contributions ranging from Nelson's flowing scholarship, to Ortlund's acknowledged pursuit of apologetics, to Barnes' experiential diagnostic treatise make for an assortment of approaches and perspectives that are able to both enlighten and challenge the reader. In the process of engaging the doctrine of creation and the presence of evil, several consistent threads emerged between various included essays, such as the unifying nature of Christology and a broadly eschatological perspective on evil. This work is a challenging yet rewarding venture that advances the scholarship present in the *Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology* series.

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In All the Scriptures: The Three Contexts of Biblical Hermeneutics. By Nicholas G. Piotrowski. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021. 304 pp. $32.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-5140-0218-6.

There is no shortage today of books that introduce readers to the subject of biblical hermeneutics. As helpful as many of them are, the sheer number of different approaches to the discipline can be disorienting to believers who just want to learn how to better read their Bibles. In addition, some of these volumes can leave the reader with the impression that interpreting the Scriptures accurately requires knowledge equivalent to that of a biblical scholar. Amidst a wealth of resources, it is surprisingly rare to find an intro to hermeneutics that features both depth of content and simplicity of presentation, one that presents a full

picture of the hermeneutical task while leaving the reader feeling empowered to study the Bible for themselves without the need for a doctorate in biblical studies. However, In All the Scriptures by Nicholas Piotrowski—president and academic dean of Indianapolis Theological Seminary—is exactly that kind of book.

Piotrowski sets out in this volume to lay out "the theoretical-philosophical foundation to reading the Bible" (p. 16). Although that may sound like the premise for an academic tome, the book is written in a style and size accessible to the average churchgoer. Piotrowski defines hermeneutics as "the theoretical study of the science and art of how to legitimately and ethically interpret texts" (p. 4). In terms of methodology, he boils down his hermeneutical approach to the study of "three layers of context: literary context, historical context, and Christological context" (p. 9). The focus of his book, then, is to equip readers to study these three contexts for themselves in order to grow in their understanding of God's Word and see Christ displayed in all the Scriptures (Lk 24:27).

After an introduction summarizing the thesis and outline of his approach, Piotrowski begins with two chapters that prepare the reader for the remainder of the book. In chapter 1 he embarks on a brief tour of the history of hermeneutics within the church. The key lesson he draws from this survey is that every generation of the church is susceptible to the temptation to import one's current cultural Zeitgeist into the text of Scripture. Thus, the interpreter must take care to be aware of his own presuppositions and allow them to be shaped or changed by the teaching of the text. In chapter 2, Piotrowski seeks to engender the correct hermeneutical presuppositions in his readers by examining the hermeneutics of Jesus and the apostles. He argues that when they quoted or utilized an OT text, they consistently demonstrated a concern for the literary, historical, and Christological (i.e., redemptive-historical) contexts of the text in question. Thus, he concludes, followers of Christ should seek to emulate the hermeneutical principles exemplified by the Savior and the NT authors.

The following four chapters form the heart of the book, as Piotrowski unpacks at length each of the three contexts that form the framework for his hermeneutic. The literary and historical contexts receive one chapter apiece, while two chapters are devoted to the Christological/redemptive-historical context. In each discussion, he encourages his readers to get

into the habit of reading the Bible in large chunks (e.g., pericopes, chapters, and even whole books in one sitting). The more familiar Christians are with the big picture of the text, he insists, the more likely they are to interpret the finer details accurately. Even in his chapter on historical context, Piotrowski exhorts readers to allow their immersion in the biblical text to guide them in asking the right kinds of historical questions rather than making the text fit with their own understanding (or misunderstanding) of historical data (p. 110). At the end of the day, Piotrowski wants his readers to be in the text, focusing on the overall storyline and flow of thought of the Bible rather than relying primarily on secondary sources (though he provides an abundance of recommendations in the latter category).

Piotrowski concludes the book with discussions of genre and application, each one receiving a full chapter. In the former, he provides an overview of the broad genre categories of Scripture, noting how each genre was particularly prevalent during a certain period of redemptive history (pp. 201, 225). In the latter, he walks the reader through how to apply the biblical text, emphasizing the corporate and Christological aspects of application. In other words, he argues, believers should seek to apply a passage in light of both the finished work of Christ and their membership in the new covenant community, thus guarding against the two prevalent pitfalls of legalistic or overly individualistic applications (though in this reviewer's opinion, his process here is a bit too formulaic).

Piotrowski's treatment of hermeneutics has numerous strengths to commend it. In addition to its accessible writing style, the book is a genuinely enjoyable read. Piotrowski draws from his college major in ecology to provide memorable and effective illustrations at the start of each chapter, and the reader will find further illustrations along with charts and diagrams throughout the book. He places a welcome emphasis on biblical literacy, constantly drawing his readers attention back to the biblical text. He offers nuanced and balanced discussions of topics such as historical backgrounds, literary genre, and the Christological nature of the Bible. Perhaps the most significant contribution that Piotrowski makes to this field of literature is the strongly biblical-theological bent of his hermeneutic. This comes out most clearly in his two chapters on Christological context, where he discusses issues such as prophecy, typology, and biblical-theological themes that can be traced through the canon (pp. 177–89). Yet, even when discussing other topics, Piotrowski

consistently trains his readers to view any text in light of the Bible's overall storyline. This biblical-theological framework is both needed and refreshing.

The only area in which the book feels underdeveloped is the role of systematic and historical theology in hermeneutics. He does briefly mention that both disciplines should be grounded in "the sure building blocks of exegesis and biblical studies" (p. 16). While this is certainly true, he never addresses the function of either discipline in the actual task of doing exegesis. Although he provides brief discussions on the need for holding the right presuppositions (pp. 46–49) and utilizing a gospel-centered hermeneutic (pp. 241–44), these presuppositions and tools are not given a specifically doctrinal form. This leaves unanswered questions such as: How does my doctrine of God or of Scripture shape the way I interpret the text? How much weight should be given to the doctrinal teachings of past generations of believers? Given all the discussions today surrounding the theological interpretation of Scripture, at least a short treatment of this subject would have been beneficial.

That shortcoming aside, Piotrowski's book serves as a fresh, readable, and effective intro to hermeneutics that deserves a wide audience. Believers new to the faith will find it an engaging first foray into biblical interpretation, and even those who have followed Christ for many years may find their own Bible-reading habits being challenged and shaped by the vision it paints. However far along one is in their walk with Christ, Piotrowski's volume will likely invigorate one's love for God's Word and desire to be immersed in it.

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Justice and Charity: An Introduction to Aquinas's Moral, Economic, and Political Thought. By Michael P. Krom. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020. 256 pp. $29.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-5409-6224-9.

Christians are called to live in the world but not of the world. We should engage but not conform. Today, the distinction has narrowed. This is a problem in the church at large and Michael Krom sees the same within the Catholic Church (p. 2). Krom is chair of the philosophy department at Saint Vincent College and holds a PhD from Emory University. He points to disparity between Catholic social teaching (CST) and how parishioners actually live. He says those who wish to follow the Church's call to engage culture should look to Aquinas as foundational to understanding CST (p. 3). He sees Aquinas as central to the Church's social thought and, having written and spoken extensively on Catholic moral and political thought, is well suited to his purpose of introducing the reader to Aquinas's theories and relating them to contemporary life.

Aquinas detailed his theories of human action in three categories: moral, economic, and political. Within each category, he posits we can know truth differently based on reason (philosophy) and on God's revelation (theology). This structure provides the outline of the book with a concluding section applying Aquinas's theories to understanding CST and contemporary cultural issues.

In part one, Moral Theory, he shows that humanity's reason, our differentiator in creation, includes a natural desire for happiness (p. 20). However, our reason is shown to be incomplete without theology. It is true that we have reason to help guide our actions but, without God's revelation, we stop short of our true end, union with God, and begin to settle for happiness in creation, which necessarily results in idolatry (p. 18). According to Aquinas, our true end and perfect happiness is achieved through the sacraments and rules laid out by the Church, not by reason alone (p. 65). However, true ethical living is not about following a set of rules but incorporates our pursuit of God and our natural desire for happiness. True ethical living is not about choosing to do the right thing contrary to our desire but living in a way that serves our happiness and His glory (p. 13).

If moral theory shows our pursuit of union with God through ethical living, part two, economic theory, teaches how we should utilize material

goods toward that end. Economic philosophy, separate from theology, merely shows us how a pagan, who possesses acquired but not divinely infused virtues, uses material goods under their control (p. 75). For instance, in discussing justice, he shows it can be commutative, governing the exchange of goods, or distributive, governing the distribution of goods (p. 81). Clearly, one need not be a Christian to exchange or distribute goods in a just way. The difference is seen once economic theology is introduced guiding how to use material goods in a way that glorifies God. We can pursue our own temporal happiness through economic philosophy but, without God's revelation, we will never achieve our true happiness. It is one thing to be economically just in daily life but quite another to do it in an effort to glorify God.

Part three covers Aquinas's political theory. Krom lays out the difference between common good in our earthly communities, understood through reason, and how we are to live as Christian sojourners in this world, understood through revelation. Through reason and human law, we can establish justice in a community but this does little to promote true virtue (p. 121). We might naturally desire justice but, without God's divine law directing us, our pursuit of justice is limited. Absent God, worship becomes state-centered sometimes resulting in nationalism or persecution of religion. As Christians, our relationship to God and His divine law is different and we engage knowing that Christ is why we act justly. God's revelation shows Christians should be "the leaven" building up our communities in virtue and service to God and His glory (pp. 170-171). Aquinas would further argue that, while harmony between human and divine law is desirable, when they contradict the Christian sojourner must disobey the human law and receive whatever persecution results as reason remains subject to revelation (p. 172).

In the final part, Krom applies Aquinas's teaching to contemporary issues including sexuality, science, globalization, threats to creation, and politics. While Catholic teaching is present throughout the book, it dominates this section. For instance, Krom points to a need for Aquinas "to be completed and complemented by contemporary Church teaching" (p. 178). He also states "the sacraments are necessary for salvation" (p. 69) and that God's plan for salvation "is being accomplished through his Body the Church, in its life and sacraments" (p. 195). Protestants would immediately disagree with this and point to the finished work of Christ

on the cross. Krom rightfully sees reason as subservient to theology but leans heavily on Church tradition as much as, or more than, Scripture (p. 7). However, we must remember that Krom set about to introduce a Catholic audience to Aquinas in an effort to help them understand CST and how it applies to their lives. He achieved this purpose well but one could argue many of his assumptions also apply to the Protestant church. In many areas, the church looks no different than secular culture. While Protestants might not seek to apply CST in daily life, we certainly would benefit from understanding how reason is, and should be, subservient to revelation from God in all facets of life. We need to engage the world while not conforming to it but we need to heed this call while maintaining the sufficiency and ultimate authority of Scripture.

We sometimes do an injustice by immediately dismissing a book based solely on theological differences but our cultivation of knowledge need not be so binary in nature. There is often middle ground where we can benefit by considering the thoughts of those with whom we disagree. If nothing else, dissenting views provide opportunity for solidifying our own beliefs. However, because of the focus on CST, Krom's book, while ideal for his intended Catholic audience, is likely a bridge too far aside from those with a unique need for understanding Aquinas's teaching as applied by the Catholic Church. For a deeper look at the concepts of justice and charity, sans the Catholic focus, one would be well served by Abraham Kuyper's On Charity and Justice. For protestants that do choose to read this book, it should serve as a reminder of the simplicity and beauty of Sola Scriptura and drive us to thank God for His perfect, complete revelation.

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Systematic Theology- An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. 2nd ed. By Wayne Grudem. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020. 1586 pp. $59.99, Hardcover. ISBN 978-0-310-51797-9.

It is hard to believe and impossible to prove that there is another systematic theology that is as comprehensive, as clear, as biblical, as accessible, and as updated concerning the latest controversies in Christendom as is Systematic Theology (2nd ed.) written by Wayne Grudem. Indeed, Grudem proves to be a theologian of the highest class and rare quality, who is not afraid to tackle burning topics in many Christian circles and confess openly and confidently the areas where his theological thinking has changed because of well-founded reasons.

Educated at the University of Cambridge, Grudem is a scholar, professor, and prolific author held in high regard even by one of the leading New Testament scholars from Cambridge, who was also Grudem's doctoral supervisor, non-other than C. F. D. Moule. In Moule's words, the first edition of Grudem's Systematic Theology was maximum opus (p. 15). The second edition of Grudem's Systematic Theology is far better than the first one because it is fully updated with answers to new questions and new objections which have arisen during twenty-five years of use. Furthermore, the second edition of Grudem's Systematic Theology is a must because of new scientific discoveries and theological controversies. Therefore, the second edition "is about 16 percent longer than the first edition" (p. xvi).

The second edition of Systematic Theology kept the exact format of the first edition, having seven main sections and fifty-seven chapters. The length of the sections is directly connected to the topic's importance and the amount of information available in the Bible. For example, Grudem assigns eighty-one pages to the doctrine of the future while allocating three hundred sixty-four pages to the doctrine of God.

The brilliance of Grudem's work can be seen also in the fact that every chapter can be read as an individual book because the author is engaging, challenges the mind, is personal, and offers practical applications at the end of each chapter. Paradoxically for some people, Grudem does not write with teachers of theology in mind, but he writes for students and for every Christian wanting to know the central doctrines of the Bible in greater depth (p. xxi).

What is new in this second edition? Answer: more material than can be covered exhaustively in a standard book review. Every student of Scripture must own this second edition written by Grudem to understand the brilliance of the theological thinking of the author holistically. The more one reads this book without biases, the more he will be amazed and perplexed by Grudem's capacity to explain complex matters to the most common mind.

The first significant change in the second edition is using the ESV translation of the Bible exclusively instead of RSV (p. xv). Grudem believes that ESV is an excellent example of an "essentially literal" translation (www.waynegrudem.com). Another major change is the completely updated bibliographies (p. xv). Grudem is enthusiastic about the explosion of systematic theology texts and encourages his readers to "compare different authors and different viewpoints on a particular theological topic" (p. xvi). Furthermore, Grudem believes that when studied rightly, theology leads to growth in worship. In the second edition, besides the hymns, he also added contemporary worship songs at the end of each chapter (p. xxiii), keeping in step with the trend in many churches.

The fact that Grudem changed his mind "very little" on a couple of issues might be intriguing for some people, while others will admire his sincerity (p. xvi). Thus, Grudem affirms the doctrine of God's impassibility (p. 196), and the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son by the Father. He discusses in depth the meaning of monogenēs (pp. 293-298). For Grudem, substantial new evidence came to light with the publication of a significant essay by Irons (p. 294). Thus, Grudem concludes that when monogenēs is used of God the Son in the New Testament it means "only begotten" (p. 296). Furthermore, the author argues for the eternal submission of the Son to the Father, which is held also by "widely influential and highly respected theologians" (p. 317).

Another "surprising" change that Grudem acknowledges concerns the age of the universe and the earth. Before delving into the discussion, Grudem clearly states that this doctrine is less important than some other doctrines discussed before (p. 385). Also, the author acknowledges that "twenty-five years have gone by (since the first edition), and the scientific evidence for an old earth and an old universe has become significantly more robust and more persuasive (p. 396). Grudem also interacts with authors and theologians who advocate for a young

universe and a young earth. A significant part of the material advocating for an old universe and old earth is taken from the Christian astronomer Hugh Ross (p. 396). Even though Grudem believes that there is convincing evidence of a 13.8-billion-year-old universe and 4.5-billion-year-old earth, he declares that the Bible does not state the earth's age or the universe (p. 412).

One of the second edition's most significant "additions" is the material that Grudem produced regarding evolution. About thirty-two pages of brand-new material regarding evolution appear in the second edition because "a substantial body of new scientific research has presented extreme challenges to modern evolution theory" (p. 353). The author gives a severe "death blow" to modern evolution theory by providing solid scientific objections, following the latest research in the field of genetics that took place in some of the most prestigious universities in the world. For example, Grudem summarizes what two remarkable scientists and authors say regarding DNA: "these books continue to provide persuasive evidence for the astounding complexity of a living cell and the impossibility that cells have come into existence through a gradual evolutionary process" (p. 359).

Moreover, the author does not ignore the theistic evolution because it is inconsistent with the teachings of the Scripture. After outlining twelve claims of theistic evolution, Grudem, citing the apostle Paul, concludes that the current operation of the natural world is a result of God's judgment (p. 377). Theistic evolution is extremely dangerous because it completely removes the evidence from creation for God's existence (p. 381). The second edition of the Systematic Theology written by Grudem has many strengths, and its weaknesses are weak. Throughout the books, the author proves to be a Biblicist of the highest class, knows his Bible, and keeps in step with the latest scientific discoveries and is super knowledgeable. The author has crystal-clear logic, is meticulous, and is a master at synthesizing multiple and complex ideas. Also, the footnotes are rich and strategically placed for the reader's convenience. I heartily recommend this book to all truth-seekers, especially students, pastors, and scholars, for there are few books that will match its depth, clarity, complexity, and exemplary scholarship.

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Pastoral Theology in the Baptist Tradition: Distinctives and Directions for the Contemporary Church. By R. Robert Creech. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. 2021. 272 pp. $19.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1540962584.

Pastoral Theology in the Baptist Tradition: Distinctives and Directions for the Contemporary Church was written by R. Robert Creech. Creech currently serves as the Hubert H. and Gladys S Raborn Professor of Pastoral Leadership and director of pastoral ministries at Truett Theological Seminary, at Baylor University. Creech joined the faculty at Truett Theological Seminary in 2009 after having served for twenty-two years as the Senior Pastor of University Baptist Church in Houston, Texas. His goal in writing Pastoral Theology in the Baptist Tradition is to provide a Baptist voice in the conversation about pastoral ministry. According to Creech, there is not definitive work from a Baptist perspective when it comes to the theological vision of pastoral ministry. Creech, therefore follows what James McClendon has done in his three-volume Systematic Theology in trying to provide a "Baptist vision" to "discover, describe, and transform" Baptist pastoral theological beliefs and practices (p. 5). To accomplish this purpose, Creech provides Baptist voices from the past four centuries, including a racially and ethnically diverse array of Baptist pastors, past and present (p. 5).

Creech's "Baptist vision" is manifested through four parts: Becoming a Pastor, Proclamation: Pastor as Prophet, Care: Pastor as Priest, and Leadership: Pastor as Servant. Within each section, there are chapters that each provide a biblical foundation, a historical bypath, and a theological reflection. Creech's aim in dividing each chapter in this manor is to provide a full scope for each topic within the theology of pastoral ministry, not just from a vague perspective, but as pastoral ministry is set in Scripture, in history, and in systematics.

In section one, Creech addresses what it means to be a pastor. He begins with the identity a person takes on in becoming a pastor, the calling associated with that identity, being set apart for the role of pastoring, and then the role of women in ministry. These topics form a necessary foundation for Baptist pastoral theology, for as Creech says, "I don't just do the work of a pastor. I am a pastor" (p. 11), for "we are pastors all the time" (p. 27). In many ways, this is why "The Call to Ministry" is so important for Baptists, for this calling "ultimately comes

from God" (p. 44). To affirm this call, local churches will "ordain" a pastor, for the sake of the Baptist vision in "being the church" (p. 72).

Once an identity is established and affirmed with the local church, Creech builds upon this foundation to explain the roles of a pastor. This is broken down into the final three sections. In the public ministry of the word, Creech says that there is something almost sacramental about preaching (p. 110), for there is an "efficacy of preaching" that "occurs in this mysterious interaction of the material and the spiritual" (p. 111), so much so that "the final mark of true preaching" is "to send the church into the world" (p. 131). In the private ministry of the word, pastors follow the example of Jesus and the apostles when they "engage in caring for human hurts and hopes, in listening to human hearts, in ministry to human brokenness, in taking the compassion of Christ into the ordinary events of human life" (p. 159). Not only should the pastor care for those entrusted to his care, but he should also disciple by teaching the church, by "encouraging them and instructing them in God's ways" (p. 188). Ultimately, how a pastor leads in the public and private ministry of the word maintains "a tension between authority and servanthood" (p. 193).

Creech does a wonderful job of providing a full account of each topic in this volume. He takes a wide range of thought from a variety of theologians, modern and historical. Additionally, he provides perspectives from differing viewpoints as well. Knowing a full account of Baptist history as it relates to the role of pastoral theology allows pastors to not only imitate those who have gone before but to participate in a common story (p. 241). Such a volume is helpful from Creech considering the church is comprised of pilgrim people who are pursuing a heavenly kingdom where leaders will be required to provide a clear vision for how to live (p. 239).

Despite the vision that Creech provides and the vast research that is clearly present, he, at times, allows his own theological vision to overshadow an unbiased view of history as it relates to pastoral ministry. In his first section titled "Becoming a Pastor," Creech has one full chapter devoted to women in ministry. If he was truly trying to take an historical account of pastoral ministry, it seems to make sense to simply incorporate the roles that women have taken in regard to pastoral ministry within his historical account, instead of setting apart a chapter to include his own personal viewpoint. Creech does admit that "the dominant practice among Baptists over the past four hundred years has

been to have only men preach and serve as pastors" (p. 82), but at the same time he says that the "atmosphere of egalitarianism…was in the air that early Baptists breathed" (p. 217). In some places he seems to present a clear historical account, whereas in others, he takes time to defend his egalitarian viewpoint.

In many ways, Baptists often fail to see their own theological heritage when it comes to pastoral ministry. According to Creech, Baptists have been "more active than theologically reflective" (3), leaving them impoverished in a clear vision for the church. Therefore, aside from any weaknesses this volume may portray, Creech does provide a much-needed distinctive for pastoral ministry from a Baptist perspective. May this volume provide the necessary discussion among Baptists as they continue to serve the church in fulfillment of the Great Commission.

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Now and Not Yet: Theology and Mission in Ezra-Nehemiah. New Studies in Biblical Theology. By Dean R. Ulrich. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021. 200 pp. $28.00, Paperback. ISBN 13-978-1514004074.

Dean R. Ulrich graduated from Westminster Theological Seminary with a doctorate and served as a pastor in a Presbyterian church (PCA). In addition to this book, Ulrich has penned other books including From Famine to Fullness, which looks at the theological message of the book of Ruth. He also taught Old Testament for many years in various institutions.

In Now and Not Yet, Ulrich presents a Biblical Theology of Ezra-Nehemiah (EN), that explores through that book what God has already done and what He will do. Stated differently, Ulrich reads EN as one part of the whole biblical story. His approach initially looks at how the author of EN treats the post-exilic community, then broadens to include the entire biblical story, and subsequently lays out some instruction on Christian living. While looking at a book of the Bible through the lens of

Biblical Theology is not new, this book offers this methodology in a book-sized treatment of EN. As for a specific thesis, Ulrich argues that EN emphasizes how one can become an ordinary, though "godly participant in God's story" in redemptive history (pp. 5, 25).

Ulrich accomplishes his thesis in eight chapters or about 160 pages. His initial chapter primarily focuses on explaining why most have neglected the book of EN and ends with a brief statement on his methodology and general purpose for the book. The second chapter functions to accomplish two goals: one, to explain Biblical Theology, especially in relation to a standard commentary and Systematic Theology; two, to provide an overview of how Biblical Theology would look applied to the book of EN. In this, he gives a brief guide for the structure of EN, presents its message, and places the book into the bigger story of the whole Bible. The following five chapters (chapters 3-7) constitute the body of the book, where he applies Biblical Theology as a method to the text. The eighth and final chapter very briefly presents a theological summary of EN. Specifically, as a recording of a time when God worked through the ordinary means of grace to achieve modest progress in His very imperfect people, ultimately closing this section in the Bible with "prayer in the face of bitter reality" (p. 160). Ulrich closes his book by encouraging the readers to look beyond the current now into the not yet, to Jesus who will bring the eternal "now."

The book contains an accurate and concise layout of the biblical, theological, and historical context of EN. On almost every page, Ulrich provides many helpful links to Old Testament (OT) passages, which relate to the current passage in a focus on theme, theology, and lexical links. Such helpfully curated connections aid those wishing to gain a fuller understanding of the OT network of shared meaning and theological terminology. Not limiting his links with the OT alone, he also traces themes into the New Testament. Example, he traces the state of the exiles in Ezra chapter one to Peter's declaration that the NT people of God live as sojourners and exiles (1 Pet. 2:11) or more loosely with Romans 8:28 and a mutual need to rely on God's sovereignty.

In addition to placing EN in its biblical and theological context, Ulrich helps those who do not have a quick or accurate grasp of the ancient near eastern (ANE) world, such as many pastors and most laymen. While the book does not pretend to offer a historical account of Israel, the ANE, or even the exilic community, it does offer a good grounding for the events

of the book without drowning its readers in the abundance of details available to those who wish to find them. Some of his best work on the ANE world naturally takes place toward the beginning of the book. Specifically, in his explanation of the literary outline of EN, he sprinkles many insights into the ANE world (pp. 17-25). Notably, he describes one of the most important events in the book of EN, the decree from Cyrus, which he consistently refers to in the book.

Another aspect of the book worthy of praise, comes in Ulrich's excellent assessment of the difficult issues within EN. In the modern era, Ezra's treatment of the intermarriage debate sparks the most controversy. While he does not give the most detailed, nor the closest reading available, Ulrich managed to write a succinct and thoroughly biblical treatment of this passage of scripture (pp. 83-96). Thankfully, he navigates through the typical pitfalls of either blaming Ezra on racial profiling or conversely overlooking any of the concerning passages, including forced divorcement. In his analysis of the issue, he, as always, connects with other passages in the Bible ranging from Exodus to 1 Corinthians and offers some level of canon-wide harmonization. So, while not the most extensive contribution to the issue, the book represents perhaps the best assessment of the intermarriage debate from both a micro (how Ezra dealt with the issue) and a macro standpoint (how Christians should think about the issue).

Good or bad, he consistently brings the themes he finds in EN into a discussion of how a NT follower of Christ can think about it and live it out. In a common example, he takes his explanation of the first chapter of Ezra and through the interpretive lens of Philippians 2:13 and Colossians 3:9-10 applies his findings of hope for followers of Jesus, who are "stuck in bad patterns of behavior" and long to be more like Jesus (pp. 32-33). For some, this will be a very welcome aspect to the book and an essential component to any good Biblical Theology. Others may view it as taking emphasis away from the original passage, itself often overlooked.

One could comfortably read the book in one or two sessions because of its short size and ease of writing style. Ulrich tends to avoid technical words in favor of common ones, so a layman can benefit from the book's content. Those who wish to enter a more rigorous conversation will benefit from Ulrich's many helpful footnotes, though the nature of his purpose for writing prevents the book from fully replacing commentaries

or monographs. Saying all that, the book shines the best as an excellent introduction into what God did in EN. A pastor may wish to read this before he ventures into preaching the book. Conversely, a Christian may wish to read through the different chapters right after reading each of the main sections of EN to help formulate the big picture of what God is accomplishing through His Bible.

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Old Made New. By Greg Lanier. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022. 176 pp. $17.99, Paperback. ISBN 1433577836.

In the book Old Made New: A Guide to the New Testament Use of the Old Testament by Greg Lanier, the author elevates the reader's reverence for, and commitment to, the Old Testament Scriptures by showing their intricate and inseparable relation to the New Testament. Lanier (Ph.D. University of Cambridge) is Associate Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida, and serves as an associate pastor at River Oaks Church in Lake Mary, Florida. He addresses this book specifically to a non-academic audience. His goal is to bring simplicity and clarity to a typically academic subject matter by giving the reader accessible tools, simplified terminology, and easy-to-grasp concepts. His writing is aimed at the people in the pew. The author's admirable intent is to equip believers for a lifetime of energizing, life-giving Bible study of the complete text of Scripture (p. 19).

Lanier approaches this often ambiguous and complex topic in six simple chapters: "Introduction," "Tools of the Trade," "The Old Testament and the Gospel," "The Old Testament and Jesus," "The Old Testament and the Church," and "Conclusion." He begins by expressing the intricate and beautiful connectedness of the Old and New Testaments. This introduction captures attention and draws the reader forward with fascination and a growing desire to explore the interconnectedness of Scripture. There is a sense of adventure awaiting in this fresh exploration of God's word.

Lanier then presents an effective and simple three-step process of understanding the New Testament's use of the Old Testament. First, "identify the passage," or understand when the New Testament is referencing the Old Testament either through citation, quotation, or allusion. Second, "double-click the Old Testament," that is, further explore the original Old Testament passage and context. Third, "listen to the remix," or more clearly understand the New Testament passage and consider how the author is applying, expanding, or using the Old Testament.

With this foundation laid, the author effectively explains that the Old and New Testaments present and explain the same gospel, dispelling the common misconception that the Old Testament is law and the New Testament is grace (p. 51). He does this by sharing a simple but effective synopsis of biblical theology: "Where We've Been" (creation and fall, Israel's unfinished story), "Where We Are Now" (the last days, times of Gentile inclusion, day of salvation), and "Where We Are Headed" (future resurrection and day of judgment). Through this chapter, the author effectively applies his three-step process to the theme of the gospel using specific examples of Old Testament passages used in the New Testament.

The author follows a similar framework when he proceeds to reveal how the Old Testament witnesses to the person of Christ. He states, "From the beginning to the ending of Jesus's earthly ministry, we are pointed to what is written in Scripture as the key to understanding who he is and what he has done" (p. 83). Using examples, the author explains key passages that reveal a coming divine Son (the deity of Christ foretold) as well as a coming human suffering Savior (the atoning work of Jesus foretold). He establishes that Jesus is the glue that binds the two Testaments and the thread of commonality between them (p. 117).

Lanier then uses his process to connect dots between the Old and New Testament concepts of God's people and God's church. He explores Old Testament concepts used in reference to New Testament believers and churches, tying together many similarities between God's relationship to Old Testament Israel and His relationship to the New Testament Church. The author reasonably and honestly admits that there is both "continuity and discontinuity" between Israel and the church, but states, "At a minimum this chapter shows that the NT authors see the OT as giving voice to the identity, mission, and conduct of today's church" (p. 151).

In closing, Lanier reviews his process and his desire to equip readers with a framework of understanding the Old Testament in connection to and through the lens of the New Testament. One of the most interesting and helpful aspects of the book is the Appendix, in which the author shares a lengthy list of Old Testament citations in the New Testament.

The great strength of this book is that the author has taken a complex subject and made it not only accessible, but also practically useful to the person in the pew. He does not merely teach the connection points between Old and New Testaments. He provides the reader with a useful framework and method for seeing, understanding, and properly interpreting and relating with those connections. This makes the book extremely useful for small group studies in churches. Believers who engage this resource will come away with an interpretive framework that will serve them for a lifetime of Bible study.

The challenge of this book will be that it should not be simply perused or quickly consumed. It is theological, not devotional, and yet extremely inspirational. Yes, Lanier has simplified a dense subject. But even in its simplified form, readers and students will need to move deliberately through the chapters, charted examples, and worksheets to gain the most from the text. For this reason, it is probably most useful for small group study or, at the very least, for the serious reader who is not looking for light reading.

In a day when the Old Testament has recently come under new assault, and when many who read the Bible struggle to understand the significance of the Old Testament, this book is a welcomed and needed resource for the church. It will aid expositors to tell God's story accurately and to properly interpret the Old Testament through the progressive revelation and clarity that God gives through the New Testament Scriptures. It will also give believers the skill of properly viewing, understanding, interpreting, and teaching the Old Testament through a Christo-centric, gospel-shaped framework of biblical theology.

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The Method of Christian Theology: A Basic Introduction. By Rhyne R. Putman. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2021. 318 pp. $22.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-5359-3333-9.

While the past few decades have seen a proliferation of many good and important publications in the field of systematic theology, far fewer works focused on theological method have been published over the same period. Rhyne R. Putman, in his third monograph, The Method of Christian Theology, helps fill this void. Given that Putman's prior two works, In Defense of Doctrine (Fortress, 2015) and When Doctrine Divides (Crossway, 2020), surveyed various aspects of Christian doctrine and doctrinal engagement, it is fitting that this third volume would address theological method, a presupposition of sorts to Christian doctrine.

Written with the understanding that the history of Christianity is riddled with varying approaches, some helpful and others not, to understanding God and his word, Putman desires to offer a "user-friendly" entry point for students into the world of doing theology that focuses on method as opposed to philosophy (p. 4). As such the "end goal" of the volume is to "develop a group of students passionate about Christian truth and reaching the nations for King Jesus" and not simply "sustain the academy" (p. 4). To accomplish being both an entry point into and a Great Commission-oriented understanding of theological method, Putman structures his work into four copacetic parts: part one (chapters one through four) on "principles," part two (chapters five and six) on "preparations," part three (chapters seven through eleven) on "procedures," and part four (chapters twelve through fourteen) on "practices."

Part one defines and offers a clarifying distinction between theology and doctrine. Chapter one addresses various approaches to defining theology before landing at a seminal definition of theology as "a critical and organized reflection on God's self-revelation for the purposes of growing in Christ and making disciples" (p. 22). Chapter two then distinguishes doctrine from theology by defining doctrine as "faithful and true teachings derived from Scripture and used to grow God's people in knowledge, spiritual maturity, and obedience" (p. 39). Chapters three and four build off these definitions by expounding upon how doctrine relates to discipleship (it changes how we view the world) and by briefly

examining the various theological disciplines and how they relate to one another.

After establishing the essential principles, Putman moves in part two to addressing the individual doing the work of theology. The question "who must a theologian be?" resounds throughout this part. Chapter five articulates a scriptural vision for how the theologian must study doctrine in the Spirit (p. 92) and cautions against studying doctrine in the flesh (p. 89). Chapter six then warns readers against the extremes of fideism and rationalism in their pursuit of understanding (pp. 103-105) and advocates that theologians must pursue being an intellectually virtuous people of faith who seek understanding (p. 107).

With these definitions and expectations in place, Putman develops his theological method in part three. Chapter seven offers a crash course on the doctrine of Scripture and interpretation. Putman defends a verbal-plenary view of the inspiration of Scripture, as well as the authoritative, trustworthy, perspicuous, and sufficient nature of Scripture. For Putman, pursuing theology begins by first engaging with and interpreting Scripture. Chapter eight addresses the role of the Christian tradition and historical theology in the pursuit of theology. Putman argues that "to study Christian theology is to enter a two-millennia-long conversation about the gospel and its implications for missions and the practice of the church" (p. 146). To enter this conversation means to pursue theology in a historical, global, communal, and interdenominational context (pp. 147-148). Chapter nine discusses the relationship between philosophy and theology, with particular reference to the utility it offers in providing concepts, grammar, and the defense and clarification of ideas. Chapter ten considers the role of experience in various theological traditions (such as Wesleyan churches, Liberal Protestantism, and others) before demonstrating the role of experience in theology such as in an individual's testimony. For Putman, experience "does not dictate the meaning of Scripture," but rather "Scripture gives meaning to experience, and experience confirms biblical truth" (p. 194). The final chapter in part three, chapter eleven, addresses a way forward to put the ideas from chapters seven through ten into practice. Putman offers his readers a reproduceable twelve-part method that individuals may use for "effective theological study" (p. 197).

Part four address how one might utilize the provided method. Chapter twelve considers how theologians should contextualize doctrine

for their audiences. Here, Putman builds off of Millard Erickson in his warning against "transplanting" or "transforming" doctrine, before suggesting students engage in the "translation" or contextualization of doctrine that is faithful to its original essence (p. 230). The body of the work closes in chapters thirteen and fourteen with two specific applications where the proposed theological method may be employed: theological research papers and doctrinal sermons. Putman's final word comes in a two-page conclusion where he suggests that theological method "is not the end, but the beginning" (283). For Putman, the "end" of this "beginning" is the fulfillment of the Great Commission born out of reflection on God's word and "the labor of theology" (p. 284) that produces sound doctrine for God's people.

Putman's work is imminently self-aware. He ably writes of the necessity for students, pastors, and theologians alike to have a grasp on the method they employ when doing theology. However, Putman is careful not to concretize his perspectives, nor does he totalize his method. He recognizes that "theology is both an art-like science and a science-like art" (p. 195) that must balance creativity and wisdom with mechanics and procedures. There is no one way to do theology, but there are good approaches to pursue and pitfalls to avoid, and as such Putman offers "a way to study theology" (p. 196), not "the" way.

Moreover, Putman accomplishes something in his work that other volumes on method generally fail to achieve: a provided example of an itemized, reproduceable method. As noted above, chapter eleven provides a twelve step "way" of doing theology that students may utilize. The provided method is the culmination of Putman's desire to produce "a user-friendly book" for students that is more interested in developing a specific method for doing theology than endeavoring into the philosophy of theology (p. 4). Putman has surely achieved this end.

While the uncareful reader might make claims that Putman's work scoffs at the importance of the academy's role in theological inquiry, this is simply not the case. The volume is clearly written for students and not academicians (p. 4), but Putman is quick to acknowledge that "scholarly endeavors do, in fact, serve a crucial purpose" (p. 44). As an academic himself, he "punches right" in his recognition of the need for the uninitiated to have access to materials on theological method written in simple language. Putman's production of an accessible entry point into the complicated waters of theological method balances the importance of

Christian scholarship with the end goal of building Christ's church. Not dismissive of the relationship between the academy and church, Putman handles this sensitive issue with the integrity of a gentleman-scholar. Theology must not begin and end in the academy but must be pursued with the evangelism of the world, the edification of the church, and ultimately, the glory of God as its end.

Structured like a textbook with key terms and sources for additional research provided at the end of each chapter, The Method of Christian Theology provides a valuable and practical starting point for students wishing to delve deeper into the study of theology.

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Redeeming Our Thinking About History: A God-Centered Approach. By Vern S. Poythress. Wheaton: Crossway, 2022. 256 pp. $21.85, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4335-7144-2.

History is important, especially how one thinks about it. In Redeeming Our Thinking about History, Dr. Vern Poythress makes a strong case for both points, arguing particularly for the preeminence of a God-centered approach to thinking about history. Poythress has published similar books on science, philosophy, and mathematics, as well as many other topics. He holds several advanced degrees and has been teaching at Westminster Theological Seminary for nearly fifty years.

In his opening chapter, Poythress highlights two reasons why biblical history is important. First, God says it is by way of commands to pay attention to it. Here, Poythress quotes several illustrative passages (e.g., Deut 4:9-11) and notes how Christianity is a history-dependent faith. Second, he gives reasons why history is "good for our souls" (p. 17): it broadens our understanding of God, Christ and redemption, and humanity, and "leads to praising God and glorifying him" (p. 19). Secondarily, these reasons inform the usefulness of extrabiblical history also.

In the first of five parts, Poythress surveys elements necessary for historical analysis, beginning with submission to "[Christ's] universal rule" (p. 23). Besides rule, God has a plan for history as well, although history's contours remain extremely complex. To understand history, Poythress urges the consideration of events, people, and meanings, which are interdependent and fundamentally sourced in God. Next, after noting that "People are either for God or against him" (p. 48), Poythress exemplifies the implications of this worldview dichotomy. He starts with historical reductionism, which results when historians replace God with another organizing principle (e.g., rationalism). He then underscores the skills of understanding people and historical causes. The Christian has the advantage in each, insofar as the biblical worldview retains unparalleled explanatory power for human nature and action, the regularities that give rise to and explain events, and miracles.

Part 2 covers the unity, diversity, and uniqueness of biblical history. History's unity derives from God, the ruler and designer of history, "both in its large-scale shape and in its every detail" (p. 84). God's plan of redemption composes the former, while innumerable "miniredemptions" and tragedies make up the latter (p. 85). Complexity and diversity run throughout, but God's judgment and Christ's victory are certain. There is also much diversity, as represented by multiple accounts of similar events in the biblical record. Such diversity reflects God, just as His authorship renders it unique among historical writing. Consequently, the Bible cannot be used as a blanket model for thinking and writing about history, but with the Spirit's leading, it can help Christians understand, study, and write about history in productive and God-glorifying ways.

In part 3, Poythress explores "Understanding God's Purposes in History" (p. 101). Beginning and ending with the Bible, he explains that divine purposes are more often shown than told and provide a reliable framework for meaning and understanding. He then takes up discerning God's purposes outside of the Bible, warning against overreach while urging recognition and praise in both public (e.g., academia) and private (e.g., church). Relevant guiding principles include God's sovereignty, glory, benevolence, justice, His use of trials, and Scripture as an evaluative standard. Next, Poythress returns to historical analysis, noting the limits of objectivity, perception, and subjective impressions, along with the fiction of religious neutrality in academia.

Building on neutrality, part 4 addresses how Christians should write history. Using the Roman persecutions and Reformation doctrinal struggles as examples, Poythress argues that Christians must take sides in some cases. At other times, Christian freedom allows for backgrounding "partisanship" by prioritizing "factual narrative" over "overt moral evaluations" (p. 171). This, of course, requires a careful weighing of motives. Concerning histories of people untouched by the gospel, interpreting God's purposes is more difficult, but "biblical principles are always relevant" (p. 181).

Borrowing heavily from the work of Jay D. Green, part 5 focuses on ways Christians formally approach historical writing. Of the seven versions outlined, providentialism ("the study of God's purposes in history," p. 195) naturally receives the most attention. Originally framed as "rival" versions by Green (p. 186), Poythress contends that they are better understood as "complementary emphases," (p. 213) which he later expands to compatible "perspectives" useful for studying all of history (p. 216). In the end, Poythress returns once more to providentialism, warning against counterfeits while encouraging a humble and vigorous study of history in service to God.

If Poythress's goal is to present a "God-centered approach" to thinking about history, he achieves this by continually relating his many subtopics to God. His broad coverage is indeed valuable, but it can be difficult to follow his thinking (e.g., Why these subtopics in this particular arrangement?) and sometimes his positions (e.g., Where precisely does he stand on making claims on God's purposes? cf. chs. 13, 14, and 23) from one section to the next. In light of this, an introduction that succinctly outlined his writing purposes, premises, and plan to orient the reader, together with a summary conclusion, would be most helpful.

Another strength is Poythress's recurring emphasis on the complexity of history. He highlights this in a variety of ways, from singular claims (e.g., "History is murky," p. 123) to more systematic commentary (e.g., his chapter on historical reductionism, pp. 51-61). To this end, he wisely urges caution in evaluating humans and events (pp. 142-144), remarking often on the influence of common grace and sin (e.g., pp. 46, 63-65), and noting the invariable oversimplification of dichotomous labeling (pp. 55, 86). Elsewhere, the complexity of certain topics would benefit from further explanation. For instance, Poythress rightly and consistently

speaks of God's sovereignty over history. Besides rule (p. 84), he also speaks of God's design (p. 84) and purposes (pp. 103, 116). That he typically stresses the plenary nature of each – combined with his references to divine causation (pp. 69, 103, 115) – begs a discussion on God's relationship to human agency, generally, and sin and evil in particular. He does not ignore these subjects, nor the specific questions in view (cf. pp. 32-35, 133-134, 143), but in light of their gravity, a robust synopsis of these issues is preferable to a citation for further reference (p. 34).

Similarly, consolidating his understanding of meaning, which he references extensively, would be advantageous. Statements like "God controls the meanings of the events [of history]" and "God crafts historical events and gives them meaning" (p. 35) are perplexing. Undoubtedly, such claims relate to God's plan for history (cf. pp. 23-24, 84-88) and His purposes (cf. part 3), but Poythress's notion of meaning and its relationship to God's plan and purposes is not always clear. From this reader's perspective, thoroughly emphasizing God's glory (cf. pp. 19, 123, 128) as a unifying principle of purpose and meaning would be a worthwhile anchor to have fixed in mind from the very beginning.

Considering the significance of history and the prevalence of revisionism, this book is important for all Christians for its reminders that God is indeed at the center of history, purposefully controlling its every part. It serves as a valuable introduction to thinking about history, sufficiently arguing for a God-centered approach, while simultaneously providing the reader a variety of avenues for further research. It is a must-read for budding historians and is brimming with useful reminders for those more experienced.

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The Care of Souls: Cultivating a Pastor's Heart. By Harold L. Senkbeil. Bellingham, Washington: Lexham Press, 2019. 312 pp. $21.99, Hardcover. ISBN 1683593014.

"What will make the boat go faster?" This statement provided the primary paradigm for evaluating ministry and planning for the coming academic year on the ministry team with which the reviewer served. An earnest desire for the expansion of the gospel drove an attempt to reverse engineer the envisioned picture of success. In The Care of Souls, Harold Senkbeil proposes a different framework for faithfully engaging in the work of pastoral ministry: habitus, "a pastoral temperament or character worked by the Holy Spirit through his means" (p. 17). Senkbeil aims to reorient the minister's priority from doing to being, and he calls the pastor to anticipate the fruit of ministry labor that comes from the long, patient work of living in vital fellowship with Jesus—not the other way around.

Shaped by almost fifty years of ministry experience, Harold Senkbeil serves as Executive Director of DOXOLOGY: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care. His varied experience, as well as his current role providing care and counsel to a new generation of Lutheran pastors, ably positions him to write this book on pastoral formation. From his years in ministry and his childhood growing up on a farm, Senkbeil weaves stories, observations, and instructions into a vision for pastors and their ministry rooted in the only source of life, hope, and endurance: Jesus Christ.

Senkbeil begins by describing his father's labor on their family farm. This picture will serve as an orienting metaphor throughout the book—a framework for his own reflections on learning the craft and character of pastoral ministry. Senkbeil then defines pastoral care as being bound up in Jesus and the gifts of His Word and Spirit. A pastor's fundamental formation comes from knowing Jesus and sharing this fellowship with others through the ministry of the Word and the sacraments. The author leads the reader through the relational foundations of diagnosis and treatment, the nuanced influence of both guilt and shame, the hope of the Gospel in the pursuit of holiness, the sober-minded battle within the spiritual realm, the earnest participation in evangelism as a pastor, the continuing need for care as a leader, and a final call to endurance. The steady cadence of humble service by Word and sacrament as stewards of

the mysteries of Christ forms the uniting theme, even as the image of his father's farming formation carries through to the conclusion's benediction, "The Holy Spirit bless you" (p. 281).

The greatest strength of this book is the quiet, persevering dignity that Senkbeil restores to the pastoral ministry of one who receives from Jesus and gives to those entrusted to his care. This is an honor cultivated through faithful teaching and tending (1 Tim 5:17) that grows from humble dependence at the feet of Jesus—not the independent brashness of platform peddling or visioneering that plays to a personal brand (2 Cor 2:17). Not only does Senkbeil's writing push back against a consumer-driven approach to pastoral ministry, it also helpfully corrects the possible overemphasis on every-member ministry that flattens the unique calling of pastors. Senkbeil provides an arresting picture of the humble dignity of this role in his description of the sheepdog and his master. Though the sheepdog is not aware of every purpose of the master, he gives himself wholeheartedly to the perplexing, constant work of guiding the sheep out of love for his master (p. 123).

Senkbeil accompanies this continuous recalibration of a pastoral heart with helpful, concrete practices of a careful undershepherd who ministers out of dependence upon the calling and gifts of the Chief Shepherd. The reader is not left adrift with only a compelling vision, absent of identifiable steps of faith that will cultivate this habitus. Among his many contributions, the reviewer found Senkbeil's chapters on diagnosis and treatment to be particularly helpful in practicing the classical pastoral model of ministry. As the terms diagnosis and treatment feel particularly medical in nature, Senkbeil acknowledges that he draws from a conversation he had with a medical doctor who shared that oral history is critical for meaningful care. The same reality holds true for the pastor; thus, Senkbeil emphasizes the importance of listening well along four complementary layers: faith, providence, holiness, and repentance. Listening in this way positions the pastor for appropriate treatment of the particular issues beneath the apparent symptoms. Senkbeil helpfully follows this emphasis with ten theses for treatment that weave principles with stories of pastoral practice.

The reviewer encountered two elements that provided nuanced challenges to reading this book. Awareness of these two elements would serve future readers. First, Senkbeil writes unapologetically from a Lutheran background—as he should! Yet his sacramental emphasis and

some of his own stories may sound foreign to readers with different Protestant backgrounds or convictions. A concise systematic theology that engages the varying Lutheran emphases with other Protestant traditions may be helpful for understanding Senkbeil's counsel and meaningfully translating it to one's own convictions and practice. Second, the ordering of the book's chapters requires the reader to anticipate more clarification of a discussion in a later chapter or referencing back to an earlier chapter to remember the context of a previous discussion. In some ways, this book reads like a memoir, moving narratively from various lessons that have helped train Senkbeil's own habitus throughout his pastoral ministry. Neither critique detracts from the value of the book, but both may help a future reader engage meaningfully with the author.

Among a number of significant lessons, the reviewer has been particularly influenced by The Care of Souls in three ways. First, the striking imagery of the sheepdog with his master, and Senkbeil's accompanying reflections, have helped to reorient the reviewer's hope and understanding within the daily plodding of ministry. The humble, receptive participation of the sheepdog in the master's purposes frees the sheepdog for the duty of the day done for the love of the master. Second, Senkbeil repeatedly addressed the right ordering of a pastor's priorities in ministering to others—first was the person's primary need to relate with God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As such, Senkbeil's emphasis on God's Word, prayer, and sacraments is correct. Third, Senkbeil helpfully dismantles the false dichotomy of mission and pastoral care (p. 221). The reviewer's primary ministry over the last decade has been among college students, largely involving evangelistic initiative and foundational discipling. Might an emphasis on pastoral habitus impede the advance of the gospel? No. Instead, the very character and temperament formed in a pastor's abiding fellowship with Jesus brings the life-giving gospel of Jesus Christ to the unbeliever even as it nourishes those entrusted to his pastoral leadership. It overflows into all his relationships. This reminder encourages the reviewer to continue to cultivate a pastor's heart in the patient application of the fundamental gifts of Word, prayer, and worship wherever God places him in ministry.

The reviewer highly recommends Harold Senkbeil's The Care of Souls for every weary pastor faithfully laboring among God's flock, for every cynical ministry leader looking for more than the next leadership fad, and

for every aspiring pastor longing to learn the fundamental character and calling essential for enduring ministry under the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

Aaron Trent
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Ethics Beyond Rules: How Christ's Call to Love Informs our Moral Choices. By Keith D. Stanglin. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021. 233 pp. $26.99, Hardcover. ISBN 978-0-310-12090-2.

Many Christians have been exposed to a rule laden understanding of Christian ethics reminiscent of the movie Footloose: Do not have sex outside of marriage. Do not swear. Do not get drunk, etc. Keith Stanglin, executive director of the Center for Christian Studies in Austin, Texas, hopes to provide a better way of ethical reasoning with his book Ethics Beyond Rules: How Christ's Love Informs Our Moral Choices. His "aim is to help disciples of Christ…think through the basics of Christian ethics in a self-critical way" (p. xvi) and "provide them with an accessible guide to what ethics is, what Christians should believe and practice—and why—and to challenge the church to love as Jesus Christ loves" (p. xix).

In part 1 (chapters 1-5), Stanglin lays the foundation for Christian ethical reasoning, emphasizing that moral relativism is "counterintuitive, unbiblical and impractical" (p. 13) and that an objective morality exists and can be known through one's conscience and reason but more clearly through Scripture. He purports that humans are to be morally good in order to be like God and fulfil our human purpose (telos). While briefly summarizing deontological and consequentialist ethics, Stanglin concludes that ultimately "Christian ethics always comes back to the virtues" (p. 29). He writes that, while rules are a necessary gift for immature people to be formed in virtue and protected, the Christian life is ultimately about love and freedom and that "to reduce Christian morality to a set of rules is to miss the point" (p. 33).

Acknowledging that "the fundamental virtue of Christian ethics is love" Stanglin believes "the fundamental question of ethics is, 'What does

love require?'" (p. 47). He helpfully defines love as "the commitment to and pursuit of the actual good of the other" (p. 53), citing the example of Jesus' ministry. Lastly, Stanglin recognizes the complexity of using the Bible in ethical discussions but sketches out how the Bible gives us three tiers regarding morals: (1) rules, (2) principles and paradigms, and (3) Christian worldview and theological convictions. In conclusion, he emphasizes tradition and reason (and to a lesser degree, experience) as aids to interpreting Scripture and reasoning ethically in a Christian manner.

This section is easily the strongest part of the book. In just 65 pages Stanglin accessibly presents a Christian ethics 101 course that skillfully covers classic ethical questions: Is there objective morality? How can we know it? Why should we be good? Do we focus on the action, consequence of action or actor in ethical evaluation and formation? All this in a deceptively easy-going style that accomplishes his original aim quoted above.

In part 2 (chapters 6-12), Stanglin provides "concrete case studies that approach the respective topics through the decisively Christian principles and assumptions developed" (p. xvii) in part 1. Stanglin's discussion of familiar, hot-button territory (sexual ethics, abortion) as well as less commonly discussed subjects in ethics books (the use of technology, politics) are sure to stimulate and even provoke readers. His emphasis on sex for procreation (p. 73), connecting almsgiving with salvation (pp. 126-130), cautioning against the ubiquitous and uncritical acceptance of smart phones and social media (pp. 140-146), and other opinions are sure to evoke a reaction within the Christian reader living in the modern, Western world.

I found the chapters that explicitly follow Stanglin's ethical method described in part 1 (first look to Scripture, then tradition, reason, etc.) more helpful than those that did not, which sometimes felt disjointed from the rest of the book. Despite being very well researched, the short chapters did not give Stanglin enough space to corroborate his—at times—strongly worded opinions. For instance, I was not convinced that he adequately supported his dismissal of identity politics as a form of racism (p.184).

While I disagree with some of his conclusions, and occasionally his tone, Stanglin's discussions are thoroughly Christian. That is, instead of being persuaded into Stanglin's tradition (the Church of Christ) readers

are invited into the Great Tradition. Throughout the book he quotes many Church Fathers and a diverse group of other past voices such as St. Benedict, Richard Hooker, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Pope Paul VI, John Wesley, Martin Luther King, Karl Barth, the Didache and other early Christian texts, altogether giving the book a firm foundation and rich sources for its arguments. These voices richly serve to remind readers that we are not the first students of Jesus to seek God in the face of challenging moral issues, and we need not reinvent the ethical wheel.

In part 3 (chapters 13-14), Stanglin provides a helpful discussion regarding the two senses of the word "world" and what it means to be in the world but not of the world. Lastly, he exhorts his readers to take up the identity as "loving resistant fighters" (p. 206) as part of a "church militant" (p. 202) and be faithful to Christ in an anti-Christian environment.

These chapters highlight language throughout the book that depicts a world that is "increasingly hostile to believers" (p. xviii), in which Christians need to be willing to "take a bullet for…[their] beliefs" (p. 26). He calls the current cultural and moral situation a "crisis" (p. 205) and a "war" (p. 206). Numerous references to "American churches" (p. 205) make evident that the "our society" (p. 7) Stanglin speaks of is the United States. Given this, I wonder if his us-vs-them language unintentionally plays into the larger culture war rhetoric already ravaging a polarized country. Coming from a pluralistic, cosmopolitan city in a thoroughly post-Christian country, I think language that reflects a posture of service and witness is generally more helpful than warfare and battle.

Despite these critiques Stanglin's book remains a fine candidate for small groups and book clubs wishing to think about Christian ethics. Such groups will find the discussion questions, a further reading list, and a relatively short length accommodating to meeting their aims. Other options include the slightly longer, less-introductory (but perhaps more nuanced) multi-authored work Discerning Ethics: Diverse Christian Responses to Divisive Moral Issues (InterVarsity Press, 2020), edited by Hak Joon Lee and Tim Dearborn.

Jonathan Tysick
Wycliffe College, University of Toronto

PhD Graduates (2022)
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

PhD Graduates (2022) from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, with their PhD emphases, dissertation title and supervisory committee members.

December 2022 – PhD Graduates

Justin Joseph Lee Benson, PhD (Historical Theology)
What is Landmarkism? Defining Landmarkism by Rationale and its Development.
Dr. Jason Duesing and Dr. Alan Branch

Samuel Levi Bierig, PhD (Biblical-Studies-Biblical Theology)
"Walk in the Way": Modernist Hermeneutics, Classical Theism, and the Case for a Single Thematic-Theological Controlling Principle in the Book of Proverbs.
Dr. Matthew Barrett and Dr. Mitchell Chase

David C. Dickenson, PhD (Biblical Studies-New Testament)
Thanking God Emphatically: Indirect Rebuke in the Three Thanksgivings of 1 Corinthians.
Dr. Christopher Azure and Dr. Eric C. Turner

Joshua Firey, PhD (Biblical Studies-Systematic Theology)
Same Spirit, Same Empowerment: Affirming an Exclusively Spirit-Empowered Christ through the Transfer of the Spirit.
Dr. Patrick Schreiner and Dr. Sam Storms

Timothy Gatewood, PhD (Systematic Theology)
Truth not Served by Human Hands: A Reformed Thomistic Retrieval of Divine Transcendence, Omniscience, and Participatory Truth.
Dr. Matthew Barrett and Dr. Thor Madsen

Cory M. Gonyo, PhD (Missiology)
Establishing Principles for Biblical Contextualization with Specific Application in Theravada and Folk Buddhism of Southeast Asia.
Dr. Andreas Köstenberger and Dr. Blake Hearson

Eliezer Graterol, PhD (Missiology)
Can Jesus Help Buddhists Find Meaning in Suffering? The Coexistence of Meaning and Suffering as an Ontological Approach to Reaching Buddhists.
Dr. Cory Gonyo and Dr. Thor Madsen

Justin W. Jackson, PhD (Biblical Studies-Biblical Theology)
Under the Wings of the Redeemer: A Biblical Theology of Ruth.
Dr. Blake Hearson and Dr. Eric Montgomery

Beau Landers, PhD (Biblical Studies-Theology)
Christ Will Give You Rest: A Biblical Theology of the Sabbath.
Dr. Jason DeRouchie and Dr. Owen Strachan

Joseph Lanier, PhD (Systematic Theology)
Life, Light, and Love: Divine Aseity in Theological, Historical, and Hermeneutical Perspective.
Dr. Matthew Barrett and Dr. Gavin Ortlund

Nicholas Majors, PhD (Biblical Studies-Old Testament)
The King-Priest in 1-2 Samuel: A Messianic Motif.
Dr. Jason DeRouchie and Dr. Rustin Umstattd

Eric John Michalls, PhD (Biblical Studies-New Testament)
The Seventh from Adam: An Apologetical and Theological Use of the Hebrew Scriptures and Pseudepigraphal Texts in Jude and 2 Peter.
Dr. Radu Gheorghita and Dr. Thor Madsen

Keith Palmer, PhD (Biblical Counseling)
John Newton's Theology of Suffering and its Application to Pastoral Care.
Dr. Dale Johnson and Dr. Stephen Yuille

Justin Powell, PhD (Historical Theology)
A Faith without Works is Dead: The Need for Re-examining the Polemics of the Second Century.
Dr. John Mark Yeats and Dr. Jesse Payne

PhD Graduates

Mark Lewis Richardson, PhD (Biblical Studies-Biblical Ministry)
Jesus and the Sons of God Motif: A Biblical Theological Reassessment of the Gospel.
Dr. Todd Chipman and Dr. Eric Turner

Carlos Bertrand Smith, PhD (Theology)
The Image of God and Cognitive Disabilities: Dignity, Dominion and Dependence.
Dr. Alan Branch and Dr. John Mark Yeats

William Tyler Sykora, PhD (Biblical Studies)
Perishable and Imperishable? Reconsidering the Building Materials in 1 Corinthians 3:12.
Dr. Thor Madsen and Dr. Eric Turner

Joshua Aaron Tillman, PhD (Biblical Studies-Biblical Theology)
Sing a New Song: The Shape and Message of Book 1 of the Psalter.
Dr. Blake Hearson and Dr. Rustin Umstattd

Michael Alan Todd, PhD (Historical Theology)
A Conquering Rhetoric of Liberation: The Work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.
Dr. Thor Madsen and Dr. Jason Doty

Jonathan David Woodyard, PhD (Historical Theology)
A Faith Disposed Towards Jesus: The Relationship between Love and Faith in Jonathan Edwards and the Reformed Tradition.
Dr. Jason Duesing and Dr. Michael McMullen

Jonathan Richard Wright, PhD (Biblical Studies-New Testament)
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