

# MIDWESTERN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Spring 2026 issue of the *Midwestern Journal of Theology*. Once again I would like to express 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 Mr. Jeff Lavenau for all the various tasks that he has helped with on this issue.

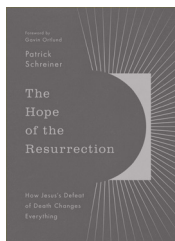
In this current issue we are happy to publish four articles, with the first three coming from professors at Midwestern and the final one from Dr. Tim Haupt of First Baptist Church, Nixa, MO. Our first piece was the Faculty Address given by Dr. Matthew Swain in the Fall of 2025, in which he argues convincingly for the important role of Southern Baptist Theological training for the Musician-Theologian. This is followed by Dr. John Meade's detailed analysis of Origen's Hexapla for Biblical and Theological studies. Our penultimate article and the final piece from Midwestern faculty in this issue, is Dr. Andrew King's scholarly Biblical analysis of the injustice and idolatry as it is presented in Hosea 10:1-8. Our final article as noted, comes from Dr. Tim Haupt in which he examines carefully and helpfully the role of the Church in John Bunyan's doctrine of sanctification.

As usual we close this issue with a number of relevant and thought-provoking book reviews, helpfully secured and edited by Dr. Blake Hearson the book review editor.

If you have an interest in submitting an article for consideration, please submit a Word document to the managing editor Dr. Michael McMullen at [mmcmullen@mbts.edu](mailto:mmcmullen@mbts.edu). Articles are typically 4,000–5,000 words, but we do not impose a word limit. Every article submitted will be reviewed and if accepted for publication will be formatted after acceptance and so no particular style is required for submission. We are sorry we are not able to publish every article we receive.

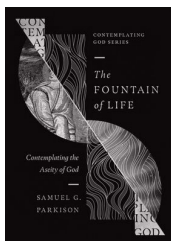
# Books in Brief

New and upcoming releases from the Midwestern Seminary community



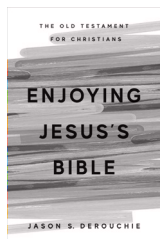
## THE HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION by Patrick Schreiner

In this approachable study, Patrick Schreiner explains the history, apologetics, theology, and ethics of the resurrection. Jesus's resurrection happened centuries ago, but evidence shows it is at the center of everything that is *true*, *good*, and *beautiful* today. These three attributes—or transcendentals—provide a simple framework for understanding reality, including Christ's victory over death and why it matters for your life.



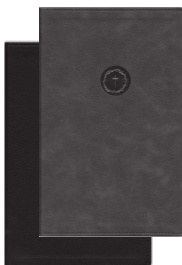
## THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE by Samuel G. Parkison

As part of the Contemplating God series, this book offers an accessible and engaging exploration of divine aseity. Blending theological depth, readability, and literary creativity, Samuel G. Parkison welcomes readers into the riches of the classical Christian tradition, inviting them to marvel at the wondrous mysteries of God.



## ENJOYING JESUS'S BIBLE by Jason DeRouchie

Unhealthy approaches to the Old Testament can lead to significant doctrinal and ethical problems. This is why Jason DeRouchie's *Enjoying Jesus's Bible* teaches us how to read the Old Testament in the ways God intends, see Jesus where Scripture discloses him, hope in all God's promises for us, and live faithfully in relation to God's law. *Enjoying Jesus's Bible* will help you see like never before that the Old Testament is Christian Scripture given by God to instruct us and instill hope in us—hope in and through Jesus Christ.



## SPURGEON AND THE GOSPELS by Geoff Chang

Geoff Chang's *Spurgeon and the Gospels* invites readers to encounter Christ through the eyes of Charles Spurgeon. This devotional on the Gospels features brief extracts from Charles Spurgeon's sermons and collected works leading into each chapter of the four Gospels. Each reflection prepares the reader to enter the chapter with insights from one of the church's most influential preachers.

Strength For Today, Bright Hope for Tomorrow:  
Carrying the Baton of  
Southern Baptist Theological Training  
for the Musician-Theologian

MATTHEW F. SWAIN,  
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If Churches Everywhere would cease to regard sacred music either with indifference or as a matter of mere taste; if they would commence with the young, training their ears while they are sensitive, and their voices while they are flexible . . . ; and if the voices of all God's people should join in heartily and understandingly with grace not only in the notes but in the heart, the effect would certainly surprise us all.<sup>1</sup>

In 2023, an article written for *The Alabama Baptist* by Erin Roach shed light on growing concerns over an alarming and increasing rate of music minister shortages within churches of the Southern Baptist Convention. In her quest for answers, author Erin Roach interviewed several prominent denominational leaders, including Dr. Steve Bowersox, Chair of the University of Mobile's Department of Worship Leadership and Production Technology, for answers. Bowersox shared anecdotal evidence exposing the then-current challenge for the church. The issue, according to Bowersox, was not having too many graduates to fill a limited number of ministry positions. Rather, there was a scarcity of

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<sup>1</sup> *The Baptist Psalmody: A Selection of Hymns for the Worship of God* by Basil Manly Jr. and Basil Manly Sr. (1850).

qualified individuals to fill those ministry roles. Bowersox stated, “Last year [2022] at graduation, the school was presented with 35 more [ministry] positions than they had graduates to fill [those] positions.”<sup>2</sup> At the time of the article’s publication, Bowersox acknowledged that this deficit had been present for the previous five years.

Although surprising, Dr. Bowersox’s observations are indicative of a larger problem within the Southern Baptist Convention. Fast forward just two years after this article was published, and the situation has intensified. Churches across the Southern Baptist Convention are competing to hire worship pastors from an insufficient supply of qualified music ministry candidates. Although not a comprehensive explanation for this phenomenon, several overarching reasons contribute to the problem:

1. Churches today are looking to hire worship pastors who are adequately trained both theologically and musically. Along with a diverse set of musical skills, they want individuals with robust theological training. More often than not, candidates have either musical training or theological training, but rarely a combination of both.
2. A current generation of worship pastors is on the verge of retirement. As those individuals begin to age out of ministry, they will leave an even greater number of available positions to fill by qualified candidates. These are positions that will grow increasingly difficult to fill with a small pool of candidates.
3. Changes in worship styles, and theological shifts have impacted curricula in the academy both for better and for worse. In the early 2000s, many SBC Colleges and Seminaries sought to shift the educational pendulum away from conservatory models, which stressed high levels of skill and musicianship. The purpose of this pendulum swing was to meet the expanded pastoral and ministry-related demands placed on 21st-century church musicians.

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<sup>2</sup> Erin Roach, “Amid Music Minister Shortages, Training Shifts to Emphasis on Theology,” *Alabama Baptist*, February 2, 2023.

<https://thealabamabaptist.org/amid-music-minister-shortage-training-shifts-to-emphasis-on-theology/>

Institutions, therefore, sought to build curricula robust in Theology and Bible training. Such warranted additions acknowledged the ministerial nature of most worship-related positions and helped steer training toward preaching, teaching, counseling, discipling, and shepherding. At the same time, many of these institutions diminished practical training in the language and skill of music, leaving students with skill-based deficits and unable to meet the increasingly complex musical demands of today's church.

4. A pervading belief that musical training is not necessary for leading a worship ministry in the local church, causing candidates to bypass standard music training. In this scenario, often a theologically-minded (or theologically trained), but self-taught musician is considered sufficient. Unfortunately, this type of self-taught, or "hobby musician," usually burns out after a few years due to limited musical skills, which prevent them from leading and developing a more comprehensive music ministry.

5. Diminishing opportunities within the local church to train, teach, equip, and call out young people in the area of music ministry. In the same article published by the Alabama Baptist, Dr. Joe Crider, Dean of Southwestern Seminary's School of Church Music, cites a reason for today's struggle. He states, "The reasons for the shortage are complex, he said. As churches moved away from children's choirs, youth choirs, and even adult choirs, musical opportunities and training [within] a ministry context diminished significantly . . . Therefore, generations of young people [have not been] exposed to music making in the church for the purpose of helping lead others in worship."<sup>3</sup>

The most obvious piece of good news is that worship and music students who graduate from one of the Southern Baptist seminaries will have little difficulty finding a ministry position. But the problem should stand as a "call to arms" for both the churches and academic institutions of the Southern Baptist Convention that continue to labor in this critical

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<sup>3</sup> Erin Roach, "Amid Music Minister Shortages, Training Shifts to Emphasis on Theology," *Alabama Baptist*, February 2, 2023.

area. Thankfully, however, the Southern Baptist Convention has been historically committed to the theological and musical training of its worship leaders, and excellent efforts are currently being made toward this end. If our churches and seminaries continue to invest in the future generation of church musicians, a bright and hope-filled future lies ahead. Most importantly, God has not brought us to this hour and dilemma without answers and a path forward. Although the harvest of workers appears few, the landscape is changing, and for the better. The theological institutions of the Southern Baptist Convention have been, and remain, steadfast in their commitment to train worship leaders.

In light of these concerns, today's lecture will present a unique voice and perspective toward the ever-evolving conversation of how best to enrich the church's song by training the next generation of leaders in this area for the church. In our brief time together, I hope to:

1. Present a brief early history of church music education in the Southern Baptist Convention, and show its historic commitment to bettering the church's worship through such efforts.
2. Demonstrate that committee recommendations for better church music presented to the convention in 1926 are helpful guideposts as we seek answers and direction for the future.
3. Share how Midwestern's Department of Worship Ministries is attempting to uniquely steward convention efforts to train musician-theologians for the church today and into the future.
4. Encourage Midwestern's faculty, staff, and students to play a role in helping this endeavor by becoming the Singing Seminary.

#### A Brief History of Southern Baptist Church Music Education

The role of "Worship Pastor" or "Minister of Music" is one that Twenty-first Century Southern Baptist churchgoers are well-acquainted with. Before the twentieth century, however, the concept of a "Minister of Music" was largely unknown. In an article titled "The Minister of Music in Southern Baptist Life," church musician and hymnologist Hugh T. McElrath noted that during the first two decades of the twentieth century, the professionalized role of music minister was nearly non-

existent. McElrath pointed out that 90% of Baptist churches were led musically by amateurs, while only a small 10% were led by any type of professional<sup>4</sup>. It was into this landscape that pioneering efforts were made by the *Baptist Sunday School Board* in order to cultivate improved local church music programs by encouraging its musicians to be better trained. In addition to improving the musical state of the church, convention efforts were intentional to improve the corpus of hymnody being sung on an average Sunday. This began with a convention resolution in 1910 to “supply the Brethren of our churches with hymns and songbooks such as were suitable and desirable.” The well of 19th-century gospel hymnody, unfortunately, left many churches singing hymns lacking in substantive theological and Christological content. Additionally, the quality of hymn singing on an average Sunday left little to be desired.

By the 1920s, stronger convention efforts to improve the state of church music began to materialize. “Schools of music” were established among several SBC seminaries with the intention of training God-called men and women for ministry in church music. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary was the first to develop a “Department of Gospel Music” in 1915 to accomplish these efforts. By 1921, the department had changed names from the “Department of Gospel Music” to the “*School of Gospel Music*.” Isham Emmanuel (I.E.) Reynolds was the first Professor of Church Music at Southwestern, and it was he who helped to establish this first-of-a-kind Baptist training program under the leadership of the institution’s president, Lee Rutland Scarborough. Reynolds was a transplant from the North, and a graduate from Moody Bible Institute, where the training of church musicians was already underway. Reynolds and Scarborough hoped that this new training ground would help address areas of improvement in the church’s music. Southwestern Seminary had three objectives in training church musicians: 1) that their students would embody a spiritual and evangelistic fervor, 2) that students would learn scholarly and efficient musicianship, and 3) that students would be able to practically apply

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<sup>4</sup> Hugh T. McElrath, “The minister of music in Southern Baptist life.” *Baptist History and Heritage*, 21(3), 1986.

their learning in the local church.<sup>5</sup> The program started out with nine students in the first class, and quickly grew to over two hundred with approximately fifteen faculty members. Simultaneously, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary established a church music program in 1919, and opened its department under the leadership of E.O. Sellars.

Although the idea of a vocational minister of music was not yet established, more groundwork was being laid across the landscape of the convention. Between 1910 and 1928 the *Home Mission Board* hired professional musicians as staff members for its Department of Evangelism. These professional, itinerant musicians traveled extensively around the country with companion evangelists. I.E. Reynolds was one such musician who ended up at Southwestern on an evangelistic mission where he met Scarborough, the institution's president. Scarborough convinced him to join the faculty and establish its church music training program.

Broader convention efforts were also taking place. By 1925, there was sufficient momentum for the establishment of a committee to study music being used in churches across the Southern Baptist Convention. By 1926, this committee, known as the *Committee on Better Church Music*, presented its report at the annual meeting. This three-page report addressed the importance of church music and discussed the current state of music in the Baptist Church. The committee made thirteen recommendations to the convention. These recommendations are summarized as follows:

1. That music is part of worship and should be treated with reverence, spirituality, and instructiveness.
2. That hymns should carry Truth.
3. That music should fit the hymn text
4. That church music leaders should be competent musically, and that they should also carry the weighty responsibility of leading corporate worship. Such individuals should not consider their leadership a performance.
5. That music plays an important role in worship.

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<sup>5</sup> Alex Sibley, "Back to the Roots: A Vision of Ministry-Driven Excellence," April 16, 2020. <https://swbts.edu/news/feature-back-to-the-roots-a-vision-of-ministry-driven-excellence/>.

6. That pastors ought to care deeply about their church's hymnody from a doctrinal, musical, and practical standpoint.
7. That pastors ought to guard their congregations against "unscrupulous" music publishers and songbook dealers.
8. That when at all possible, churches should employ church music directors whose responsibilities were to direct and arrange the music of every service.
9. That pastors and their churches should call out young men and women with musical talent and a conviction that they should use those gifts to serve the Lord. Additionally, they should make every effort to send them to one of the convention's institutions to fit them for service.
10. That pastors should encourage church members interested in church music to attend the "Better Church Music Conference" held in Ridgecrest.
11. That state conventions should provide opportunities for good church music.
12. That all denominational schools pay attention to church music as it pertains to their fine arts department.
13. That the Convention instruct the Sunday School Board to establish a Department of Church Music for the purpose of Improving Musical Conditions in the church.<sup>6</sup>

These recommendations paved the way for mid-twentieth-century efforts, which were pursued with urgency across the broader convention. At the 1939 annual meeting, the results of another church music survey conducted the previous year were published. In it, the report urged the convention to act in haste to improve the state of church music within its churches. The report stated: "How great and tragic have been the losses which have already come upon with great sections of our convention because of long delayed action in this important field." (Baptist Convention 1939, p. 125).

By 1941, the cause of better church music was taken even further by the *Baptist Sunday School Board's* establishment of its *Department of*

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<sup>6</sup> Reynolds, I.E., E. C. Dargan, Chas W. Daniel, E. O. Sellars, J. Fred Scholfield. "Report of Committee on Better Church Music to the Southern Baptist Convention" SBC Annual, 1928. 42-43.

*Church Music.* The board hired well-known church musician, hymn writer, and music educator, Baylus Benjamin McKinney (also known as B.B. McKinney). McKinney was elected to lead the Board's newly established *Department of Church Music* with the mission of providing church music training materials to local churches and associations. The establishment of the *Department of Church Music* led to the development of broader statewide programs in church music, including the supplementation of salaries for those in each state who would devote themselves to full-time ministry in church music. Additionally, the first State Music Secretary was appointed in Alabama in 1945. During this season, another school of Church Music was established at one of the convention's theological institutions. Dr. Ellis A. Fuller, Southern Seminary's sixth president, called Donald Frances Winters to establish and inaugurate a church music training program. Although the title and role of "Minister of Music" was not originally conceived at Southern, graduates from that institution were promoted as such. Hugh McElrath points out that "not long thereafter, Minister of Music became the designation for many full-time church musicians, regardless of where their training was received." (McElrath, 13) By the conclusion of World War II, all seminary music schools were flooded with men and women seeking preparation for the ministry of music. (McElrath, 13)

#### Wisdom From the Past Speaks to Us Today

Bryan Chappell states:

Always we are to be informed by tradition; never are we to be ruled by it. The Word of God is our only infallible rule of faith and practice, but an unwillingness to consider what previous generations have learned about applying God's Word discloses either naivete or arrogance. God intends for us to stand on the shoulders of those faithful before us. He gives us a mission for our time, but he also gives us a history to prepare us for our present calling.<sup>7</sup>

History, then, can and should inform us as we carve new paths into the future. This principle is true as we seek understanding and attempt to provide solutions to dilemmas in the ever-evolving landscape of

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<sup>7</sup> Bryan Chappell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009): 16.

modern church music and worship. Although the recommendations offered by *The Committee on Better Church Music* were intended for the church a century ago, their insights and observations give applicable advice for today. Although the musical and stylistic landscape of the church one hundred years ago was undeniably different, the concerns aimed at improvement in the church's worship still exist today. A deeper study reveals the heart of the committee's concern was the priority of the church's worship, the quality, vigor, and theological content of its song, and the need for investment in church musicians from both pastors and local churches. When viewed in this light, the frontier of the 1920s does not appear much different than the frontier of the 2020s. Solomon's words, therefore, are fitting for this study: "What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

The committee's first overarching area of concern was the role of music in worship, its quality, and content. It is fair and safe to assume that our forefathers were attempting to address these issues related to congregational singing. Before the *Committee on Better Church Music*, the *Sunday School Board* had made efforts to guide the church toward singing hymns with rich content through the endorsement of specific hymnals.

The committee emphasized that congregational songs carry Truth. This signified their concern for the centrality of the Word in all of worship, but especially in song. To take this a step further, the committee encouraged churches to take the act of congregational singing seriously and to help their congregations understand that it was a significant part of the church's liturgy. The Biblical mandate to sing was clear, and the committee knew that corporate singing could be invigorated with the help of skilled leadership from trained musicians capable of bringing many voices together. It should be emphasized that the committee explicitly discouraged musical performance in worship. Rather, the musician should bring a sense of Gospel "weight," motivated by divine calling, to the platform. The emphasis here was on the edification and participation of the congregation, not the musical prowess or ability of the leader. Yet, the committee understood that singing led by a skilled pastoral musician could have a great impact on the church. The contention is that these concerns are no less significant for today; arguably more so.

The committee also called on pastors to bear responsibility for the betterment of their church's worship and song. Four of the recommendations made to the convention directly addressed pastors. As primary worship leaders, pastors ought to guard the doctrine and theology of both the church's song and its liturgy. Additionally, pastors were to protect their congregations from the wholesale adoption of music composed and published by those whose motives weren't pure, or whose doctrine was not right. And yet the call to pastors was not just to protect and guard, but to lead the way in cultivating excellent congregational singing. In particular, pastors were called upon to take the lead in helping to identify musically gifted persons from within their churches and encouraging them to seek training for the purpose of serving. Churches, likewise, were to partner in this endeavor by encouraging such young men and women to pursue musical and theological training.

The last category of recommendations encouraged states and academic institutions, particularly the convention's theological seminaries to commit to training individuals for the purposes stated above. The committee understood that training and equipping its own for ministry had a reciprocal and long-term impact on the strength of the church's worship and supply of her leaders in this area.

#### Midwestern's Response: Training Musician-Theologians For the Church

It has been established that theological institutions of the Southern Baptist Convention have been charged with the stewardship of training and equipping church musicians for the church. Nearly fifty years after the *Committee on Better Church Music* presented its recommendations to the Convention, Midwestern Seminary followed her sister institutions and picked up the baton of theological training for church musicians. To solidify this commitment the school called A.L. "Pete" Butler, along with his wife Jo Ann, to help establish the "Department of Church Music" in the early 1980s. Pete was widely known for the hymn tune he had composed, ADA<sup>8</sup>, which named the Oklahoma town where he served as Minister of Music at the First Baptist Church. This new hymn tune was a fresh and modern musical setting to Fanny Crosby's "Redeemed." It

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<sup>8</sup> ADA is the name of the hymn tune written by Dr. Pete Butler. Hymn tune names are traditionally expressed in all capitals.

garnered attention after its premiere by the *Singing Churchmen of Oklahoma*, and was later picked up by the Billy Graham Association to be sung at crusades. The Butlers, however, who were widely known in the convention and beyond, brought more than a popular song to Midwestern. With them came twenty years of local church ministry experience, a high level of academic musicianship and artistry, years of teaching experience, and deep theological convictions to the classroom. They wrote courses to train students in hymnology, church music history, general church music, music theory, conducting, voice, and basic piano playing. By faith they came to Kansas City to take up the convention's mantle of "better church music" and did so by training church musicians for Gospel ministry. The Butlers endeared themselves to students, faculty, and staff, and their faithful ministry laid a solid foundation upon which today's Department of Worship Ministry could be built.

In addition to the Butlers, however, other individuals labored to train church musicians at Midwestern Seminary, including Dr. Randall Bradley who now serves as Professor of Church Music at Baylor University, Dr. Fred Spann, and the late Dr. Janie Watkins who also taught at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. A pivotal hire made the year before Dr. Pete Butler's retirement was that of Dr. Lee Hinson, who had also given much of his life to serving Southern Baptist musicians. It was Dr. Hinson who attempted to expand training in the classroom by introducing contemporary musical styles into the curriculum. He made efforts to both address the changing musical styles happening in churches across the country. Of note, Dr. Hinson modeled these changes in chapel, and did so by being the first to accompany congregational singing with the guitar.

It was, however, Dr. Jason Allen's "for the church" vision that helped solidify, reshape, and revitalize Midwestern's commitment to train worship leaders for local church ministry. In 2015, the *Department of Church Music* was renamed the *Department of Worship Ministries*. The intentional change in nomenclature was intended to reflect a refreshed curriculum designed to prepare students for the broader set of both musical and ministry demands placed on the twenty-first-century church musician by the local church. It was no longer sufficient for a curriculum of this nature to focus the majority of a student's ministry preparation on traditional musicianship and musical language. By necessity, the

expanded curriculum would need to offer robust training in Biblical, theological, pastoral, ministerial, philosophical, historical, technological, and administrative concepts necessary for today's functioning church musician. The intention, however, was not to throw out the proverbial "baby with the bathwater" of yesteryear's church music curriculum, but rather to reposition, modify, and augment necessary musical training and theology designed to prepare students to lead a comprehensive music ministry.

Although the stylistic "worship wars" of the 2000s were largely over, theological institutions were left unsure how best to adequately train modern-day church musicians. Two questions rose to the surface: First, "what practical skills were needed to train music leaders for the church?" and second, "what did churches want in a potential worship staff hire?" Each of the seminaries with church music training programs attempted to adjust its curricula to answer these questions.

In light of these questions, how could Midwestern's Worship Ministries' curriculum best prepare individuals to serve the diverse churches of the Southern Baptist Convention?" No two churches within the convention are identical, and although the majority are generally theologically conservative, there is little consensus on the issue of musical style in corporate worship. Some churches sing modern worship songs while others sing hymns. Some churches have band-driven congregational singing, while others have orchestrally-driven singing. Others, yet, sing to a more acoustically driven accompaniment. Some churches have worship choirs, while others have praise teams. And what about the nature of the role itself and who is eligible to fill it? Although there is a positive and growing trend over the last fifteen years for churches to hire a pastoral musician to their staff, there is still a diversity of other titles applied to the role of staff church musician: Worship Leader, Director of Worship, Minister of Music, Director of Worship Arts, to name just a few. A subsequent area of concern that quickly had to be addressed was how best to train both men and women for ministry, while staying faithful to the seminary's commitment to honor Scripture's teachings on gender roles and Biblical Complementarianism. And what about the ever-changing winds of musical trends and worship fads? Did students need to be equipped for the moment, or would they and their churches best be served by being given something of deep and enduring value?

The only clear way forward was to develop a comprehensive musical and theological curriculum to help students move into any of the potentially diverse roles within the convention's churches. The best way to address these many issues, serve students, and serve the churches of the convention was to design a curriculum focused on the two essential elements necessary in a worship curriculum: music and theology. A curriculum designed to train excellent musicians and excellent theologians was the best way forward. Training Musician-Theologians "For the Church" was intentionally designed to help students aspiring to music and ministry to see the need for both theological training and practical ministry training.

Music, in its beautiful design and complexity, is the Lord's gift, and He has given it to his church as a vehicle to convey beauty, Truth, and goodness. Therefore, it was clear that the most important components of a student's musical training should be those components which support and encourage congregational singing. The best path forward to help students toward this endeavor was to train them with timeless, tried, and tested musical skill. This is the type of skill needed to help students make wise musical choices for their congregation's diet of song, and help them identify and overcome musical roadblocks that often prevent a congregation from singing out. The curriculum, therefore, had to immerse students in the language of music. It is language that helps one communicate articulately, and with fluency. Therefore, it was essential for Musician-Theologians to not only "speak" the God-given language of music, but they would also have to dive deeper and "know" the language's construction and grammar. It should be noted that learning the language of music has absolutely nothing to do with style. Rather, knowing the language is what will help students lead congregational singing in all its varieties and styles existing across the spectrum of churches within the convention.

Consider how architects, medical doctors, and preachers use language and skills essential for their jobs. Architects study facets of building structure, form, construction methods, environmental science, mathematics, physics, and design theory to create beautiful buildings with structural integrity. Medical doctors study Latin, anatomy and physiology, pathology, pharmacology, ethics, and clinical skills. Likewise, preaching pastors learn Greek, Hebrew, hermeneutics, and the skill of effective oration to construct and deliver intelligible and biblically

faithful sermons. Would any of these professions serve their clients, patients, or parishioners well by shortening or skipping elements of their comprehensive training? By no means! Does a podiatrist or pediatrician study the basics of medicine any less because they treat a specialized part of the body or a narrow age demographic? Therefore, is not skill and language training as important for the church musician? The contention is yes, and for the musician-theologian, this truth resounds more so.

One could argue that Biblical support for trained and knowledgeable musicians can be found in 1 Chronicles chapter 15. Verse 22 in this chapter indicates that Cheneniah, leader of the Levites in music, was selected to lead musical worship because he “understood it.” There is little doubt that musical worship of the Old Testament was any less complex or developed. In fact, the picture painted in this chapter suggests complex musical worship - combining joyous singing and the playing of musical instruments (such as harps, lyres, cymbals, and trumpets). Cheneniah knew how to skillfully bring all these musical elements in praise and worship worthy of the Lord. Cheneniah’s “knowledge,” however, had to extend beyond musical knowledge. In this instance, one could argue that “knowledge” implies wise, discerning, and theologically informed understanding of worship and the application of music. Students, therefore, must have a well-developed Biblical theology of worship. They must study and know the scripture, be able to design biblically faithful liturgies, and choose congregational songs with doctrinal fidelity.

In the end, students who have a strong foundation in both music and theology will be more fully fitted to serve the church with both confidence and longevity. A call to worship ministry starts with a general call to ministry. Such a call places a unique set of expectations and a burden of preparation on those who will eventually serve. Some students sense a specific calling to combine musical leadership with a pastoral role, which might also include preaching and teaching. Others, however, sense a more generalized call to combine musical leadership with a desire to engage in discipleship, evangelism, church planting, counseling, youth ministry, women’s ministry, missions, or Christian education. A common misconception students have is that studying worship limits one’s service to music, giving little room for broader ministry to the church. Nothing could be further from the truth! Our worship curriculum starts with a strong foundation for general ministry, which enables individuals

to freely pursue multiple avenues of ministry. Our worship degrees help students understand that serving people with the Gospel, and training them to be disciple makers, is at the heart of all ministry.

### The Singing Seminary

We have examined both the past and present, but what remains of the days ahead, and how can Midwestern Seminary carry the baton of worship training forward for future generations? Furthermore, is there a way for all students, faculty, and staff to join the efforts of our Seminary's Department of Worship Ministries and work together to strengthen the biblical fidelity of her church's corporate worship and song? The answer is a resounding yes!

We will continue to remain steadfast as we labor toward building a thriving and vibrant *Department of Worship Ministries* with the Lord's help. Our commitment to train, equip, and commission musician-theologians for Gospel ministry both at home and abroad is resolute. As we do so, however, we blast the shofar, calling the campus at large to join us in our joyful efforts. Most of us here are called to invest in and teach students topics related to other areas of church ministry, and not all of our students are called vocationally in this way. If this is the case, what is the path forward? How then do we lock arms to strengthen the church's voice and her song? We sing! More specifically, we become known as a "singing seminary."

There is an unavoidable Biblical reality for all of us who believe in and profess Christ: all believers are created to sing, all believers are commanded to sing, and more so, all believers are compelled to sing about the wonderful, saving grace of Jesus Christ, who is our very own "singing Savior."<sup>9</sup> In his compelling book, *Sing!*, author and hymn-writer Keith Getty reminds us afresh of the Lord's command to sing. He says, "Repeatedly and throughout Scripture, we are commanded to be a singing people. There are more than four hundred references in the Bible and at least fifty direct commands . . . We are told to sing - and the Scripture is not only concerned *that* we sing but also with where, what, and how we sing."<sup>10</sup> This most easily can occur in the context of our twice-weekly

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<sup>9</sup> Keith and Kristyn Getty. *Sing!: How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church*. (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2017). These are broad chapter topics taken from the book.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

chapel services. In them, the body of Christ gathers together, not as a local church, but as *the church* (or a snapshot of the church) to read the Word, to preach the Word, and to sing the Word. While in chapel, students, faculty, and staff have the opportunity to sing both old and new hymns of the faith - songs with rich theology and Biblical truth that are learnable, singable, teachable, and beautiful.

What kind of impact could be made on the church, and more broadly, the nations, if when our graduates leave this institution, they do so with an arsenal of song - songs that not only reside in their hearts but that pour forth from their lips? Songs which speak of the saving work of Christ, his finished work on the cross, our identity in Him, songs that remind us how to live daily, and songs that encourage us to march forward in this dark world toward a secure future in Heaven. Think of the impact our singing seminary could have: Missionaries could be personally strengthened and emboldened in their Gospel labors abroad, Biblical counselors would be equipped with lyrical Truth to mend and overcome people's hurts and hangups, and Children and Student Pastors could feed the church's young with reminders to see their infinite worth and value from Christ rather than the entrapments of the world. The list goes on...

When we unashamedly lead out as the "singing seminary" that is "for the church," we will be successful in faithfully accomplishing what our Baptist forefathers longed for in the churches of the convention nearly 100 years ago - a church strengthened by better song. When the committee on "Better Church Music" presented their report to the annual convention in 1926, it did so by prefacing the thirteen recommendations with a reminder of how song has been a vital part of the church's history. The committee states,

Music is the handmaid of religious worship in the greatest sense and adapts itself to the spirit of the occasion, it matters not whether it be of praise, adoration, joy, thanksgiving, exhortation, supplication or sorrow. Music begins where speech ends. 'Music seems to be the instinctive utterance of the human soul.' It is absolutely indispensable in the Christian church. . . . [But] music has had a great part in all religious reformations; in fact, Luther's reformation was a singing reformation, and his enemies said that he did more harm by his hymns than he did by his sermons. The reformation under the

Wesleys was also a singing reformation. The place of music in religion today is just as important as it has ever been in the past.<sup>11</sup>

Our task of training the next generation of musician-theologians more broadly as a convention, and specifically as an institution, is weighty, but one I believe has a bright and hope-filled future. Might it be that as our “singing seminary” leaves the walls of this institution and takes with it a passion for singing truth, that a reformation of sorts would be fanned into flame within the local church. When we all play our part, a singing and worshipping seminary like Midwestern will more effectively encourage and strengthen the church so that the world might hear, see, and encounter the beauty of the Gospel and our great Savior, Jesus.

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<sup>11</sup> Reynolds, I.E., E. C. Dargan, Chas W. Daniel, E. O. Sellars, J. Fred Scholfield. “Report of Committee on Better Church Music to the Southern Baptist Convention” SBC Annual, 1928. 41.

## The Significance of Origen's Hexapla for Biblical and Theological Studies<sup>1</sup>

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By many accounts, early Christian scholars used Origen's Hexapla and his related philological projects for their own textual, exegetical, and theological work in the biblical texts.<sup>2</sup> Origen's Hexapla, his subsequent Tetrapla, and the later Caesarean Library's reception and development of Origen's oeuvre were significant works of biblical philology in Late Antiquity that aided in writing commentaries, homilies, theological treatises, and Bible translation. The word Hexapla (pronounced HEK-suh-pluh) is formed from two Greek words ἕξ "six" and πλᾶ "fold" meaning "six-fold." From patristic descriptions and the precious few remaining fragmentary copies of the synopsis, the Hexapla consisted of six columns containing different versions of the Old Testament listed as follows from left to right: (1) the consonantal Hebrew text, (2) a Greek transcription of that Hebrew text recording the vocalization, (3) the Greek edition of Aquila, (4) the Greek edition of Symmachus, (5) the Septuagint edition, and (6) the Greek edition of Theodotion. The user of this text would have access to the Hebrew text and its vocalization or reading tradition (columns 1–2), the traditional Greek translation of the church popularly called "Septuagint" (column 5), and the three famous Jewish revisions (often referred to collectively as "the Three") of that

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful for Peter Gentry and Michael Léger who read an earlier draft of this paper and provided valuable feedback on it. I'm also thankful to those who attended my presentation on this topic and engaged with me over it at the Septuagint Studies section of the Evangelical Theological Society meeting in San Diego in 2024.

<sup>2</sup> See the essays in John D. Meade, ed., *The Forerunners and Heirs of Origen's Hexapla: The Proceedings of the Inaugural Colloquium of the Text & Canon Institute*, DSI 19 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2024).

translation (columns 3–4, 6). The user could read a single edition by reading each individual column vertically or compare all the versions by reading horizontally across the columns.<sup>3</sup> The Hexapla was a significant scholarly tool and aid for the student of the Old Testament scriptures. But today, in many quarters of biblical and theological studies, the hexaplaric remains have collected dust and have often gone unused or even unmentioned altogether. And from my perspective, this situation is lamentable for reasons detailed below.

I want to show students of the biblical text—not only Septuagint specialists and textual critics of the Old Testament / Hebrew Bible—the significance of the hexaplaric remains for their work. I will first address part of what I perceive the problem to be: our exegesis manuals omit discussion of the Hexapla and our manuals on Old Testament textual criticism contain incomplete and outdated descriptions. Furthermore, these books do not usually provide examples of how the remains of the Hexapla provide witness to the text or its reception. Accessing the remains of the Hexapla has been a challenge historically, and no doubt, contributes to this problem. After illustrating the problem, it will be helpful to describe Origen's textual work afresh before demonstrating the significance of the hexaplaric remains for modern biblical and theological study.

### 1.0 The Problem

The problem is twofold. On the one hand, our exegesis manuals and handbooks do not discuss the Hexapla, and on the other hand, our otherwise helpful introductions to Old Testament textual criticism usually do not illustrate the usefulness of these sources and sometimes contain misinformation. A further, related problem, as we will see below, is that few commentators analyze the hexaplaric remains for the texts they interpret.

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<sup>3</sup> For basic description and function of the Hexapla in Late Antiquity, see John D. Meade, "Hexapla," in *The Dictionary of the Bible in Ancient Media*, eds. Tom Thatcher, Chris Keith, Raymond Person, and Elsie Stern (London: T&T Clark / Bloomsbury, 2017), 170–172. For more on the Hexapla as textual machine, see Jeremiah Coogan, "Tabular Thinking in Late Ancient Palestine: Instrumentality, Work, and the Construction of Knowledge," in *Knowledge Construction in Late Antiquity*, ed. Monika Amsler (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), 57–81.

### 1.1 Omission of the Hexapla

The problem is easy to illustrate since the otherwise fine and time-tested introductions to Hebrew exegesis by Stuart, Chisholm, and DeRouchie do not list nor describe the Hexapla as a source of the Old Testament text.<sup>4</sup> These manuals give some basic examples of Old Testament textual criticism, describe many of the sources to the Hebrew text, and provide bibliography for the student to consult. But omitting discussion of the hexaplaric sources is curious. Is it because the hexaplaric texts are perceived as a challenge to access? Is it because they are perceived as related only to the text of the Greek Septuagint and not the Hebrew Bible? In any case, it is no wonder the student and pastor know very little, if anything, about the Hexapla for biblical studies since these otherwise faithful guides to the task of exegesis simply do not discuss it.

Curiously, these manuals rightly and regularly mention the use of the Latin Vulgate as a witness to the Hebrew text. But this point raises another issue related to the Hexapla, for Jerome mentioned on occasion that he depended on the Jewish revisers, and modern scholars detect the Vulgate's dependence on the earlier hexaplaric sources in various places. In other words, the Vulgate should not be viewed in every case as an independent witness to the Hebrew text, for as we will see below, Jerome is often indebted to his hexaplaric sources.

### 1.2 Other Descriptions

The introductions to Old Testament/Hebrew Bible textual criticism are helpful to students and nonspecialists. Next to handbooks on exegesis, these books are probably the most read to learn about the textual history of the Old Testament and practical approaches to textual

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<sup>4</sup> Douglas Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2022), 36–38; 83–102; Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 19–29; Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 128–156. A revision of DeRouchie's work is scheduled to appear in the next couple of years and will revise its chapter on textual criticism and add discussion of the Hexapla.

criticism. Here, I survey the helpful volumes by McCarter,<sup>5</sup> Brotzman and Tully,<sup>6</sup> Wegner,<sup>7</sup> Anderson and Widder,<sup>8</sup> and Würthwein and Fischer.<sup>9</sup>

McCarter's otherwise helpful introduction does not mention the Hexapla or its sources except for the Glossary in Appendix A. The bibliography of primary sources in Appendix B does not contain a section devoted to the Hexaplaric remains, thus omitting the edition by Frederick Field and the Göttingen *Septuaginta's* second apparatus as the most up to date collection of fragments. If one consulted only this resource and the works listed in it, one would probably never find or consult the hexaplaric remains.

The other works devote some space to describing the Hexapla and the Three. Overall, the descriptions of the Three and the further reading sections are beneficial. In every case, these introductions present the fifth column of Origen's Hexapla as containing a corrected Septuagint text with the critical signs.<sup>10</sup> This conclusion is understandable since it was probably the consensus view of how Origen's Fifth Column appeared. These manuals of Old Testament textual criticism do not explain how the

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<sup>5</sup> P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

<sup>6</sup> Ellis R. Brotzman and Eric J. Tully, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 68–70.

<sup>7</sup> Paul D. Wegner, *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible: Its History, Methods, & Results* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 187–197.

<sup>8</sup> Amy Anderson and Wendy Widder, *Textual Criticism of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 72–75.

<sup>9</sup> Ernest Würthwein and Alexander Achilles Fischer, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 106–114.

<sup>10</sup> As a philologist in the tradition of Alexandrian philology, Origen both received and innovated the use of the critical signs for his textual critical work. He used an *obelos* "lance" (—) or sometimes appearing with a dot above and below (⋈) to mark text that was only present in the Septuagint version and he used an *asteriskos* (✱) to mark text he added from one of the Three Jewish revisers in order to make the Greek copy equal to the Hebrew text. For the debate over whether Origen used these signs in the Hexapla or a later work known as the Tetrapla, see John D. Meade, "Searching for Origen's Hexapla," in *The Forerunners and Heirs of Origen's Hexapla: The Proceedings of the Inaugural Colloquium of the Text & Canon Institute*, ed. John D. Meade, DSI 19 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2024), 25–28.

readings of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion appeared in the margins of some manuscripts, and it will be crucial to show the provenance of these readings if students and scholars are expected to use and cite them in their work.

If our manuals and introductions continue to transmit outdated information, we cannot fault the student and researcher for being confused about the nature and significance of these texts. A fresh description of Origen as philologist and of his textual critical work is provided below.

### 1.3 The Challenge of Accessing Origen's Hexapla

Before proceeding, I should remark on the challenge of accessing the hexaplaric remains, for some of the problem with failing to mention the Hexapla, or failure to describe it well, may result from a difficulty in accessing them today. Furthermore, the hexaplaric remains have not always been included in biblical scholarship since their reception in the West. Thus, there may be several factors contributing to their omission in our manuals and introductions which would further underscore the need for making them more widely available through a new critical edition.

A scholar working in the West before the end of the sixteenth century could not simply access the hexaplaric remains.<sup>11</sup> In 1587, Pierre Morin published a collection of the fragmentary remains of the Hexapla as part of the Sixtine edition of the Septuagint. A year later in 1588, these notes were incorporated into the editor's annotations of the Latin translation of the Sixtine, edited by Flaminio Nobilius. Although these materials were published in other collections, researchers would wait until 1713 for Bernard de Montfaucon to publish the first edition dedicated solely to the remains of the Hexapla; that is, this edition was published independently of an edition of the Septuagint. This edition was the first one to source the readings of the Hexapla. In 1875, Frederick Field published his magisterial edition after the method of Montfaucon and for the first time he incorporated the evidence of the so-called Syro-

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<sup>11</sup> For this history, see T.M. Law, "A History of Research on Origen's Hexapla: From Masius to the Hexapla Project," *BIOSCS* 40 (2007): 30–48.

Hexapla, a Syriac translation of a text related to the Hexapla.<sup>12</sup> Soon after, the earliest commentaries of the International Critical Commentary series such as Crawford Howell Toy's volume on Proverbs (1899) began to include the readings of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion from Field's edition in the task of exegesis of the Hebrew Bible. Thus, it is a relatively recent development for biblical scholars to refer to the remains of the Hexapla in their work, and therefore, their inclusion in our exegetical processes has not yet caught up.

Since 1939 with the publication of Joseph Ziegler's *Esaias* volume for the Göttingen *Septuaginta* series, the fragmentary remains have been listed in that series' second apparatus. Thus, the reception and use of the hexaplaric fragments have been uneven. Unfortunately, for the most part, students and scholars have considered the hexaplaric remains relevant only for the study of the Septuagint. And since Field's edition turned 150 years old in 2025, the only independent edition of these fragments is now out of date. And perhaps it is an unfair expectation of students and specialists to access the hexaplaric remains in editions of the Septuagint, since that step could be confusing or unintuitive. Thus, to address this important question of access to the Hexapla, it is now time to publish a new critical edition of the remains of the Hexapla, and thus the Hexapla Institute has undertaken this mission.<sup>13</sup> In general,

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<sup>12</sup> For a history of the editions of the Hexapla, see Peter J. Gentry, "2.3.11 Editions of the Hexaplaric Witnesses," in *Textual History of the Bible Vol. 3B*, eds. Russell E. Fuller, Armin Lange, Richard D. Weis (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming), 16–23.

<sup>13</sup> For the project, see the Hexapla Institute's website at [www.hexapla.org](http://www.hexapla.org); for a full description and defense of the "New Field," see John D. Meade, "The Dream for a 'New Field' Comes True: A Description and Defense of the New Critical Edition of Job 22–42," in *Editing the Septuagint: The Unfinished Task: Papers presented at the 50th anniversary of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, eds. Felix Albrecht and Frank Feder, DSI 16 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2022), 131–153; for earlier description and rationale of the project, see Alison Salvesen, "A 'New Field' for the Twenty-First Century? Rationale for the Hexapla Project, and a Report on Its Progress," in *The Text of the Hebrew Bible and Its Editions: Studies in Celebration of the Fifth Centennial of the Complutensian Polyglot*, eds. Andres Piquer Otero and Pablo Torijano Morales (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 286–309; Bas ter Haar Romeny and Peter J. Gentry, "Towards a New Collection of Hexaplaric Material for the Book of Genesis," in *X Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and*

then, access to the hexaplaric remains has been restricted to certain quarters of scholarship. But with the new edition underway and much of the data already in the Göttingen series, students of the biblical text and theology are encouraged to engage with the hexaplaric fragments in some of the ways detailed below. But before we look at the significance of the Hexapla, we need a fresh look at Origen and his work to clarify what he did to better understand the nature of these sources.

## 2.0 Origen's Editions

Part of the problem for understanding Origen and his Hexapla and then leveraging those texts for biblical and theological studies can be attributed to a lack of interdisciplinary research in the past. Patristic and Septuagint scholars have not always used one another's insights. Furthermore, the research of classicists has not always been consulted by biblical scholars. But Origen was a church father, a philologist after the late antique type, and a user of Hebrew and Greek versions of the Old Testament represented in various manuscripts and traditions. Furthermore, his work was received and developed and innovated by his followers and later translated into Latin and Syriac and probably other languages. Thus, researchers from across a series of disciplines are needed to reconstruct the late ancient period, interpret the patristic comments and biblical manuscripts, and trace the Hexapla's reception into other languages and traditions.

Clearly, we can't do all this work here. But these are some of the important developments in this field that those engaging biblical and theological studies must know. These insights are taken from a new volume entitled, *The Forerunners and Heirs of Origen's Hexapla*.<sup>14</sup>

First, Origen was not only a theologian or a philosopher as one tends to think. According to all accounts, Origen was trained in philology. Thus, we must also situate him in the world of the ancient grammarian or philologist by linking terms and concepts of ἔκδοσις "critical edition,"

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*Cognate Studies*, Oslo 1998, ed. Bernard A. Taylor. SBLSCS 51 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 285–299; Gerard J. Norton O.P., "Collecting Data for a New Edition of the Fragments of the Hexapla," in *IX Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, Cambridge 1995, ed. Bernard A. Taylor. SBLSCS 45 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 251–262.

<sup>14</sup> Meade, *Forerunners and Heirs*.

σημεῖα “critical signs,” ὑπομνήματα “commentaries on the text and its variants,” and διόρθωσις “corrected text” to his exegetical and textual work. Seen through this lens, Origen is best envisioned as a textual critic who gathers all his manuscripts, collates them according to the differences they share, categorizes them as “old copies,” “majority of copies,” “most accurate copies,” makes a judgment on the readings in front of him, and corrects them. Origen's own statements in his commentaries and homilies support this reconstruction.<sup>15</sup>

Second, Origen created the six-column Hexapla so that he could produce a more traditional critical edition after the late ancient form, called the Tetrapla by his followers. The Hexapla was columnar as described above. A glance at this Hexapla gave an early Christian scholar immediate knowledge where the versions agreed or disagreed with the Hebrew and among themselves. Furthermore, the plethora of Jewish Greek translations gave early Christians a wealth of exegetical knowledge of the Hebrew text. No doubt, the Hexapla gave its readers a facile comparison of all the parallel texts. It was a table that was intended to be read horizontally and vertically to understand the textual complexity of the whole.

As such, the Hexapla most probably did not contain Origen's corrections to the Greek copies of the scriptures except for maybe the correction of some proper names and word order. Although there is a good scholarly debate, the consensus is shifting to the view that the Fifth Column did not contain the critical signs. This view weighs the following observations as significant: (1) the absence of signs from the extant synopses and early Christian descriptions of it (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.16.4; Jerome, *Comm. Tit.* 3.9); (2) the internal probability that the signs in the Hexapla would be superfluous and out of alignment with the synopsis as a late ancient table intended to be read by scanning in both directions; (3) the Tetrapla with signs and scholia originating with Origen as attested in early Christian sources, colophons, and now *P.Grenf.*; and (4) the classical Greek background of the philologist's critical edition, including the practice of revising and innovating previous ones.<sup>16</sup>

Third, several early Christian manuscripts and sources refer to the

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<sup>15</sup> Meade, “Searching,” 14–19.

<sup>16</sup> Meade, *Forerunners and Heirs*, 28.

Tetrapla, sometimes noting its creator as “of Origen.”<sup>17</sup> There is much debate over the material layout of the Tetrapla and when, or even, if Origen created this edition. Here again, the work of classicists is helpful to note. Eleanor Dickey has shown that columnar translations in Late Antiquity were designed for Greek speakers learning Latin and how to read the original Latin texts. The earliest examples of the format are glossaries dated to the first or second century, and this elementary use of the columnar form probably developed into continuous texts of Virgil and Cicero as evidenced from third- and fourth-century mss. These texts are (1) columnar, (2) bilingual, and (3) contain lines in each column divided into meaningful units. Dickey says:

The goal of the translation is not only to make clear the overall meaning of the original, but also to show someone with limited knowledge of the original language how that meaning is achieved, by making it possible to identify which words and phrases of the translation correspond to particular elements of the original. The line breaks are positioned to divide up meaningful units; the translator can use them both to show the reader how the original text is to be construed and to organize groupings that can be successfully translated as a unit.<sup>18</sup>

There are many points of interest here, but for our purpose, the fact that these columnar texts or translations from Late Antiquity are bilingual almost certainly shows that Origen would have constructed his bilingual Hexapla in columns but not his *monolingual* Tetrapla. That text would assume a different form, one like the traditional *ekdosis* or critical text of a philologist from Late Antiquity. This text would have contained the critical signs of the Greek grammarians, and Origen on at least two occasions confesses to using these signs in his copies of the Greek scriptures (*Comm. Matt.* 15.14; *Ep. Afr.* 7).

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<sup>17</sup> Peter J. Gentry, “Text and Translation of All Known Colophons Relating to Origen’s Hexapla,” in *The Forerunners and Heirs of Origen’s Hexapla: The Proceedings of the Inaugural Colloquium of the Text & Canon Institute*, ed. John D. Meade, DSI 19 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2024), 221–265.

<sup>18</sup> Eleanor Dickey, “Columnar Translation: An Ancient Interpretive Tool that the Romans Gave the Greeks,” *The Classical Quarterly* 65.2 (2015): 807–821, esp. 808.

Thus, when one examines a biblical manuscript containing the critical signs of *asteriskos* and *obelos* with a certain textual form, one is probably looking not at an immediate copy of the Fifth Column of the Hexapla but a copy of Origen's Tetrapla or his corrected text with signs. We also know from the sources that Origen began to add scholia to the margins of his Tetrapla.<sup>19</sup> We also know that his immediate followers in Caesarea, Pamphilus and Eusebius, innovated his work by adding more scholia. These scholia were probably of different kinds but mainly consisting of readings of the Three Jewish revisers, since their readings populate the margins of these manuscripts more than any other kind of marginal note.

These manuscripts show immediately the quantitative differences between the Hebrew proto-Masoretic text and the Greek scriptures of the early Church due to the presence of the critical signs. And the marginalia in these manuscripts also show the more important differences between the Three Jewish Greek revisors who revised the older Greek translations to be in more alignment with the standard or proto-Masoretic Hebrew text.

### 3.0 The Significance

In what follows, we illustrate the Hexapla's significance in the following areas: textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, reception of the Hebrew Bible, early Christian biblical scholarship and theology, and Greek lexicography.

#### 3.1 Hebrew Text of Isaiah 3:12

At Isaiah 3:12a, there is both a lexical issue and a textual issue, and there is hexaplaric evidence for each. Should the text be read as "My people—*infants* are their oppressors and *women* rule over them" (ESV)<sup>20</sup> or "My people—each of his oppressors *gleans*, and *creditors* rule over him"?<sup>21</sup> There is no need to solve the problem here. Instead, we focus on

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<sup>19</sup> On one of the relevant notes connecting Origen to adding scholia to his copies, see Gentry, "Colophons," 238.

<sup>20</sup> Or similarly in the following commentaries: J.J.M. Roberts, *First Isaiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 55; Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39* (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 148–149; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1–39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 137–138.

<sup>21</sup> H.G.M. Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 261–264; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and*

commentaries that do not use the hexaplaric remains and yet also read the text as “infants...women.”

After surveying the readings of Masoretic Text, Septuagint (LXX), Vulgate, Targum, in his otherwise helpful commentary, John Oswalt describes the difficulty in this text as follows:

Once the reading ‘glean’ was adopted, *nāšîm*, ‘women,’ could have been misread as *nôšîm*, ‘creditors,’ to correspond with the sense of the first stich. Or, if ‘glean’ were correct and ‘youths’ the mistake, then *nôšîm* would have been read as *nāšîm* to correspond with ‘youths.’ At this remove dogmatic conclusions are not possible.<sup>22</sup>

He does not list the Peshitta (the popular and prominent Syriac translation of the Hebrew Bible) or the Three. Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion clearly agree with the rest of the versions that מְעוֹלָל, often rendered “infants” in English translations, was read as a participle from עָלַל “to glean.”<sup>23</sup> In fact, no ancient version read the first line as “infant” but only as a form from the word “to glean.” That fact should function as the Archimedean point for solving this problem. Symmachus, Peshitta, and Vulgate attest to a mixed text containing a form of the word “to glean” in the first line and “women” in the second line, and thus, they show that Oswalt’s “either or” explanation does not account for the

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*Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 198; Dominique Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*, Volume 2: Isaïe, Jérémie, Lamentations (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 23–25.

<sup>22</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 137–138.

<sup>23</sup> Why the plural subject “taskmasters” with singular predicate “glean?” The construction is not unique nor impossible. Isaiah 60:17 ( וְשָׁמְתִי פְקֻדְתְּךָ שְׁלוֹמִים ) ( וְנִגְשֶׁיךָ צְדָקָה : ) also has the plural “taskmasters,” but it is understood as an abstract plural for the singular, “administration,” with the singular abstract predicate: I will make peace as your overseer and righteousness as your administration. This is the simplest explanation. GKC treats the form under two possible categories: (1) pluralis excellentiae or some type of abstract plural “his administration” (GKC sec. 124k) or (2) numerical plural with the singular in the predicate with now each severally being represented as affected by the statement (i.e., a distributive singular; GKC sec. 145l), “his oppressors, each one fleeces....”

readings, since “glean” in the first line did not influence the second line’s reading in at least these three versions.

The Three normally attest to the earliest form of the proto-Masoretic Text, the standard and conservatively copied Hebrew text.<sup>24</sup> When they preserve a variant to this text, the interpreter and commentator should pay close attention and ask why. Furthermore, in Isaiah 3:12a, the interpreter might be suspicious of the readings in Old Greek Isaiah (OG-Isa)<sup>25</sup> and the Targum since they are often quite interpretive (not to mention much later in the case of the Targum) especially for the book of Isaiah. But when one adds Theodotion and Aquila, very literal and conservative translators of the Hebrew, to the evidence register as attesting the same variant to the Masoretic Text as OG-Isa and the Targum of Isaiah, one can have more confidence that indeed there is variant reading in Isaiah 3:12. Once the hexaplaric sources are included in the evidence, the external evidence changes the way one looks at this problem, for now it is very difficult, if not impossible, to read the first line as “infants,” and it becomes increasingly more challenging, though not impossible, to read the second line as “women.” The internal evidence and transcriptional probability continue to strengthen this decision when we see that the reading of “women” has probably been conditioned by the reference to the daughters of Zion mentioned in Isaiah 3:16ff, and the medieval Jewish rendering of מְעוֹלָל with “infants” or “playful” was conditioned by “infants” (תַּעֲלִילִים) in Isaiah 3:4.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> For a provisional text and apparatus of the new Hexapla Edition for Isaiah 3:12, see the Appendix to this article.

<sup>25</sup> Claude Cox, “Some Things Biblical Scholars Should Know about the Septuagint,” *Restoration Quarterly* 56.2 (2014): 87–100, esp. 88, notes, “The general term ‘the Old Greek (translation)’ can be used for the collection of translations that stand in the corpus...We can, therefore, speak of ‘Old Greek Job.’”

<sup>26</sup> Ibn Ezra says, “נגשיו מעולל *Every one of his rulers is playful*. The מ in מעולל is not essential; מעולל is an adjective, and not a participle.” Rashi says, “their rulers are mockers Heb. נגשיו מעולל, they are mockers.” And again, “and women govern them Heb. נשים. Adulterous women govern them, as he states below (verse 16): “Since the daughters of Zion were haughty,” and they turned their hearts to evil; therefore, all weaklings governed them. Jonathan renders it as an expression of creditors (נושים) [rendering: and as creditors they govern them].” For the texts and references, see *ad loc* on [www.sefaria.org](http://www.sefaria.org).

I have not presented all of the evidence or even a complete solution to the textual problem in Isa 3:12, but if Israel's oppressors are presented as gleaners of a field who pick the field and then pick it over again and "creditors" is the original text and the focus of the prophetic indictment in 3:12, this verse becomes the smoking gun, as it were, for reconstructing the social mechanism for how the rich oppressed the poor both in Isaiah 3:14 and 5:8. The hexaplaric sources are important, if not essential, to clear reconstruction of the original text of 3:12, and therefore they open the possibility of reading the prophetic woes against this background.

This is but one example where the hexaplaric sources aid our reconstruction of the text and reading of the Hebrew Bible. As textual critics of the Hexapla continue to publish editions, editors of Hebrew Bible projects such as *Biblia Hebraica* and commentators on the Hebrew text will incorporate these texts into their research and comments.

### 3.2 Interpretation of Job 41:4

Another verse where the hexaplaric sources are significant for reading the biblical text is Job 41:4 (EV 41:12). The ESV represents the overwhelming majority reading of this text, "I will not keep silence concerning his limbs, or his mighty strength, or his godly frame."<sup>27</sup> But some commentators have recognized that the entire line could be translated like Norman Habel has done, "Did I not silence his boasting, his mighty word and his persuasive case?"<sup>28</sup> The first reading focuses on a description of the creature's appearance, while the second discerns a reference to the creature's speech and argument.

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<sup>27</sup> Commentaries that support this reading are as follows: Tremper Longman III, *Job* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 446; John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 527, 532. For a conjectural emendation of the second line that still reads as a description of the creature's appearance, see Édouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 632–33; this emendation is followed by David J. A. Clines, *Job 38–42* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 2011), 1162–1163.

<sup>28</sup> Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 551, 555, 571; Eric Ortlund, *Piercing Leviathan: God's defeat of evil in the book of Job* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2021), 164–65; Robert S. Fyall, *Now my Eyes have seen You: Images of creation and evil in the book of Job* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2002), 160–62.

As some commentators have already suggested, the Hebrew terms בְּדָיו “his limbs,” דְּבַר-גְּבוּרוֹת “his mighty strength,” and וְחִין עָרְפוֹ “his goodly frame” could all be read alternatively as descriptions of Leviathan’s speech. Thus, בְּדָיו could be read from IV בַּד “loose talk, boasting” (e.g., Isa 16:6; Job 11:3); דְּבַר could be read in its normal sense as “word”; עָרְפוֹ from עָרַף “present an argument” (e.g., Job 32:14, 33:5 (without object), 13:18, 23:4, 37:19) could mean “his argument”; the hapax חִין is probably best read as an alternative form of חֵן “grace,” describing the creature’s speech or argument—not appearance—as “fine” or “graceful,” a usage it probably has elsewhere (e.g., Ps 45:3; Prov 22:11; Eccl 10:12).

No one, however, consults the ancient versions, let alone the hexaplaric sources to see how this text has been read. First, there is no Old Greek translation for this verse.<sup>29</sup> The Old Greek translator of Job did not render these lines of the Hebrew, but Origen supplied them from the Jewish revision of Theodotion and marked them with an asterisk. Second, both Theodotion and Aquila avoided translating בְּדָיו as “his limbs,” and simply used prepositional phrases for “about him” or “concerning him.” Third, Theodotion and Symmachus render דְּבַר-גְּבוּרוֹת with λόγον δυνάμεως “powerful word” and λόγος ὁ δυνατώτατος “the rather powerful word” respectively. Fourth, for the final difficult phrase, Theodotion and Aquila read the hapax חִין as a verb from חָן and the final term עָרְפוֹ as a noun according to MT. Symmachus’ translation represents a variant from MT: “it will not oppose me.” The earliest versions thus do not preserve descriptions of the creature’s physical appearance in this verse.

The Vulgate’s “I will not spare him, nor mighty words, nor well-arranged [speeches] to make supplication” (*non parcam ei et verbis potentibus et ad deprecandum conpositis*) and the Targum’s “I will not keep silent concerning his falsehoods, and the word of strength or the

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<sup>29</sup> The lines are marked with asterisks in the Syro-Hexapla, Jerome’s Latin translation of Origen’s Tetrapla, the Armenian version, and significant Greek witnesses.

supplication which is in him"<sup>30</sup> (לֹא אֲשַׁתִּיק כְּדַבְרֵי־יְהוָה וַיִּמְרַגְבוּרְתָּא וּבְעוּתָא) (דעלוייה: continue to focus on the creature's speech.

Except for Dhorme's commentary, none of the works I examined cited the versions and used them for their reconstructions. Here, the versions, especially the hexaplaric versions, suggest the text ought to be read as describing the creature's powerful speech and fine argument.

The student of the biblical text and the history of its interpretation will find the hexaplaric remains to be brimming with significance for our understanding of its textual history as well as its interpretive reception among early Christians and Jews.

### 3.3 Early Christian Scholarship

No doubt the Hexapla holds significance for textual criticism and the history of interpretation of the Old Testament along with consequences for our interpretations today. But we cannot overlook the significance that the Hexapla had in its own time for early Christian scholarship and theology, and thus the relevance it has in reconstructing early Christian exegesis and thought. We can only make a few observations about the Hexapla's immense influence on (1) early Christian textual scholarship, (2) Jerome's Latin Vulgate, the most important Bible translation in the West, and (3) exegesis of the text.

#### 3.3.1 The Hexapla and textual scholarship

We can only provide a cursory glance at this area.<sup>31</sup> Epiphanius, bishop of Cyprus, around 390 AD described Origen's contribution to early scholarship:

For having put together the six translations and the Hebrew scripture in the Hebrew letters and words themselves in one column, he [Origen] placed another column beside with Greek letters but with Hebrew words for direct apprehension for those who do not know the

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<sup>30</sup> Céline Mangan, John F. Healey, and Peter S. Knobel, eds., *The Aramaic Bible, Volume 15: The Targums of Job, Proverbs, and Qohelet* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 88.

<sup>31</sup> See the essays in Meade, *Forerunners and Heirs*, detailing the history and reception of the Origen's textual oeuvre that was used in service of early Christian scholarship.

Hebrew letters in order that through the Greek letters they might know the phonetic value of the Hebrew words. And thus, by having placed the two Hebrew columns and the columns of the six translators in parallel in what he called the hexapla or octapla, *he gave scholars a great advance in knowledge.* (*On Weights and Measures* 176–183; emphasis added)

Epiphanius recognized that Origen's work on the manuscript copies of the church's scriptures as well as columnar synopsis of the Hexapla gave scholars a major advance in knowledge of the scriptures.

Regarding the proliferation of Origen's texts for the church, Jerome recounted the matter for Augustine:

And I am amazed how you do not read the books of the Seventy in their pure form, as they were published by the Seventy, but rather as emended by Origen or rather corrupted by the obeli and asterisks, and you do not follow the translation of a Christian man, especially when he (Origen) transferred these, which have been added from an edition of a man, a Jew and a blasphemer, after the Passion of Christ. Do you wish to be a true friend of the Septuagint? You should not read these [additions], which are under the asterisks; on the contrary, erase them from the chapters, so that you might show yourself to be a true patron. If you do that, you will be forced to condemn all the libraries of the churches. *For scarcely will one or another manuscript be discovered, which has not such additions.* (*Ep.* 112; emphasis added)

Jerome may be guilty of slight hyperbole, but his point can generally be demonstrated: Origen and the Caesarean Library's promulgating and proliferating of copies of the scriptures had great impact on the church's copies of the scriptures. As we continue to edit the hexaplaric materials and the copies of the traditional Greek translation, we will continue to learn more about the copies of the scriptures early Christians used.

### 3.3.2 The Hexapla's influence on Jerome

At Ezekiel 1:14, Jerome says plainly that his rendering of the Hebrew *hapax legomenon* קָרָקַר with *fulguris coruscanti* “flashing lightning” followed Symmachus' translation ἀκτίνοϛ ἀστραπιϛ “flashing

lightning.”<sup>32</sup> When both Jerome and a Jewish reviser agree on a variant reading of MT or in a similar understanding of a difficult passage, it is probably—but not certainly—because Jerome has followed one of the Three revisers.

In Exodus 34:29, Jerome’s Vulgate has *et ignorabat quod cornuta esset facies sua ex consortio sermonis Dei* “And he was ignorant that his face **was horned** from conversing with God.” The ancient context and understanding do not concern us here nor does tracing Medieval depictions of Moses with horns because of the Vulgate’s reading.<sup>33</sup> Instead, I am asking how Jerome arrived at such a rendering of the Hebrew (קָרַן עוֹר פְּנִיָּו). Jerome almost certainly borrowed Aquila’s version here.<sup>34</sup> In fact, Jerome’s commentary on Amos 6:13 (Jerome, *Am* III 6.13) is our only source for Aquila’s reading of Exodus 34:29.<sup>35</sup> Thus, we should not only analyze the Vulgate for its text and interpretation of the Hebrew. Often, we will need to consult the remains of the Hexapla to see whether Jerome’s rendering was independent or whether it was dependent on the Hexapla.

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<sup>32</sup> Dominique Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 548–9; for an up-to-date presentation and literature on Jerome and the Hexapla, see Edmon L. Gallagher, “The Hexapla in the Church According to Jerome,” in *The Forerunners and Heirs of Origen’s Hexapla: The Proceedings of the Inaugural Colloquium of the Text & Canon Institute*, ed. John D. Meade, DSI 19 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2024), 267–304; Michael Graves, “Origen’s Hexapla in Jerome’s *Epistle* 106,” in *The Forerunners and Heirs of Origen’s Hexapla: The Proceedings of the Inaugural Colloquium of the Text & Canon Institute*, ed. John D. Meade, DSI 19 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2024), 305–332.

<sup>33</sup> Timothy Michael Law, *When God Spoke Greek: The Septuagint and Making of the Christian Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 160.

<sup>34</sup> Gary A. Rendsburg, “Moses as Equal to Pharaoh,” in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, eds. Gary M. Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis, BJS 346 (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006), 201–219, esp., 216–18, helpfully notes Jerome’s rendering in Exodus 34:29 but does not mention Aquila as the precursor to Jerome.

<sup>35</sup> For the sources in original languages and translations, see John D. Meade, “Why Does Michelangelo’s Moses Look Like That?,” *Evangelical Textual Criticism Blog* <https://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com/2018/04/why-does-michelangelos-moses-look-like.html>.

In Job 24:12c, the relevant texts of the received Hebrew Masoretic Text, the Jewish reviser Symmachus, and Jerome's Vulgate are presented as follows:

MT	:הָלֹא לֹא־יִשְׁמַח אֱלֹהִים בְּתִפְלוֹתָי	“And God does not accuse one of <i>folly</i> ” (=תפל ו)
Symmachus	ὁ δὲ θεὸς οὐκ ἐμποιεῖ τιμωρίαν <sup>36</sup>	“But God does not enact <i>punishment</i> ” (=לל Pi)
Vulgate	<i>et Deus inultum abire non patitur</i>	“And God does <i>not</i> suffer to pass <i>unpunished</i> ”

The Vulgate's “And God does *not* suffer to pass *unpunished*” does not reflect MT's הָלֹא “folly” (see Theodotion's rendering “folly” for this

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<sup>36</sup> This is the text in John D. Meade, ed., *A Critical Edition of the Hexaplaric Fragments of Job 22–42*, Origen's Hexapla: A Critical Edition of the Extant Fragments 1 (Leuven: Peeters, 2020), 62–63. Alison Salvesen, “Textual Criticism, Translation Studies, and Symmachus's Version in the Book of Job,” *Textus* 30 (2021): 43–63, esp. 53–54, argues that the variant reading ὁ δὲ θεὸς οὐκ ἐμποιεῖ μωρίαν “yet God does not cause *folly*” avoids creating a mismatch with how Symmachus rendered the same Hebrew word (at least how it appears in the Masoretic Text) in Job 1:22. In the earlier context, Symmachus used a form of ἀφρονεῦομαι “to act foolishly” for the same Hebrew term (הָלֹא). Although μωρίαν “folly” may better correspond with the MT, it probably arose from miscopying the original τιμωρίαν “punishment.” Meade's edition is based on the best external manuscript evidence of the oldest Greek catena (Ra 788' 3005) and this reading probably accounts for how μωρίαν “folly” arose. Symmachus lightly revised the Old Greek's unusual expression ἐπισκοπήν οὐ πεποίηται; “...has [God] not paid these a visit (i.e., punished them)?” with “but God does not enact punishment (on them).” His rendering fits the context well and probably reads תפלה as from פלל Pi “to judge.” Furthermore, this would be the only occurrence of μωρία in the Greek versions, but Symmachus uses τιμωρία in Jer 20:10 (נְקָמָה), 27(50):34 (רִיב); Ps 17:48 (נְקָמָה), 68:23 (שְׁלוֹם) for three different Hebrew words in a similar manner to how he uses it here. Thus, the external manuscript evidence might be more relevant than translation equivalents in this case.

verse) but Symmachus' τιμωρία "punishment." Symmachus read the noun as derived from the Hebrew root לָפַד Pi "to pass judgment," and Jerome's *inultum* "unpunished" reflects the same understanding.

Many more examples could be adduced to show Jerome's dependence on the Three. The Hexapla was a major influence on early Christian scholarship, even fresh Latin translations from the Hebrew. Furthermore, our exegesis handbooks rightly include the Vulgate as a source of the Hebrew text, but they also introduce a new problem when they fail to mention Jerome's prior sources: now the Vulgate has become a secondary source for reconstructing the original Hebrew text. Sharper discussions of these matters in our exegesis manuals would show students and nonspecialists the value of these readings for establishing and interpreting the Hebrew Bible according to the primary sources.

### 3.3.3 The Hexapla and early Christian exegesis

Because the Hexapla contained multiple versions and texts of the Old Testament, it was a valuable exegetical tool in the hands of its users.<sup>37</sup> We can comment on one important instance, noting that there are more to explore.

Proverbs 8:22 according to the traditional Greek translation was an important text from which early Christian interpreters identified Wisdom with the Son of God: the Lord *created me* as the beginning of his ways for the sake of his works (NETS; emphasis added).<sup>38</sup> In the early part of the third century, Origen identified God's Son with Wisdom in Proverbs 8:22, but he interpreted Wisdom's eternality through the present tense verb "he begets me" in 8:25, and the verb "to create" received no attention.<sup>39</sup> In the fourth century, however, the traditional Greek translation of Proverbs 8:22 became the ground for Arius to introduce the idea that the Son of God is a work and a creature.<sup>40</sup> Thus, Athanasius spares no ink or parchment to show that Proverbs 8:22

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<sup>37</sup> This fact is observed not only in patristic commentaries and treatises but also in the numerous marginal notes excerpted ultimately from the Hexapla in various catena manuscripts that provided their users with textual and exegetical options.

<sup>38</sup> Rahlfs *Septuaginta*: κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ.

<sup>39</sup> Origen, *On First Principles*, trans. John Behr, 2 vols., Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1:40–45, 87, esp., p. 41n3.

<sup>40</sup> Athanasius, *C. Ar.* 2.1.

according to the traditional Greek translation refers only to the Son's incarnation.<sup>41</sup> Athanasius makes no recourse to other versions of the passage or prior interpretations of the passage based on other translations. But other versions of Proverbs 8:22 had long been around and earlier commentators had made use of them.

Previously, probably around 338–339 AD, Eusebius wrote his *Ecclesiastical Theology*.<sup>42</sup> In book 3.1–2, Eusebius presents several arguments in favor of interpreting “he created me” as God's appointment of the Son to rule. He begins with the genre of Proverbs and the book's use of metaphors. But Eusebius does not leave the matter for one's interpretation of metaphors. He pushes the argument beyond the traditional Greek translation in 3.2.15 by appeal to the Hebrew text:

But the Hebrew text specifically shows this. If indeed one should know accurately the true meaning of the divinely inspired scripture, one would find that the Hebrew reading does not contain “he created me,” therefore neither did any of the rest of the translators use this text. And thus, to begin with, Aquila said, “the Lord *acquired me* as the head of his ways,” and Symmachus, “the Lord *acquired me* as the beginning of his ways,” and Theodotion, “the Lord *acquired me* as the beginning of his way. And the translation is probably reasonable.”

By appealing to the versions contained in the Hexapla, Eusebius refocused the argument on the meaning of the word in the text according to the reading of the Hebrew as evidenced in the translations of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. Hence, Eusebius elaborated on the meaning of “to acquire,” noting immediately the usage of the Hebrew verb (*qana* “to acquire”) in Genesis 4:1 “I have acquired a man through God” meaning “to beget” and not “to create.” He also referred to the usage in Genesis 25:10 where Abraham acquired (*qana*) a field (*Ecclesiastical*

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<sup>41</sup> Athanasius, *C. Ar.* 2.47, 50, 56, et al.

<sup>42</sup> For the Greek Edition, see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastica theologia*, ed. Erich Klostermann, *Eusebius Werke IV: Gegen Marcelli. Über die kirchliche Theologie. Die Fragmente Marcellis* (Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1906); for an English translation, see Eusebius of Caesarea, *Against Marcellus and On Ecclesiastical Theology*, trans. Kelley McCarthy Spoerl and Markus Vinzent, *The Fathers of the Church 135* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017).

*Theology*, 3.2.21–22). Thus, according to Eusebius, all the translators render this Hebrew word with “acquire,” and the Hebrews reject the reading “to create,” which is not in the present text (*Ecclesiastical Theology*, 3.2.23).<sup>43</sup> This simple argument from the Hebrew led to his yet simpler conclusion, “There would be a significant difference between ‘he created’ and ‘he acquired’ by which on the one hand (the word) ‘creature,’ according to common usage, signifies the passage from nonexistence to existence, but on the other hand, (the word) ‘acquisition’ describes the relationship of what is preexistent to the one who is acquiring” (3.2.23). Thus, Eusebius grounds Wisdom’s preexistence in the Hebrew reading as made plain by the hexaplaric versions and avoids, he thinks, linguistic gymnastics over the term “creature.”

Eusebius used the Hexapla for exegetical ammunition. Eusebius’ exegesis of Proverbs 8:22 was then used by Basil of Caesarea in his only treatment of this text in *Against Eunomius* (SC 305; 82–84).<sup>44</sup> Thus, Basil says, “The other translators, who having struck on the meaning of the Hebrew (words) in a more crucial way, rendered ‘he acquired me’ instead of ‘he created.’ This will be a great obstacle to them for the blasphemy of the (word) ‘creature.’ For the one who said, ‘I acquired a man through God,’ shows by having used this word he did not create Cain, but begot (him)” (2.20.38–44). The link between Eusebius and Basil is interesting and has been explored already.<sup>45</sup> But Early Christian philology had great relevance for early Christian theology. Therefore, the Hexapla with its reception history should be of crucial significance for the history of interpretation and historical theology. The more we can learn about the Hexapla and the early Christian philology that created it, perhaps that insight will result in charting the development of Christian thought more accurately than previously.

### 3.4 New Testament Lexicography

Students and researchers rightly analyze the language of the Septuagint to aid their understanding of the language of the New

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<sup>43</sup> Due to Ugaritic cognates, we now know that Hebrew קנה could mean “to beget, create” or “to acquire.” See the lexeme in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

<sup>44</sup> For the details, see Mark DelCogliano, “Basil of Caesarea on Proverbs 8:22 and the Sources of Pro-Nicene Theology,” *JTS*, NS, 59 (2008): 183–90.

<sup>45</sup> DelCogliano, “Basil,” 187–188.

Testament. But fewer realize that the hexaplaric texts also offer important usages of rare words in the New Testament or they illustrate well the usage and meaning of words occurring in the NT. Swete says, "Many of the words of the N.T. which are not to be found in the LXX. occur in the fragments of the later Greek versions, and receive important illustration from their use of them. Indeed, in not a few instances these versions supply the only or the best explanations of rarer words or connotations."<sup>46</sup> Swete adds that he is only giving the list in Hatch's essay and that these examples could be easily multiplied by an inspection of the Concordance by Hatch and Redpath. The point here is not that the hexaplaric remains provide evidence for the usage of the word but more importantly the remains of the Three often best illustrate the usage and meaning of a word.

For example, the word ἐμβριμάομαι was used intransitively in classical Greek to denote the snorting of horses in their harness.<sup>47</sup> The word is used transitively with the sense of rebuking or warning someone sternly in Mark 1:43, 14:5; Matt 9:30. This usage is known elsewhere in Symmachus' rendering of געג "to rebuke" with ἐμβριμάομαι in Isaiah 17:13 in which context Yahweh *rebukes* the nations and they flee far away.<sup>48</sup>

Most significant for understanding Jesus' response to the death and burial of Lazarus (John 11:33, 38) is Aquila's use of ἐμβριμάομαι for ΔΥΤ "to be indignant, angry" of God's constant, righteous anger or indignation in Psalm 7:12.<sup>49</sup> This is the clearest usage of the word meaning "to be angry." BDAG lists Aquila (Ps 7:12) under meaning 2 "an expression of anger and displeasure in" or "scold," but because Aquila uses the word intransitively, it most probably has the meaning "be angry,

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<sup>46</sup> Henry Barclay Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902; Reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 460; for the original list of words, see Edwin Hatch, *Essays in Biblical Greek* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), 25–26.

<sup>47</sup> See the entry ἐμβριμάομαι in LSJ.

<sup>48</sup> BDAG lists the usage in Symmachus (Isa 17:13) under meaning 2 "as an expression of anger and displeasure in." But Symmachus used the word (verb + personal complement in the dative case) in a similar way to Mark 1:43, 14:5; Matt 9:30 with the sense of "rebuke, insist sternly."

<sup>49</sup> See the edition by Frederick Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum Quae Supersunt*, volume 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875), 95.

indignant,” as it most probably does in John 11:33, 38 where most commentators on John note that the verb means “to be angry.”<sup>50</sup> My limited survey of John commentaries, however, did not reveal any that cited Aquila’s usage in Ps 7:12, which would be important evidence of the word’s meaning and understanding John’s description of Jesus’ response at the tomb of Lazarus.<sup>51</sup>

The Hexapla Institute is in the process of preparing an online database of all known readings of the Three. This resource will also provide users with tools to search the hexaplaric remains according to Greek word allowing users to include important instances when determining the meanings of New Testament words. Clearly, this use of the hexaplaric remains has potential to shape our interpretations of the New Testament text today.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the Hexapla has untapped potential for advancing the fields of biblical and theological studies. Much good work remains to be done. First, we need reliable and accessible editions of the hexaplaric texts including a concordance and indexes, which is the mission of the Hexapla Institute. Second, scholars and students need to appropriate them when discussing the biblical text and its meaning along with the early Christian reception of the Hexapla. In these ways, we will accede with Epiphanius’ evaluation who said of Origen in 392 AD that in his Hexapla and Tetrapla he gave early Christian scholars a clear advance in knowledge (*On Weights and Measures*, 182–183).

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<sup>50</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 636–637, see especially the literature cited in support of both positions in 637n52.

<sup>51</sup> Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 636–637; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 415–416; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 425–426; George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 192–193; Murray J. Harris, *John* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), 215; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (London: Oliphants, 1972), 398–399.

5.0 Appendix: Provisional Text and Apparatus for Isaiah 3:12a<sup>52</sup>

HT ללִינְהַ יִשְׁגֹּנְ (יִנְע)  
 OG (λαός μου,) οἱ πράκτορες ὑμῶν καλαμῶνται (ὕμᾱς)  
 α' πράκτορσιν αὐτοῦ ἐπιφυλλίζει

Wit1: 710

σ' θ' οἱ πράκτορες αὐτοῦ καλάμηται

Wit1: 710

HT (יב ילִינְהַ) יִשְׁגֹּנְ  
 OG (καὶ) οἱ ἀπαιτοῦντες (κυριεύουσιν ὑμῶν-)  
 α' ἀπαιτοῦντες

Wit1: Hi<sup>gr</sup>

Notes: Jerome provides the Greek reading for Aquila: *Aquila et LXX transtulerunt ἀπαιτοῦντας, qui significant exactores* (PL 25:67).

σ' γυναῖκες

Wit1: ↓710 ↓Hi<sup>lat</sup>  
 Attr: σ'] ε' 710  
 NonGr: mulieres Hi<sup>lat</sup>

Notes: The marginal note in 710 preserves an attribution to the Quinta edition, but Jerome's commentary preserves Symmachus as the correct author of the fragment (PL 25:67). Of course, it is possible that Quinta also had this reading and both editions share it. Jerome notes: *Pro mulieribus, quas solus interpretatus est Symmachus, et Hebraice dicuntur NASIM* (יִנְע).

<sup>52</sup> HT=the Hebrew text in BHS without cantillation marks; OG=the reconstructed Greek text in the Göttingen *Septuaginta* series; α' σ' θ'= the sigla for readings attributed to Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion respectively; Wit1=positive presentation of the evidence for the hexaplaric reading (↓ indicates the witness appears below in one or more apparatuses); Attr=the apparatus used to show variants to the attribution; NonGr=the apparatus to present all non-Greek evidence for a reading like Jerome's commentary on Isaiah in this case; Notes=comments on the texts and variants in apparatuses.

θ' δανεισταί

*Wit1:* 710 H<sup>gr</sup>

*Notes:* The attribution and reading are well attested. Jerome notes: *Theodotio δανειστάς, id est, feneratores* (PL 25:67).

Justice Like Poison:  
Idolatry and Injustice in Hosea 10:1–8

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The notion of ‘justice’ is commonly associated with the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament. Indeed, for many today, to be “prophetic” means standing in a long stream of authoritative spokespeople who, in the words of Amos, called for justice “to flow like water” (Amos 5:24).<sup>1</sup> Yet as many look to the Prophets as a resource for “justice,” the book of Hosea is rarely considered in the conversation.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, some scholars explicitly distinguish Hosea from other Prophetic books by a supposed lack of concern with justice. Joseph Blenkinsopp, for instance, says, “Hosea concentrates so much on false worship (‘harlotry,’ ‘whoredom,’ and the like) that, unlike Amos, he has relatively little to say about social justice and the civil rights of the disadvantaged.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

<sup>2</sup> To my knowledge, the only full-length treatment of the topic is Ronald Laldinsuah, *Responsibility, Chastisement and Restoration: Relational Justice in the Book of Hosea* (Langham Monographs, 2015). Welcomed exceptions to the trend also include Brian P. Irwin, “Social Justice,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*, 719–34; John McLaughlin, *Justice in the Balance: Learning from the Prophets* (Wipf & Stock, 2020), 101ff. From a broader perspective, Daniel Smith-Christopher notes that “justice” is rarely included among the many scholarly proposals for unifying themes of the Twelve. See Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, “The Problem of ‘Justice’ as Social-Criticism in the Twelve,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Minor Prophets*, ed. Julia M. O’Brien (Oxford University Press, 2021), 160.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, Revised and Enlarged. (Westminster John Knox, 1996), 90.

Does Blenkinsopp have it right? Does Hosea's preoccupation with worship leave no room for a concern for justice?<sup>4</sup> Does Hosea advocate for orthodox faith without deeds of justice? Can such faith save Israel? This article will explore this dynamic of worship and justice in the book of Hosea. Contrary to what Blenkinsopp intimates, we will see that for Hosea, one's conception of God is inextricably connected to the social life of the people, including their posture towards justice. To this end, we will proceed in three steps.

First, we must address the issue of terminology. What do we mean by "justice?" I draw upon the work of Daniel Philpott to consider justice as "comprehensive right relationship." The value of this framework is its emphasis on both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of justice. This allows our discourse on justice to be properly theocentric. Justice, as we will see, has everything to do with one's orientation to the Living God. To work for justice in the world involves reflecting the justice that God practices towards his creation.

Second, I will turn to Hos 10:1–8 as a case study for Hosea's presentation of justice. As this text shows, a false conception of YHWH, here depicted through worship associated with the golden calves, produces not only enmity towards God, but also is the soil in which the fruit of injustice blossoms. Worship and ethics are inseparable because Israel becomes like what they worship. The end result of their gross misconception of YHWH is, to quote the immortal words of the musical Hamilton, a "world turned upside down."

Lastly, with the foundation laid by Hosea, I will offer some brief reflections on justice as a trinitarian enterprise. Comprehensive right relationship begins with one's conception of God. Since God is Trinity, the work of the people of God today must be shaped accordingly.

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<sup>4</sup> "Justice" and "social justice" throughout this article are used in the classical biblical sense. For contemporary meanings of "social justice," see Thaddeus J. Williams, *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth: 12 Questions Christians Should Ask About Social Justice* (Zondervan Academic, 2020). Also see the recent critique of the coopting of the Prophets for contemporary social issues by one Old Testament scholar writing from a self-consciously progressive perspective: Julia M. O'Brien, *Prophets beyond Activism: Rethinking the Prophetic Roots of Social Justice* (Westminster John Knox, 2024).

### Justice as Comprehensive Right Relationship

It has long been said that “Britain and America are two nations divided by a common language.” A similar phenomenon is evident with the discourse on “justice.” Everyone assumes a particular understanding and is puzzled when others talk funny. Justice, as Christopher Frey says, “seems to be more or less a cluster of normative ideas combined in one fashion or another...”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the academic community is comprised of individuals divided by a common word: “justice.” Part of this division is the disparate conversations we have in our disciplinary silos. On the one hand, philosophers continue to debate the nature of justice, whether as individual rights (Wolterstorff), right order (O’Donovan, Macintyre), some other variation, or something altogether different.<sup>6</sup> Biblical scholars on the other hand have explored the social, political, and economic world of the ancient Near East and Mediterranean, reconstructing the context for what Scripture describes as “justice and righteousness.” While I have no aspirations to bridge this divide – our Brits and Americans will just have to coexist – I must, at minimum, define what I mean by “justice.”

Of course, the lexical data in the Old Testament is our starting point.<sup>7</sup> Yet, however one analyzes the occurrences of “justice,” “injustice,” and

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<sup>5</sup> Christofer Frey, “The Impact of the Biblical Idea of Justice on Present Discussions of Social Justice,” in *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and Their Influence*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman, JSOTSupp 137 (Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 92.

<sup>6</sup> For a survey of these views, see John D. Carlson, “Rights versus Right Order: Two Theological Traditions of Justice and Their Implications for Christian Ethics and Pluralistic Polities,” *JSCE* 36.2 (2016): 79–100.

<sup>7</sup> In addition to the lexicons, see Walter J. Houston, *Justice for the Poor?: Social Justice in the Old Testament in Concept and Practice* (Cascade, 2020), 150–80; Walter J. Houston, *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament* (T & T Clark, 2006); Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Fortress, 1995); Hemchand Gossai, *Justice, Righteousness and the Social Critique of the Eighth-Century Prophets*, vol. 141 of *AUSS 7: Theology and Religion* (Peter Lang, 1993); Moshe Weinfeld, “Justice and Righteousness’ – מִשְׁפָּט וְצְדָקָה – The Expression and Its Meaning,” in *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and Their Influence*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman, JSOTSupp 137 (Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 228–46. On justice in the ancient Near East and Egypt,

the like, we can all recognize that the concept is not reducible to lexemes alone. One only need to think of Naboth, who was falsely incriminated, murdered, and defrauded in 1 Kgs 21, a narrative without any language of justice or injustice.

But what are the contours of justice in the Old Testament? Some scholars define justice in terms of a particular model. For example, though he recognizes other aspects of justice, Walter Brueggemann argues that proponents of distributive justice in the OT, that is, the redistribution of social goods and power, "...occupy the central space in the theological testimony of Israel..."<sup>8</sup> It is this paradigm that animates much of his interpretation. James Luther Mays affirms this distributive component in the Prophets but formulates it differently than Brueggemann, subsuming distributive justice under a broader framework. For the Prophets, Mays asserts, justice has theological, moral, and judicial/economic dimensions.<sup>9</sup> This broader conception is much welcomed, as it prevents reductionism, as in the case of Brueggemann, to one aspect of justice. Beyond the multifaceted nature of justice, I am convinced that for justice to be truly biblical, it must have an adequately theological foundation.<sup>10</sup>

For this reason, I am intrigued by the proposal of Daniel Philpott who describes justice in terms of "comprehensive right relationship."<sup>11</sup> This is

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see Nathan Bills, *A Theology of Justice in Exodus* (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2020), 34–40, and sources cited there.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Fortress, 1997), 738.

<sup>9</sup> James L. Mays, "Justice: Perspectives from the Prophetic Tradition," *Interpretation* 37 (1983): 5–17.

<sup>10</sup> Brueggemann, for instance, disassociates justice from the nature and character of YHWH. In some instances, "Yahweh in heaven," Brueggemann says, "must 'get with the program' of *shalôm* on earth!" (Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, 740). But this raises an obvious question: who determines the program of *shalom* YHWH must "get with?" Making "justice" a superordinate reality over God is theologically problematic.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Philpott, "Resurrecting Justice," *JMT* 11.1 (2022): 167–92. He applied this notion to political matters in Daniel Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace: An Ethic of Political Reconciliation* (Oxford University Press, 2012). Though he writes from within Catholic political theology, his categories rest on theological commitments broadly shared with evangelical theology.

a broad framework that intersects both divine and human justice with, borrowing terminology from Nicholas Wolterstorff, primary and rectifying justice. The four resulting categories posit a theocentric view of justice that can encompass specific applications of justice (i.e. retributive justice, etc.). According to Philpott, the first category, what he calls “divine primary justice,” describes the moral order that God establishes and upholds through his creation and covenants. The second category, “divine rectifying justice,” entails God’s response to sin, which includes judgment but ultimately culminates in reconciliation through the death and resurrection of Jesus.<sup>12</sup> Philpott’s third category, “human primary justice,” refers to right relationship of people with God, the natural world, and one another. This involves the cultivation of inward virtue and is shaped by God’s revelation in Scripture. The final category, “human rectifying justice,” describes human response to the wrongs of others, including in judicial and legal actions, with the ultimate goal of restoration of right relationship between humans. I readily confess this framework is not perfect. For instance, one wonders where the fate of the unrepentant enemies of God fits into Philpott’s schema. Nevertheless, I appreciate both the broad scope and theocentric focus of the proposal. It roots all human justice in the justice of God. As Philpott states, “The fruit of divine justice is human justice, the comprehensive right relationship that people enact towards other people and towards God.”<sup>13</sup> As the below will show, a proper understanding of biblical justice cannot be divorced from a proper understanding of God. Mays is correct that “[The Prophets] would not have been satisfied with any theory of [justice’s] significance which lacked a confessional dimension and did not reckon it to be inherent in divine reality.”<sup>14</sup> To illustrate the connection between worship and justice in Hosea, we will employ Philpott’s categories as a heuristic tool to analyze Hos 10:1–8. As will be seen, the value of this framework is its theocentric orientation that resonates with the interconnectedness of Hosea’s message. The vertical and horizontal dimensions of relationship are not merely analogous but causally connected.

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<sup>12</sup> Philpott appears to overlook the role of justice in the final judgment of the wicked. I would still categorize this as “rectifying justice” but acknowledge that individual reconciliation is not a universal reality (cf. Matt 25:41).

<sup>13</sup> Philpott, “Resurrecting Justice,” 179.

<sup>14</sup> Mays, “Justice,” 8.

## Idolatry and Injustice in Hosea 10:1–8<sup>15</sup>

### Introduction

As with the entire book of Hosea, Hos 10:1–8 is a textually difficult section, exemplified not least of which in the opening verbless clause in 10:1.<sup>16</sup> The agricultural imagery from Hosea 9 continues in this section as Israel is likened to a vine; just what kind of vine is a matter of some debate. The crux of the issue is how we render the participle  $\text{קָרַב}$ , which modifies “vine.” Hans Wolff, with support from LXX and Vulgate, translates the first half of the verse, “Israel was a luxuriant vine. He yielded fruit accordingly” (cf. CSB, ESV, NET). In this reading, Hosea describes the affluence of the nation during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II.<sup>17</sup> Since the second half of the verse describes the fruitfulness of the nation, Wolff’s rendering fits contextually. Andrew Macintosh, however, reads the verse differently. Following the more common use of the verb  $\text{קָרַב}$ , he translates it, “Israel is a damaged vine whose fruit fails him” (cf. KJV).<sup>18</sup> Instead of being a vine that bears the expected fruit, Israel is blighted and fruitless. Truly, two more contrasting interpretations could not be envisioned. Whereas Wolff sees Israel as affluent and prosperous in this verse, Macintosh sees Israel in ruin and decay. Of course, both sides marshal textual support for their reading, accompanied, as usual, with the invocation of semitic cognates and ancient versions. But which view is correct? Does Hosea picture Israel here at a national high point or at a demoralizing low point? Is

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<sup>15</sup> Some of this material is drawn from Andrew M. King, *The Book of Hosea*, The Pillar Old Testament Commentary (Eerdmans, Forthcoming).

<sup>16</sup> A new section in 10:1 is indicated by the shift in topic and speaker. See Eric J. Tully, *Hosea: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text*, BHHB (Baylor University Press, 2018), 234. Moon is correct that this break with the previous section is more a matter of convenience than literary necessity. See Joshua N. Moon, *Hosea*, ApOTC 21 (Apollos, 2018), 169.

<sup>17</sup> Cornelius van Leeuwen, “Meaning and Structure of Hosea X 1–8,” *VT* 53 (2003): 370. Hans Walter Wolff, *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea*, trans. Gary Stansell, Hermeneia (Fortress, 1974), 170, 173. This verse, like the previous chapter (cf. 9:10, 15), may also contrast the past with the “present.”

<sup>18</sup> A. A. Macintosh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Hosea*, ICC (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 1997), 383–84.

Israel in riches or is it in rags? After much weeping and gnashing of teeth, I have concluded, along with Ehud Ben Zvi, that the answer is “yes.” The ambiguity of the sense may not be entirely accidental, but indeed could very well be the point.<sup>19</sup> On the one hand, Israel was a luxuriant vine. The Book of Kings tells us that Jeroboam II ushered in a time of national resurgence, expanding the borders of Israel with territory unclaimed since the days of the United Monarchy (2 Kgs 14:25). Hosea too gives us an insider look, saying that Israel built palaces and maintained a formidable army (10:13). The second half of 10:1 says that with their booming economy, Israel had the resources to put a church on every corner: “he multiplied altars...they improved pillars.”<sup>20</sup> So yes, Israel could rightly be called a luxuriant vine. But that’s not the whole story.

While outward appearances suggest the nation’s prosperity, the Word of God always probes beneath the surface, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb 4:12). In this case, YHWH’s verdict is unsparing: Israel’s “hearts are false” (10:2). In this sense, קרַב meaning “to ruin, devastate, or empty” (cf. Isa 24:1; Jer 51:2; Nah 2:2), could thus apply here.<sup>21</sup> Like a whitewashed tomb, Israel appeared outwardly beautiful, but inside there was only the bones of a spiritually dead people (cf. Matt 23:27). This view too accords with the larger indictment of Hosea. The lion’s share of the book is devoted to exposing the corrupted nature of Israel’s religious and political life. This is framed in the first three chapters with the household metaphor, where the YHWH-Israel relationship is portrayed both as an estranged husband and wife and parent and child. As a wife, Israel was prone to adultery (1:2; 2:5), supposing her provisions and luxuries to be gifts of her lovers, instead of their true source, YHWH. This theme continues throughout the book, as Israel trusts in anyone and anything other than YHWH (cf. 4:12; 5:13; 7:11; 9:10). Thus, Israel is both a luxuriant vine, but one that is spiritually devastated (cf. Amos 6:6). The polysemous nature of this opening clause introduces the paradox that is Israel in the world of Hosea.

To further explore the relationship between worship and justice I want to ask two questions: 1) How does this section portray the religious

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<sup>19</sup> E. Ben Zvi, *Hosea*, FOTL 21A/1 (Eerdmans, 2005), 207.

<sup>20</sup> The sinful multiplication of altars occurred previously in 8:11.

<sup>21</sup> Van Leeuwen dismisses the negative sense for the participle too quickly. See Leeuwen, “Meaning and Structure of Hosea X 1–8,” 370.

life of the people regarding their worship? And, 2) What kind of ethical life does their spirituality produce?<sup>22</sup> In other words, what do they think about God and how does that affect the way they live? As we will see, what is lacking in Israel is a comprehensive right relationship with God and people.

### Misconceiving the Divine

The religious life of Israel is complex in the Book of Hosea. There are occasions of the outright worship of other gods, such as Baal/Baals (2:8, 13; 9:10; 11:2; 13:1).<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the world of Hosea is in the shadow of Jehu's revolt, which involved waging war against the Baalism of Jezebel and Ahab that was hostile to Yahwism (1:3; cf. 2 Kgs 9–10). Yet beyond the worship of other gods, a more insidious form of idolatry in Hosea is not religion directed away from YHWH, but religion directed towards YHWH. At one level, Israel believed all was well between them and YHWH. Hosea intimates that YHWH was invoked in oaths at Bethel in 4:15. In 8:2, YHWH says, "To me they cry, 'My God, we—Israel—know you.'"<sup>24</sup> Here Israel, who is condemned in the surrounding verses as covenant violators (8:1) and those who have rejected the good (8:3), refer to YHWH as "my God." This appellation stands in sharp contradistinction to the divine assessment that Israel is "not my people"

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<sup>22</sup> This article will not make an argument about the structure of this section. While I appreciate many aspects of Van Leeuwen's proposal for a chiasmic structure for 10:1–8, I am not persuaded that it properly organizes the material in the unit. See Leeuwen, "Meaning and Structure of Hosea X 1–8."

<sup>23</sup> Traditionally, the "lovers" in Hos 1–3 were understood to refer to the deity Baal, perhaps in various manifestations. A number of scholars reject this designation, arguing that *בַּעַל* and *בְּעָלִים* are not deities, but have an economic or political referent. For an overview, see Brad E. Kelle, "Hosea 1-3 in Twentieth-Century Scholarship," *CBR* 7.2 (2009): 202–08. In my view, the religious interpretation has the best textual support. 2:13, for instance, appears to equate the "Baals" (*בְּעָלִים*) with "her lovers" (*מִצְאֵהָ בָיָהּ*), with the Baals being the recipients of sacrifices. Against the notion that Baal was non-existent in Israel following Jehu, see Andrew M. King, "Did Jehu Destroy Baal from Israel?: A Contextual Reading of Jehu's Revolt," *BBR* 27.3 (2017): 309–32. The rest of the book uses Baal with clear reference to the deity (9:10).

<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere Israel offers sacrifice to YHWH (5:6; 8:13). While these sacrifices may have been offered at local sanctuaries, it seems likely that the state cults at Bethel and Dan played a preeminent role in Yahwistic worship (see below).

and that YHWH is “not I AM” to them (1:9).<sup>25</sup> Yet their claim to “know” YHWH, a theologically significant concept in Hosea, illustrates a central issue in the book.<sup>26</sup> The question, as M. Daniel Carroll R. has noted, is not whether Israel still venerates YHWH, but, rather, *what kind of YHWH do they believe in*.<sup>27</sup> For there to be a comprehensive right relationship with God, it is essential to ensure you have the right God. This very question lies at the heart of our passage.

YHWH is mentioned explicitly only in 10:3 where the people are quoted saying, “we have no king! For we do not fear YHWH; And the king, what will he do for us?”<sup>28</sup> Putting aside the issue of kingship for a moment, we can hear the bold claim of the people. Rather than those who walk in the fear of YHWH, Israel is like Pharaoh who said, “who is YHWH that I should obey his voice” (Exod 5:2). While some scholars view this quotation as the future reflection of the people after the fall of the northern kingdom, I find Duane Garrett’s argument most compelling that the quote does not describe a future reflection on long past events, but rather, exemplifies the people’s defiance in the “present.”<sup>29</sup> Israel is not identifying the causal relationship between the fall of the kingdom and their *previous* failure to fear YHWH. Instead, Hosea gives voice to their brazen rejection of YHWH and his program for kingship. The absence of fear leads the nation to rage against the LORD and against his

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<sup>25</sup> Many English versions render the final clause of 1:9, “I am not your God” [NIV, ESV, CSB, NET]. The Hebrew text, however, alludes to a reversal of Exod 3:14, where YHWH said “I AM WHO I AM.” Hosea announces the reversal of YHWH’s covenant disposition towards his people.

<sup>26</sup> “Knowing” YHWH in Hosea is never merely cognitive but involves affections and allegiance (cf. 2:8, 20; 4:1, 6; 5:4; 6:6; 14:9). Knowing God in Hosea is beholding YHWH rightly and responding accordingly.

<sup>27</sup> M. Daniel Carroll R., “The Prophetic Denunciation of Religion in Hosea 4–7,” *CTR* 7 (1993): 15–38.

<sup>28</sup> A number of interpreters view this quote as originating either in the final years of the northern kingdom or after the fall of Samaria. Machinist paraphrases the verse, “For now (as they face God’s punishment), they will say, ‘We have no king (מלך), because we did not fear Yhwh; but the king (המלך)—what could he do for us (now, anyway)?’” Peter Machinist, “Hosea and the Ambiguity of Kingship in Ancient Israel,” in *Constituting the Community*, ed. J. T. Strong and S. S. Tuell (Eisenbrauns, 2005), 161.

<sup>29</sup> Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, NAC (B&H Publishing Group, 1997), 207–08.

anointed.<sup>30</sup> This too plays into the paradoxical nature of Israel; they are simultaneously Yahwistic and hostile to YHWH. Perhaps Israel's blunt quotation originates in the context of a confrontation with YHWH's messengers (cf. 9:8; Amos 7:12–13; Mic 2:6). In any case, their verbal defiance did not mean that they were left without a Yahwistic witness.

While it is unclear whether the altars and pillars Israel multiplies in 10:1 are Yahwistic or not, I believe the reference to the golden calf in 10:5 helps us see, to Carroll's question, what kind of YHWH the people believe in. I render the verse as follows:

*“For the heifers of Beth Aven they<sup>31</sup> are fearful, [for the] ‘resident’ of Samaria. Indeed, its people will mourn over it, its pagan priests who rejoiced over it, that is, over its glory, because it will have been exiled from them.”*

The background of the golden calf, of course, is the great sin of Israel in Exod 32 and later the cult established by Jeroboam I after the division of the kingdom (1 Kgs 12:25–33).<sup>32</sup> In both instances, it appears that

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<sup>30</sup> Of course, the quotation is put in the mouths of the people by Hosea. Nevertheless, as one who receives and mediates the revelation of YHWH (cf. 1:1; 14:9), we can embrace this perspective as true of the people.

<sup>31</sup> Many commentators read a plural referent for “residents of Samaria” and take this as the subject of the verb “to be afraid.” While LXX has the plural subject, some understand the singular “resident” in MT as a collective noun. See Macintosh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Hosea*, 399; W. Edward Glenny, *Hosea: A Commentary Based on Hosea in Codex Vaticanus*, SCC (Brill, 2013), 145–46. I take the subject of the verb “to be afraid” (יָרָא) to be the people who spoke defiantly in 10:3 and who “spoke words” in 10:4.

<sup>32</sup> The literature on these narratives is extensive. See, for example, Michael B. Hundley, “What Is the Golden Calf?,” *CBQ* 79.4 (2017): 559–79; James W. Watts, “Aaron and the Golden Calf in the Rhetoric of the Pentateuch,” *JBL* 130 (2011): 417–30; Y. H. Chung, *The Sin of the Calf: The Rise of the Bible’s Negative Attitude Toward the Golden Calf*, LHBOTS 523 (T&T Clark, 2010); Gary N. Knoppers, “Aaron’s Calf and Jeroboam’s Calves,” in *Fortunate the Eyes That See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Astrid B. Beck (Eerdmans, 1995), 92–104; Herbert C. Brichto, “The Worship of the Golden Calf: A Literary Analysis of a Fable on Idolatry,” *HUCA* 54 (1983): 1–44; John N. Oswalt, “The Golden Calves and the Egyptian Concept of Deity,” *EQ* 45 (1973): 13–20; Moses Aberbach and Leivy Smolar, “Aaron,

neither Aaron nor Jeroboam were seeking to start an entirely novel religion. After the construction of the calf at Sinai, Aaron declares, “tomorrow will be a feast to YHWH” (Exod 32:5), apparently something still active in Hosea’s day (9:5). Both Aaron and Jeroboam I attribute the exodus from Egypt to the calf/calves (Exod 32:4; 1 Kgs 12:28). Most likely the calves were not thought to be the deity itself, but functioned similarly to the Ark of the Covenant as the pedestal of YHWH.<sup>33</sup> Thus, it appears that the calves are Yahwistic in nature, albeit in a form expressly prohibited by YHWH (Exod 20:4).<sup>34</sup> For this reason, the biblical authors can polemicize the calves as simply the work of human hands (cf. Hos 8:6).<sup>35</sup> As Michael Hundley states, “Yhwh will not deign to associate with the image even if it was crafted for him.”<sup>36</sup>

Returning to Hos 10:5, in my reading, there are two references to the calf in the verse. First, the calf is described as “the heifers of Beth Aven.”

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Jeroboam, and the Golden Calves,” *JBL* 86.2 (1967): 129–40. For bovine imagery more widely in the ancient Near East, see Daniel E. Fleming, “If El Is a Bull, Who Is Calf?: Reflections on Religion in Second Millennium Syria-Palestine,” *EI* 26 (1999): 23–27.

<sup>33</sup> The calf in Exodus is likely both a substitute for the long absent Moses as well as the ark. See R. W. L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34*, JSOTSupp 22 (JSOT Press, 1983), 47. Chung states, “Given Israelite aniconism, it is reasonable to assume that the calf image did not serve as an iconic representation of YHWH, but rather as an expression of sacred emptiness, like the Ark/cherubs” (Chung, *The Sin of the Calf*, 11).

<sup>34</sup> On the Yahwistic nature of the calves, see Theodore J. Lewis, *The Origin and Character of God: Ancient Israelite Religion Through the Lens of Divinity* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 317–22; Jonathan S. Greer, *Dinner at Dan: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sacred Feasts at Iron Age II Tel Dan and Their Significance*, vol. 66 of *CHANE* (Brill, 2013), 14–26. This view was held by William F. Albright. See William F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 156.

<sup>35</sup> Moberly captures the perspective of the biblical authors, saying, “...illegitimate worship of the true God (i.e. syncretism, the incorporation into Yahwism of non-Yahwistic rites and practices) is not possible; illegitimate worship cannot, by definition, be worship of the true God.” (R. W. L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34*, JSOTSupp 22 [JSOT Press, 1983], 167)

<sup>36</sup> Hundley, “What Is the Golden Calf?,” 575. Also, see Moberly, *At the Mountain of God*, 166–67.

The feminine plural form “heifers” (תִּילָוֹת) has caused not a few interpreters, pardon the pun, to have a bit of a cow. Following LXX, virtually all English versions render the word as the masculine singular “calf.” The KJV is a lone voice in the wilderness maintaining the plural “calves” (Good enough for Paul, am I right?). Admittedly, the translation “calf” is contextually appropriate, as masculine singular pronouns (“its people,” “its pagan priests,” “its glory”) and a masculine singular verb (הָלַךְ, “to go into exile”) refer to the calf throughout the verse. But grammatical gender and number are not so static in Hosea.<sup>37</sup> Ephraim (masculine), for instance, is referred to as a trained heifer (feminine) in 10:11. The plural could convey either a sense of abstraction (i.e. the calf cult as a whole) or, more convincingly in my view, a sarcastic play on the *pluralis majestatis* (plural of majesty).<sup>38</sup> The feminine form too could polemicize the calf, which is masculine everywhere else. The focal point of Israel’s worship is not represented with a young bull, a symbol of strength and vitality, but a heifer. Israel’s god has lost his mojo. This polemical sense is underscored with the reference to Bethel (“House of God”) as Beth Aven (“House of Iniquity,” cf. 4:15; 5:8; 10:8). For these reasons, I am sticking with “heifers.”

A second reference to the calf in 10:5 occurs in the phrase “the ‘resident of Samaria.’” In my reading, this phrase parallels the “heifers of Beth Aven” in the first clause, both of which are the object of the people’s

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<sup>37</sup> A premier example of mismatched grammatical gender is the nation of Israel portrayed as a wife in Hosea 1–3. Some argue that the feminine imagery suggests that the referent is not the nation, but more specifically the city of Samaria. See Brad E. Kelle, *Hosea 2: Metaphor and Rhetoric in Historical Perspective*, AcBib 20 (Society of Biblical Literature, 2005); John J. Schmitt, “The Wife of God in Hosea 2,” *BR* 34 (1989): 5–18. This view is maintained in Bo H. Lim and Daniel Castelo, *Hosea*, THOTC (Eerdmans, 2015). For a critique of this view, see J. Andrew Dearman, “YHWH’s House: Gender Roles and Metaphors for Israel in Hosea,” *JNSL* 25 (1999): 97–108. Regarding grammatical number, we can note the plural form of Holy One (קְדוֹשִׁים) is used to describe YHWH in 11:12, perhaps on analogy to the grammatically plural אֱלֹהִים (God).

<sup>38</sup> See Thomas E. McComiskey, “Hosea,” in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas E. McComiskey (Baker Academic, 1992), 167.

“fear.”<sup>39</sup> Similar to the phrase “resident’ of Samaria,” the phrase “calf of Samaria” occurred in 8:6. But since there is no evidence for a golden calf in Samaria, why would Hosea associate the calf with the capital city of Samaria, some 25 miles north of the nearest state sanctuary at Bethel? What hath Samaria to do with Bethel? The answer may lie in Hosea’s frequent intertwining of politics and religion. In 8:4, Hosea juxtaposes the installation of unauthorized kings and officials with the crafting of idols with silver and gold. False religion and false politics are never far apart, and injustice is never far behind. The reference to the calf as the “resident’ of Samaria” suggests that illicit worship had become so entrenched in their political life that Samaria could be said to be the calf’s real dwelling place. The “YHWH” of Israel did not dwell in the place where the real YHWH set his name (Deut 12:5–7; 1 Kgs 8:29), but instead resided where it was most politically advantageous for the leadership. With YHWH’s presence residing in Samaria, the sanctuaries of Dan and Bethel become little more than extensions of the royal religion. This is why Amaziah, the priest at Bethel, can tell Amos that his message is not welcomed because the Bethel sanctuary is “the king’s sanctuary” and “a temple of the kingdom” (Amos 7:12–13). Israel’s religion was in service to the crown, not the other way around. Just as Jeroboam I used Yahwism to secure his own political power (see 1 Kgs 12:26–29), so too does Hosea expose Jeroboam’s state religion.

So what kind of YHWH do we see in Hos 10:1–8? If, as I argue, the calf is associated with the worship of YHWH, the people appear to conceptualize YHWH particularly in political terms, ones that, conveniently, serve their own interests.<sup>40</sup> A god of your own understanding is a god who will often tell you what you want to hear. The divine realm, then, becomes much like the Burger King of my childhood where you could “have it your way.” Rather than being the people of

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<sup>39</sup> See Tully, *Hosea*, 244; F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (Doubleday, 1980), 556.

<sup>40</sup> Additionally, there may have been baalized elements of the calf cult in popular imagination (cf. 2:16). Whereas Jezebel and Elijah/Jehu, for instance, were representatives of two separate deities, by the time of Hosea, these deities may have been conflated in some ways.

YHWH (cf. Exod 3:7; 6:7), Israel had become the “people of the calf.”<sup>41</sup> Elsewhere in the book Israel allies itself with any god or nation they suppose will provide for them (2:5, 7; 5:13; 7:11; 8:9). Yet such a system is fragile. Rather than producing confidence in their god, the people are fearful for the calf’s wellbeing (10:5).<sup>42</sup> Their anxiety is entirely justified, because, as stated at the end of the verse, the calf will be exiled away from them.<sup>43</sup> And if their god cannot protect itself, there certainly is no guarantee of national security for its people.<sup>44</sup> While the blessed YHWH gives and takes away (Job 1:21), the “YHWH” Israel venerates will simply be taken away. The only things left for Israel will be shame (10:6) and ruin (10:7).

From the perspective of justice as comprehensive right relationship, we can see that Israel’s first order of injustice is against God. Rather than giving him the honor and allegiance he is due, they seek to mold him into a more suitable image. With the breakdown of justice at the vertical level, our passage continues on to show us the breakdown of justice at the horizontal level. The bad tree bears bad fruit.

### Justice Blossoms Like Poison

With their misconception of YHWH, how then does Israel live towards one another? How does their worship relate to their ethics? We

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<sup>41</sup> Joy Phillip Kakkanattu, *God’s Enduring Love in the Book of Hosea: A Synchronic and Diachronic Analysis of Hosea 11:1–11*, FAT II 14 (Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 115.

<sup>42</sup> While the verb גָּרַר can be used with a sense of reverent worship (cf. Pss 22:23; 33:8), the לְ preposition on “heifers” suggests not the object of their devotion, but specification in the sense that they are afraid *concerning* the calf. See Tully, *Hosea*, 244.

<sup>43</sup> The reference to “its glory” is reminiscent of the capture of the Ark by the Philistines in 1 Samuel 4. When news reached Israelites, Eli’s daughter-in-law named her child “Ichabod” saying “the glory [כְּבוֹד] has departed [גִּלְיָה] from Israel” (1 Sam 4:21–22). The tragedy in Hosea is that the people are more concerned about the exile of their false god than the departure of one true God (cf. 5:6, 15; 9:12).

<sup>44</sup> Hosea portrays the covenant curse of exile in various ways, including as a return to Egyptian enslavement (cf. 8:13; 9:3). The pairing of Egypt and Assyria throughout the book (7:11; 9:3; 11:5; 12:1) suggests an escalated sense for the coming captivity. This sets the stage for a new exodus (1:11; 2:14–15; 11:11).

glimpse an answer in 10:4, where we hear that the people “speak words,”<sup>45</sup> further detailed as “swearing falsely” and “making a covenant.”<sup>46</sup> For our purposes we need only consider the false swearing.<sup>47</sup> “Swearing” (אָלֶה) was listed among the social vices that broke out in the Land in 4:2. Because there was no knowledge of YHWH in the Land (4:1), deception and violence filled the earth as the waters cover the sea. There “swearing” described pledges that accompanied oaths made with others (cf. Judg 17:2; 1 Kgs 8:31).<sup>48</sup> Here in 10:4 “swearing falsely” likely describes the same social reality. Scripture emphasizes the devastating effects of false witnesses; again, think of Naboth (1 Kgs 21:13). In Lev 19:11, YHWH prohibited deception (כַּחֲשׁ) alongside theft and the false invocation of his name (cf. Lev 6:2–3).<sup>49</sup> False swearing is part of a system of injustice aimed at defrauding one’s neighbor. Although such things should not be named among the people of God, they were part of the warp and woof of Israelite society. But how was this the case? Is not YHWH the God of truth? Is not YHWH a God of justice (Deut 32:4; Pss 9:7; 33:5; 89:14)?

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<sup>45</sup> Some commentators take these words as spoken by the king(s). Against this, it is better to retain the same plural subject from the previous verse describing the people. See Robin Routledge, *Hosea*, TOTC 24 (IVP Academic, 2022), 140; McComiskey, “Hosea,” 165; David Allen Hubbard, *Hosea*, TOTC (InterVarsity, 2009), 183. The shifts between the singular and plural emphasize the collective nature of Israel’s sin. It is not just the elites who are responsible for the spiritual condition of the nation. At some level, all Israel shares the guilt for idolatry and injustice.

<sup>46</sup> Some translations consolidate the infinitive verbs into a single event. CSB, for example, reads, “...taking false oaths *while* making covenants” (also, ESV, KJV, NRSV). While the form of “swearing” (אָלֶה) is difficult, the expected form being אֲלֶה, it is most likely an infinitive absolute influenced by analogy with the following infinitive absolute, כָּרַח (“cutting”). See McComiskey, “Hosea,” 164; Tully, *Hosea*, 242. The actions, then, independently illustrate, in part, what it means for the people to speak empty words.

<sup>47</sup> “Covenant” here does not describe the YHWH-Israel relationship (cf. 6:7; 8:1) or interpersonal agreements (cf. Gen 21:27; Josh 9:6; 2 Sam 3:12). Instead, it functions, like 12:1, to describe international treaties.

<sup>48</sup> Since “swearing” is coordinated with “deception” (כַּחֲשׁ) in the list, the oaths in 4:2 may describe inherently false oaths.

<sup>49</sup> A different verb, שָׁבַע, is used for swearing in Lev 19:11.

When the author of Kings describes the fall of the northern kingdom, he specifically connects the object of Israel's devotion with their spiritual condition: "They went after false idols [הַבָּל] and became false [הַבָּל]" (2 Kgs 17:15 ESV). In the very next verse (2 Kgs 17:16), the author of Kings mentions the golden calves, alongside other expressions of idolatry.<sup>50</sup> Through participation in the calf cult, Israel became like what it worshipped (Hos 9:10; cf. Pss 115:8; 135:18). It may be no coincidence then that Hosea describes Israel as a heifer [הַגֵּלָה] in 10:11. Rather than imaging YHWH, the people are conformed to the image of the calf. Since the "YHWH" Israel esteemed was nothing more than a god of falsehood, it is fitting that Hosea characterizes the people by false words (10:4). Out of the abundance of their false hearts (10:2) their mouths speak (Luke 6:45). In swearing falsely with one another, the people are violating the comprehensive right relationship with both God and man.

The final clause of Hos 10:4 describes the culmination of their failure to maintain a comprehensive right relationship. At this point, many of our English versions fall short of the glory of Hosea, rendering מִשְׁפָּט as "lawsuits" (NIV, CSB, cf. NET, NRSV). While social dysfunction would certainly generate more court cases, Hosea certainly intends more than this. Indeed, in the six occurrences of מִשְׁפָּט in Hosea it never refers to a legal case (2:19; 5:1, 11; 6:5; 10:4; 12:6). More commonly in the book, the translation of "judgment" is most appropriate. Several English versions opt for this translation here in 10:4 (ESV, KJV, NASB, JPS). While this is an improvement, here again we see Hosea's polysemous use of language. As is well known, מִשְׁפָּט can mean "judgment" (Deut 32:41; Ps 7:6) or "justice" (Exod 23:6; Deut 10:18; 1 Sam 8:3; Ps 146:7), among other things, depending on the context. If we put our ear to the text, we may hear both of these tunes playing in harmony. What blossoms from Israel is not just "judgment" for sin, although that is certainly the case. What blossoms in Israel is a mockery of justice; this is the fruit that befits the luxuriant and devastated vine (10:1; cf. Deut 32:31–33). In this context, Hosea can satirize their sense of justice. For, no true and ultimate social justice can coexist with a false conception of God. Later in Hosea 10, the prophet states, "You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice [חַסְדָּא], you have eaten the fruit of deception [חַסְדָּא]..." (10:13). Israel

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<sup>50</sup> Beale connects 2 Kgs 17:15–16 with Jer 2:5. See G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (IVP Academic, 2008), 111–13.

harvested “justice” *coram deo*, the only problem was that the labor was done under the radiance of the “resident of Samaria.” The justice that blossomed in Israel was no true justice, because their “YHWH” was not the true YHWH. Their “justice” crops up, as Hosea says, “like a poisonous plant.” This is similar to Amos’ charge that Israel turned “justice” into poison (Amos 5:7; 6:12). And all of this flows from their conception of God. This is the “social construction of reality” Danny Carroll has productively explored in the Book of Amos.<sup>51</sup> And like Amos, Hosea announces the deconstruction of their world. The luxuriant and devastated vine would be devastated in space and time as their king and golden calves would be exiled. The result will be that Israel will call for the mountains and hills to bury them (10:8). This is the fruit of their false conception of YHWH (cf. Deut 32:31–33). This judgment exhibits divine rectifying justice.

Although this picture is bleak, not all is hopeless. Hosea 14 provides a liturgy of repentance that addresses Israel’s comprehensive right relationship.<sup>52</sup> In their return to YHWH, the people will acknowledge and confess their iniquity (14:2) and renounce the political and religious sources of their idolatry (14:3). They will join the divine assessment that what they previously venerated as “our god” was merely the “work of their hands.” This confession is accompanied by YHWH’s transformation, as he announces, “I will heal their apostasy” (14:4; cf. 5:4). The result is that this restored Israel will “blossom like the vine” (14:7). This condition is tied to dwelling in the shade of their messianic king.<sup>53</sup> Rather than renouncing kingship, the restored Israel will embrace it in all its fullness. The ripple effects will be evident in both the vertical

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<sup>51</sup> M. Daniel Carroll R., *Contexts for Amos: Prophetic Poetics in Latin American Perspective*, JSOTSup 132 (JSOT Press, 1992), 273–77.

<sup>52</sup> The phrase “liturgy of repentance” comes from Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 269.

<sup>53</sup> While some English versions read “my shadow” (ESV, NRSV), the MT, supported by all ancient versions, has a 3ms suffix (“his shade,” NIV, KJV, NASB, CSB, JPS, NET). The contextual ambiguity of reference may be resolved if we find here an allusion to kingship. Since shade is often associated with royal figures (cf. Judg 9:15; Eze 17:22–24; Lam 4:20), this may be a reference to David their King in Hos 3:5. The Targum has a messianic reading connected to resurrection: “They shall be gathered among their exiles, they shall dwell *in the shade of their anointed One*. The dead shall be resurrected and goodness shall increase in the land.”

and horizontal dimensions (cf. 2:16–23). By the help of their God, as Hosea says in 12:6, the people will return, guarding steadfast love and justice, as they wait for their God continually. Comprehensive right relationship will be restored.

### The Trinity and the Just People of God

This connection between worship and ethics is, of course, not unique to Hosea. In Romans 1–2, Paul demonstrates the grievous social effects of misconceiving the divine, whether by Gentile (Rom 1:29–32) or Jew (Rom 2:21–22). Yet New Testament authors make clear that central to comprehensive right relationship is the recognition and proper response to the one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As John states, for example, “No one who denies the Son has the Father; he who confesses the Son has the Father as well” (1 John 2:23 CSB). Evidence that one has the Son is their love for others (1 John 3:10; 4:20–21). In their study of the trinity in the Gospel of John, Köstenberger and Swain state that “...a proper understanding of John’s trinitarian mission theology ought to lead the church to understand its mission in trinitarian terms...”<sup>54</sup> While this refers in the first order to the proclamation of the gospel, it also involves the material care for those around us. Just as the triune God has visited [ἐπισκέπτομαι] his people (Luke 1:68) so too should we visit [ἐπισκέπτομαι] the most vulnerable in their affliction (Jas 1:27). In other words, our faith in the gospel of the triune God should affect our actions in light of who God is and what God has done (1 Jn 3:16–18). This trinitarian perspective should equally shape our approach to justice.<sup>55</sup> For, in keeping with the message of Hosea, worship and ethics always go hand in hand.

Another place in the New Testament we see this connection is the actions of those reckoning with the identity of Jesus in the Gospels. In Matthew 12, for instance, a failure to acknowledge Jesus’ identity leads the Pharisees to erroneously accuse his disciples, who had plucked grain

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<sup>54</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John’s Gospel* (IVP Academic, 2008), 156.

<sup>55</sup> A trinitarian approach to justice has certain entailments, just as does a trinitarian reading of Scripture. On the latter, see Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* (Baker Academic, 2015), 5–15.

on the Sabbath, of wrongdoing. To expose their folly, Jesus cites (“wait for it, wait for it, wait”) Hosea. Jesus says that if the Pharisees had known what it means that God desires mercy and not sacrifice (quoting Hos 6:6) they “would not have condemned the innocent” (Matt 12:7). Jesus charges the Pharisees with injustice (cf. Jas 5:6; LXX Ps 93:21 [Eng 94:21]), motivated by a failure to see that he is YHWH of the Sabbath.<sup>56</sup> Just as Hosea emphasizes that a proper orientation to God is essential for one’s ethical life, so too Jesus indicates that a proper apprehension of his divine identity would lead to a right disposition towards justice as shaped by Scripture. Zacchaeus provides a counterpoint to the Pharisees. Part of his response towards Jesus involved a joyful pledge to repair what he had taken by injustice (Luke 19:8). Following Jesus changed his ethical life. Zacchaeus exemplifies the actions of someone pursuing comprehensive right relationship beginning with the joyful reception of Jesus, the Son of God.

The claim that justice, comprehensive right relationship, is properly trinitarian suggests that justice is qualitatively unique for Christians.<sup>57</sup> This is not to say that non-believers are unable to pursue or are exempt from upholding justice (cf. Rom 13:3–5).<sup>58</sup> All must appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive their due for what they have done in the body (2 Cor 5:10; cf. Rev 20:12–13). Both general revelation and the individual conscience testify to the wrongness of injustice (Rom 2:14–15). But this is to say that, in light of Scripture, we must maintain a properly theological, that is trinitarian, basis for our work for justice in the world. Our worship influences our ethics. Our comprehensive right

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<sup>56</sup> Adam Winn compellingly argues that in Mark 2:28 Jesus identifies himself with YHWH. As he states, “Jesus is not limited by the regulations of the Sabbath because he is the very YHWH who created the Sabbath and hallowed it” (Adam Winn, “A Case for Jesus as the YHWH of Israel,” in *Christology in Mark’s Gospel: 4 Views*, ed. Anthony Le Donne [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2021], 226).

<sup>57</sup> Fellipe Do Vale, “Justice, Grace, and Love: A Theological Commendation,” *TRINJ*42 (2021): 200.

<sup>58</sup> While Martens helpfully surveys many aspects of biblical justice, he errs in the way he correlates salvation in the context of global pluralism. See Elmer A. Martens, “Yahweh, Justice, and Religious Pluralism in the Old Testament,” in *The Old Testament in the Life of God’s People: Essays in Honor of Elmer A. Martens*, ed. Jon Isaak (Eisenbrauns, 2009), 123–41.

relationship starts with the triune God and works itself in service to others. What constitutes justice, then, must be normed by the self-revelation of God and guided by love in the Holy Spirit.

### Conclusion

This article has explored the relationship between worship and justice in the book of Hosea. The framework for justice as comprehensive right relationship allowed our discourse on justice to be theologically focused, both vertically and horizontally. Our analysis of Hos 10:1–8 further revealed this dynamic. The breakdown in social justice was traced to Israel's false conception of YHWH, exemplified in the golden calves. The unauthorized melding of political pragmatism and religious innovation yielded only the poisonous fruit of injustice. We then reflected briefly on the trinitarian nature of justice as comprehensive right relationship. To rightly behold the God who is Trinity entails becoming a people who live accordingly. So, to end where we began, Blenkinsopp's divorce of proper worship in Hosea from concern for social justice will simply not do. One suspects that his verdict rests on a definition of justice that is too narrow, one that, like Brueggemann's, reduces justice primarily to the economic realm. But if justice is, as argued here, comprehensive right relationship, then Hosea's indictment of false swearing, political idolatry, and the instrumentalization of religion for power is no less injustice than the cries heard in Amos. The machinery of oppression runs on deception, and Hosea exposes the theological engine that drives it. Worship and ethics are as inseparable for Hosea as they are for believers today. Justice begins with the triune God and is pursued by the people of God for the praise of God's glorious grace. Of course, Christians must work out what comprehensive right relationship looks like in our various spheres.<sup>59</sup> But in all of this, we must remember that the triune God is before all things and in him all things hold together.

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<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Mae Elise Cannon, ed., *Social Justice Handbook: Small Steps for a Better World* (InterVarsity Press, 2010); Vic McCracken, ed., *Christian Faith and Social Justice: Five Views* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); Bethany Hanke Hoang and Kristen Deede Johnson, *The Justice Calling* (Brazos, 2017).

The House of Purification:  
The Role of the Church in Bunyan's Doctrine of  
Sanctification

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**The House of Purification**

In *The Greatness of the Soul* (1682), John Bunyan compared the church to the house of purification where Esther and the rest of the virgins spent twelve months in preparation for their appearance before the king.

When the maidens were gathered together for the great king Ahasuerus, before they were brought to him into his royal presence, they were to be purified with things for purification, and that for twelve months together—to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and other things, and so came every maiden to the king. Es. ii.3,9,12,13. God also hath appointed that those that come into his royal presence should first go to the house of the women, the church, and there receive of the eunuchs things for purification, things to make us 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Col. i.12. None can go from a state of nature to glory but by a state of grace, the Lord gives grace and glory; hence he that goeth to heaven is said to be wrought for it, fitted, prepared for it. 1 Co. v.5. Ro. ix.23.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Bunyan, *The Greatness of the Soul*, in *The Works of John Bunyan*, ed. George Offor, vol. 1 (London: 1854; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991), 145. This article employs the Offor edition of Bunyan's works, and all future references will be cited by author, title, volume, and page number (e.g., Bunyan, *The Greatness of the Soul*, 1.145). Spelling and punctuation of all primary sources have been left in their original form. The dating of Bunyan's works follows that of Richard L. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 637–41.

No maiden could enter the king's presence apart from a lengthy stay in the house of purification, during which she was made fit for the king; even so, no Christian may ordinarily enter into the presence of God apart from membership in a particular, visible, evangelical church, in which he is purified by the means of grace and made fit for heaven.

Bunyan has traditionally been presented by scholars as a premodern herald of an incipient modernism, whose works, particularly *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, emphasize the individualistic, subjectivistic self.<sup>2</sup> He has often been cast as first the prey and then the purveyor of Puritan soteriological anxiety—the individual sinner driven by personal despair and perpetual doubt through a maze of paradoxical doctrines on an inward, individual quest for evidence of true conversion.<sup>3</sup> In consequence of these perceptions,

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<sup>2</sup> For example, Roger Pooley, "Grace Abounding and the New Sense of Self," in *John Bunyan and His England, 1628–88*, ed. Anne Laurence, W.R. Owens, and Stuart Sim (London: Hambledon, 1990), 105–14; M. Esther Harding, *Journey Into Self* (Boston: Sigo, 1993), 18; Monica Furlong, *Puritan's Progress* (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1975), 179; Vincent Newey, "Bunyan and the Confines of the Mind," in *The Pilgrim's Progress: Critical and Historical Views*, ed. Vincent Newey (Totowa: Barnes and Noble, 1980), 24; Roger Sharrock, "Bunyan Studies Today: An Evaluation," in *Bunyan In England and Abroad: Papers Delivered at the John Bunyan Tercentenary Symposium, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam 1988*, ed. M. van Os and G. J. Schutte (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Press, 1990), 55. These examples (among others) are cited by Galen K. Johnson, *Prisoner of Conscience: John Bunyan on Self, Community, and Christian Faith*, Studies in Christian History and Thought (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003; reprint, Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 1–4. Johnson summarizes this perception of Bunyan as "the ultimate lonely individual wrestling with his private conscience"; *Ibid.*, 4. Johnson pushes back against this consensus: "I do not deny that Bunyan stood astride the premodern and modern eras; indeed, I have asserted as much in previous chapters. But I also believe that once *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part II, is read in light of Bunyan's larger thought on conscience, individuality, and selfhood, it shows Bunyan retreating from a modern, subjectivistic interiority that undermined an objective view of Christ's person and work, toward a deeper submersion into the communal Christian life"; *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>3</sup> Roger Sharrock, *John Bunyan* (London: Hutchinson, 1954; New York: St. Martin's, 1968), 52–68; B. R. White, "The Fellowship of Believers: Bunyan and Puritanism," in *John Bunyan: Conventicle and Parnassus: Tercentenary Essays*,

there was until recently little scholarly interest in Bunyan's doctrine of the church and the corporate Christian life.<sup>4</sup> Recent scholarship, however, has begun to correct this misperception and remedy this deficiency, demonstrating that Bunyan's view of the Christian pilgrimage was essentially communal.<sup>5</sup>

This article builds upon the renewed interest in Bunyan's ecclesiology, examining how Bunyan's doctrine of the church intersected with his doctrine of sanctification. It demonstrates that Bunyan viewed membership in a particular, visible, evangelical church as not only beneficial, but essential to the Christian's sanctification, and thus, to his

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ed. N. H. Keeble (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 1–2. Michael Davies writes, “As a definitively Calvinist author and minister, Bunyan is often viewed somewhat simplistically as a proponent of a grim and psychologically terrorising divinity at the heart of which lies a wrathful Creator merciless in his administration of damnation and forgiving to but a helpless (and severely limited) few”: Michael Davies, *Graceful Reading: Theology and Narrative in the Works of John Bunyan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 18. Davies cites a number of scholars (Donald Davies, Gordon Campbell, A. Richard Dutton, Stuart Sim, and John Stachniewski) who perpetuate this view of Bunyan's “Calvinist theology, stressing tortuous paradoxes that need to be negotiated with such a belief system with its mentally persecutory nature”; *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>4</sup> One notable exception is Richard Greaves' chapter on Bunyan's ecclesiology in his published dissertation; Richard Greaves, *John Bunyan*, Courtenay Studies in Reformation Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 123–51.

<sup>5</sup> For example, John R. Knott, “Bunyan and the Holy Community.” *Studies in Philology* 80.2 (1983): 200–25; Gordon S. Wakefield, “‘To be a Pilgrim’: Bunyan and the Christian Life,” *John Bunyan: Conventicle and Parnassus: Tercentenary Essays*, 124–30; Robert Archer, “Like Flowers in the Garden: John Bunyan and His Concept of the Church,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 36.6 (1996): 280–93; Galen K. Johnson, *Prisoner of Conscience: John Bunyan on Self, Community, and Christian Faith*; Michael Davies, “Spirit in the Letters: John Bunyan's Congregational Epistles,” *Seventeenth Century* 24.2 (2009): 323–60; Philip H. Pfatfeicher, “Walking Home Together: John Bunyan and the Pilgrim Church,” *Pro Ecclesia* 25.1 (2016): 90–104; Anne Dunan-Page, “Bunyan and the Bedford Congregation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of John Bunyan*, ed. Michael Davies and W. R. Owens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 53–68; Ken Simpson, “‘The Desired Country’: Bunyan's Writings on the Church in the 1670s,” *The Oxford Handbook of John Bunyan*, 220–40. See also Timothy M. Haupt, *The Palace Beautiful: The Evangelical Independent Ecclesiology of John Bunyan*, Monographs in Baptist History (Eugene: Pickwick, 2025).

eschatological salvation. In defense of this thesis, this article first establishes Bunyan's definition of sanctification as holiness that is evangelical in contrast to legal, and essential to one's eschatological salvation. Then, it surveys the various ways Bunyan regarded the church as playing an essential role in the Christian's sanctification. Finally, this article shows how the essential role of the church in sanctification impacted Bunyan's open-communion convictions. For Bunyan, the question of qualifications for communion was about more than church order. If membership in a particular, visible church is essential to sanctification, and thus to eschatological salvation, then to deny a believer membership in the particular, visible church is to deprive him of his birthright and to imperil his immortal soul.

### **Evangelical Holiness Essential to Eschatological Salvation**

Bunyan's doctrine of sanctification was driven by two fundamental convictions. First, true Christian sanctification consists in evangelical holiness as distinct from legal holiness. Bunyan was ever zealous to distinguish the holiness that proceeds from justifying faith in the gospel from the holiness that amounts to works of the law. He wrote in *Israel's Hope Encouraged* (w. 1680/81; 1692),

But do thou, O child of God, distinguish, and keep faith and duty for justification of thy person in the sight of God far asunder; also be sure to let faith go before, and be always with thy Saviour, but add unto thy faith, virtue, &c., not as though thy faith could not lay hold of Christ, unless accompanied with these, but to show that thy faith is of the right kind...<sup>6</sup>

Faith and works must be distinguished, but never divorced. To conflate the two is to endanger the doctrine of justification by faith alone, that doctrine above all others most precious to Bunyan. To sever the two, such that one may possess the former without the latter, is to endanger one's soul, for faith without works is dead.

Shall that then be counted right believing in Christ unto justification, that amounts to no more than to an idle speculation, or naked

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<sup>6</sup> Bunyan, *Israel's Hope Encouraged*, 1.619.

knowledge of him? shall that knowledge of him, I say, be counted such, as only causes the soul to behold, but moveth it not to good works? No, verily. For the true beholding of Jesus to justification and life, changes [us] from glory to glory. 2 Co. iii.18.<sup>7</sup>

But as faith without works is dead, so are works without faith dead. In his 1656 response to the Quaker Edward Burrough, Bunyan wrote, “The query in page 13. runs thus, ‘Will that faith which is without works justify?’ I answer, No, [but] neither will those works which are without faith sanctify.”<sup>8</sup> In *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded* (1659), Bunyan wrote,

[I]t is not the obedience to the command that makes the subjector thereto evangelical, or of a gospel spirit; but, contrariwise, the principle that leads out the soul to the doing of the command, that makes the persons that do thus practise any command, together with the command by them practised, either legal or evangelical. As, for instance, prayer—it is a gospel command; yet if he that prays doth it in a legal spirit, he doth make that which in itself is a gospel command an occasion of leading him into a covenant of works, inasmuch as he doth it by and in that old covenant spirit.<sup>9</sup>

Holiness is essential, but it must be of the right kind. It must be evangelical, and not legal; it must flow from the covenant of grace, not the covenant of works. So what constitutes evangelical holiness as

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<sup>7</sup> Bunyan, *A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity*, 2.507. “That faith that hath not works is dead, being alone”; Bunyan, *A Vindication of Gospel Truths Opened*, 2.205.

<sup>8</sup> Bunyan, *A Vindication of Gospel Truths Opened*, 2.191.

<sup>9</sup> Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, I.517. Bunyan went on to apply the same principle to the giving of alms, to baptism, and to the taking of communion. “Now to do these things in sin, or without faith, it is not to do things in an evangelical or gospel spirit; also they that do these things in a legal spirit, the very practising of them renders them not under the law of Christ, as head of his church, but the works they do are of so much contradiction to the gospel of God, or the covenant of grace, that they that do them thus do even set up against the covenant of grace; and the very performance of them is of such force that it is sufficient to drown them that are subjects thereunto, even under the covenant of works; but this poor souls are not aware of, and there is their misery”; *Ibid.*

opposed to legal obedience? According to Bunyan, there are five components of evangelical holiness.

First, the source of evangelical holiness is regeneration, which itself proceeds from effectual calling and results in saving faith.<sup>10</sup> In *A Confession of My Faith* (1672), Bunyan listed three effects of effectual calling (and thus, of regeneration) that are essential to evangelical holiness. First, in effectual calling there is an “awakening about the evil of sin; and especially of unbelief.”<sup>11</sup> Second, there is “great awakenings about the world to come, and the glory of unseen things.”<sup>12</sup> Third, “[I]n effectual calling there is also a sanctifying virtue; and hence we are said to be called with an holy calling. . . . Yea, effectual calling hath annexed to it, as its inseparable companion, the promise of thorough sanctification.”<sup>13</sup> Apart from this “sanctifying virtue” imparted in regeneration, all works of righteousness proceed from a “legal spirit” and not an “evangelical spirit.” Therefore, justification must precede sanctification. “A man must be righteous in a law-sense [i.e., justification], before he can do acts of righteousness [i.e., sanctification], I mean that are such in a gospel-sense. Hence first, you have true gospel-righteousness made the fruit of a second birth.”<sup>14</sup> Regeneration, then, is the source of evangelical holiness because it results in justifying faith and imparts a new heart with new affections and new eyes capable of seeing unseen realities. Elsewhere, Bunyan could even speak of justification as “righteousness imputed,” and of regeneration as “righteousness infused.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> “I believe, that to effectual calling, the Holy Ghost must accompany the word of the gospel, and that with mighty power: I mean that calling, which of God is made to be the fruit of electing love. . . . In effectual calling the voice of God is heard, and the gates of heaven are opened”; Bunyan, *A Confession of My Faith, and a Reason of My Practice*, 2.599.

<sup>11</sup> Bunyan, *A Confession of My Faith, and a Reason of My Practice*, 2.599.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Bunyan, *A Discourse upon the Pharisee and the Publican*, 2.245.

<sup>15</sup> “Now by this very discovery the heart is also principled with the spirit of the gospel; for the Spirit comes with the gospel down from heaven to such an one, and fills his soul with good; by which he is capacitated to bring forth fruit, true fruit, which are the fruits of righteousness imputed, and of righteousness infused, to the glory and praise of God”; Bunyan, *The Desire of the Righteous*

Second, the standard of evangelical holiness is the “moral law gospelized.” Bunyan was no antinomian. The moral law, in particular the ten commandments, formed the standard of Christian obedience in the new covenant.

Have a care that thou own the whole Scripture, and not own one part and neglect another, or slight it; as thus: To own the law, and slight the gospel; or to think that thou must be saved by thy good doings and works; for that is all one, as if thou thrust Christ away from thee; or else so to own the gospel, as if by it thou wert exempted from all obedience to the ten commandments, and conformity to the law in life and conversation; for in so doing thou wilt for certain make sure of eternal vengeance.<sup>16</sup>

But Christians receive the moral law from a different source, from a different mount, under a different covenant, and, as it were, in a different voice. The saints receive the moral law from Christ and not from Moses, from Mount Zion and not from Sinai, under the covenant of grace and not the covenant of works, and as spoken in love and mercy and not in wrath amidst thunder and flashes of lightning.<sup>17</sup> In A

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*Granted*, 1.766. Similarly, Bunyan asserted, “But again, as they that were in Adam, stood not only guilty of sin, by imputation, but polluted by the filth that possessed him at his fall; so the children of the second Adam, do not only, though first, stand just by virtue of the imputation of the personal acts of justice, and goodness done by Christ; but they also receive of that inward quality, the grace, and holiness that was in him, at the day of his rising from the dead”; Bunyan, *A Defence of the Doctrine of Justification, by Faith in Jesus Christ*, 2.306.

<sup>16</sup> Bunyan, *A Few Sighs from Hell*, 1.723. Bunyan went on, however, to demand that the law and the gospel be properly distinguished. “Have a care thou put not wrong names on the things contained in the Scriptures, as to call the law, Christ, and Christ, the law. . . . Against this danger therefore in reading and receiving the testimony of Scripture, learn to distinguish between the law and the gospel, and to keep them clear asunder, as to the salvation of thy soul”; *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Thus, calls to holiness in the church ought to be “gospelized”: In the epistle to the reader at the front of *Christian Behaviour*, Bunyan wrote, “I know there are many that have treated of good works in large and learned discourses; but I doubt all have not so gospelized their discourses as becomes them, and as the doctrine of the grace of God calls for”; Bunyan, *Christian Behaviour*, 2.549.

*Confession of My Faith*, Bunyan argued that evangelical faith and holiness ought to be the only requisites for membership in the visible church, and that holiness should be judged on the basis of obedience to “moral duties gospelized” or the “moral precept evangelized.” When expositing Romans 14:17–18 (“For the kingdom of God . . . is not meat or drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”), Bunyan explained, “By which word Righteousness, he meaneth as James doth, the royal law, the perfect law, which is the moral precept evangelized, or delivered to us by the hand of Christ. . . . He then that serveth Christ according to the royal law, from faith and love going before, he is a fit person for church-communion; God accepteth him, men approve him.”<sup>18</sup> In a short treatise written upon this very topic, *Of the Law and a Christian* (1688), Bunyan stated,

The sum then of what hath been said is this, the Christian now hath nothing to do with the law, as it thundereth and burneth on Sinai, or as it bindeth the conscience to wrath and the displeasure of God for sin; for from its thus appearing, it is freed by faith in Christ. Yet it is to have regard thereto, and is to count it holy, just and good; Ro. vii.12. which that it may do, it is always whenever it seeth or regards it, to remember that he who giveth it to us is “merciful, and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,” &c. Ex. xxxiv.6.<sup>19</sup>

Third, the power of evangelical holiness is the Holy Spirit. Bunyan addressed this point most clearly in *A Defence of the Doctrine of Justification, by Faith in Jesus Christ*, his 1672 response to the

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<sup>18</sup> Bunyan, *A Confession of My Faith, and a Reason of My Practice*, 2.607. See also Bunyan, *Differences in Judgment about Water Baptism, No Bar to Communion*, 2.620.

<sup>19</sup> Bunyan, *Of the Law and a Christian*, 2.388. See also Bunyan, *Israel’s Hope Encouraged*, 1.613: “By a holy life, I mean a life according to the moral law, flowing from a spirit of thankfulness to God for giving of his Son to be my Redeemer. This I call a holy life, because it is according to the rule of holiness, the law, and this I call a holy life, because it floweth from such a principle as giveth to God the heart, and life, for the gift bestowed on us.”

Latitudinarian Edward Fowler's *The Design of Christianity*.<sup>20</sup> Fowler had asserted that the design of the gospel was to restore fallen man to his original righteousness, to promote and perfect that righteousness within man, and then to justify man on the basis of that righteousness. In response, Bunyan accused Fowler of grossly overestimating the power of human nature to perform acts of righteousness acceptable to God. The power for righteousness is not found within fallen human nature, and must come from outside of it, from the Spirit.

The principle which is laid within us, it is not the purity of the humane nature, but of the Holy Ghost itself, which we have of God received, by believing in the Son of God, a principle far above yours of humanity, as is the heavens above the earth; yours being but like those of the first Adam, but ours truly those of the second. . . . In this spirit and faith we walk, by this spirit we are led, Ro. viii.14. even into the joy and peace of the New Testament of our Lord; wherefore our holy actions are the fruits of righteousness, that is by Jesus Christ, not our humane nature, or the purity of it within us; yea, they are the fruits of the Spirit of God, the qualifications that attend the new covenant, and those that by the work of regeneration are brought within the bounds and privileges thereof.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, even then man is not justified by this “evangelical holiness.” For the gospel declares that man is justified by: (1) the righteousness of God; (2) a righteousness that is apart from the law; (3) a perfect righteousness, uncorrupted and undefiled by sin; (4) a righteousness that is of faith.<sup>22</sup> “For the righteousness that saveth a sinner from damnation must be

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<sup>20</sup> Edward Fowler, *The Design of Christianity* (London: 1671). Fowler was the minister at Northill in Bedfordshire, and later bishop of Gloucester; for Fowler, see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v.

<sup>21</sup> Bunyan, *A Defence of the Doctrine of Justification, by Faith in Jesus Christ*, 2.284.

<sup>22</sup> Bunyan, *A Defence of the Doctrine of Justification, by Faith in Jesus Christ*, 2.286–88. In *A Vindication of Gospel Truths Opened*, Bunyan wrote, “But if you do not put a difference between justification wrought by the man Christ without, and sanctification wrought by the Spirit of Christ within; teaching believers their duty to their God, for his love in giving Christ; you are not able to divide the word aright”; Bunyan, *A Vindication of Gospel Truths Opened*, 2.190.

equal to that in the eternal Deity: But where can that be found but in him that is naturally God, as is indeed the Son of the Father; in him, therefore, and not in the law, there is a righteousness fit for faith to apply to.”<sup>23</sup> Even the regenerate nature lacks the inherent power to produce evangelical holiness; continued grace and power from the Spirit remain ever necessary. “Refined, purified, sanctified nature, cannot do but by the immediate supplies, lifts, and helps of that spirit and principle of grace by which it is so sanctified.”<sup>24</sup>

Fourth, the motive of evangelical holiness is gratitude for the free justification received by faith, rather than the desire to secure God’s acceptance through works of the law. To the Quaker Edward Burrough, Bunyan wrote,

Now this I say further, that if God enable any to receive this doctrine aright (namely what I said even now) it will more engage the soul to God, than all the threatenings, thunder-claps, and curses that come from the law itself. And a soul will do more for God, seeing itself redeemed by the blood of the Lamb the Son of Mary, Jn. i.29. than if he had all the conditions of the law to fulfil, and might be sure to have heaven from the fulfilling of them. . . . Holiness of life, if it be right, flows from an assurance of our being justified by Christ’s death on the cross, on Mount Calvary.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Bunyan, *A Defence of the Doctrine of Justification, by Faith in Jesus Christ*, 2.288.

<sup>24</sup> Bunyan, *The Saints’ Privilege and Profit, or The Throne of Grace*, 1.680. Bunyan continued, “As nature, even where grace is, cannot, without the assistance of that grace, do anything acceptably before God; so grace received, if it be not also supplied with more grace, cannot cause that we continue to do acceptable service to God”; *Ibid.* See also Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, 1.538: “Nay, if thou hast so much as one desire that is right, it is the gift of God; for of ourselves, saith the apostle, we are not able to speak a good word, or think a good thought. 2 Cor. iii.5.”

<sup>25</sup> Bunyan, *A Vindication of Gospel Truths Opened*, 2.190. “And where you would lay assurance on our obedience to the law; I say, our assurance comes through our believing, and our obedience to the law is a fruit of our believing”; *Ibid.* For Burrough, see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v.

And to the Latitudinarian Edward Fowler, he wrote, “These, Sir, are the motives by which we Christians act; because we are forgiven, because we are sons, and if sons, then heirs, and so we act.”<sup>26</sup> To Bunyan, there was “no encouragement to holiness like this, like the persuasion, and belief of this,” that “we are set at liberty, by faith therein, from the guilt, and curse that is due to guilt, from death, the devil, and the wrath to come.”<sup>27</sup> Neither fear of punishment nor hope of reward are proper motives to holiness, only love. “Take heed, therefore, that you do not do, that you may believe, but rather believe so effectually that you may do, even all that Jesus Christ doth require of you from a right principle, even out of love to your dear Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>28</sup> To pursue holiness for any reason other than gratitude and love to God for justification received freely by faith is to relate to God via the covenant of works rather than the covenant of grace, to obey God as a slave and not as a son.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Bunyan, *A Defence of the Doctrine of Justification, by Faith in Jesus Christ*, 2.285.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.305.

<sup>28</sup> Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, 1.518. “Good works must needs flow from faith, or no way; because that alone carrieth in it an argument sufficiently prevalent to win upon our natures, to make them comply with holiness. Faith sheweth us that God loveth us, that he forgiveth us our sins, that he accounteth us for his children, having freely justified us through the blood of his Son”; Bunyan, *Christian Behaviour*, 2.551. In *Light for Them That Sit in Darkness*, Bunyan listed seven evangelical motives for holiness: (1) “What stronger than a free forgiveness of sins?” (2) “What stronger argument to holiness than to see though forgiveness comes free to us, yet it cost Christ Jesus heart-blood to obtain it for us”; (3) “What stronger argument to holiness than this: ‘If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous?’” (4) “What greater argument to holiness than to see the holy Scriptures so furnished with promises of grace and salvation by Christ, that a man can hardly cast his eye into the Bible but he espieth one or other of them?” (5) “What greater argument to holiness than to have our performances, though weak and infirm from us, yet accepted of God in Jesus Christ”; (6) “What greater argument to holiness than to have our soul, our body, our life, hid and secured with Christ in God?” (7) “What greater argument to holiness than to be made the members of the body, of the flesh, and of the bones of Jesus Christ?”; Bunyan, *Light for Them That Sit in Darkness*, 1.425.

<sup>29</sup> “Now in this covenant is wrapped up all thy salvation; in it is contained all thy desire, and I am sure, that then it containeth the complete salvation of thy soul; and I say, since this covenant is confirmed by promise, by oath, and by the blood

Then if the law thou reatest of, tell thee in thy conscience thou must do this and the other good work of the law, if ever thou wilt be saved; answer plainly, that for thy part thou art resolved now not to work for life, but to believe in the virtue of that blood shed upon the cross, upon Mount Calvary, for the remission of sins. And yet because Christ hath justified thee freely by his grace, thou wilt serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of thy life, yet not in a legal spirit, or in a covenant of works; but mine obedience, say thou, I will endeavour to have it free, and cheerful, out of love to my Lord Jesus.<sup>30</sup>

Fifth, evangelical holiness is perfected through the merits of Christ. Bunyan vehemently rejected the doctrine of entire sanctification or sinless perfection; he repeatedly affirmed that indwelling sin remains in the believer throughout his life, that “those that are most sanctified have yet a body of sin and death in them, and so also it will be, while they continue in this world.”<sup>31</sup> In this life, sanctification is always progressive, never perfected. Yet even the imperfect works of the justified saint are accepted of God, not by any virtue in the works themselves, but because those imperfect works are sanctified by the merits of Christ.

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of the Son of God, and that on purpose that thou mightest serve thy God without slavish fear, then the knowledge and faith of this covenant is of absolute necessity to bring us into this liberty, and out of our slavish terrors, and so, consequently, to cause us to grow in that son-like, godly fear, which became even the Son of God himself, and becomes all his disciples to live in the growth and exercise of”; Bunyan, *A Treatise on the Fear of God*, 1.484. “For take away grace and remission of sins for Christ’s sake, and you leave men nothing to help them but the terrors of the law and judgment of God, which, at best, can beget but a servile and slavish spirit in that man in whom it dwells”; Bunyan, *Paul’s Departure and Crown*, 1.731. Bunyan asserted, “This is of absolute use in this matter; yea, so absolute, that it is impossible for any Christian to do his work Christianly without some enjoyment of it”; *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Bunyan, *A Few Sighs from Hell; or, The Groans of a Damned Soul*, 3.724.

<sup>31</sup> Bunyan, *The Work of Jesus Christ as an Advocate*, 1.176; see also Bunyan, *A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity*, 2.515, 524, 525, 544; Bunyan, *Advice to Sufferers*, 2.705; Bunyan, *The Work of Jesus Christ as an Advocate*, 1.155, 185; Bunyan, *The Saints’ Privilege and Profit*, 1.645; Bunyan, *A Few Sighs from Hell*, 3.722.

We must therefore conclude that there is acceptation, and acceptation: acceptation of the person, and acceptation of his performance. Acceptation of the person may be considered with respect to justification from the curse, and so acceptation there can be none, but through the one offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Also the acceptation of a duty done by such a person is [accepted], by virtue of the self-same offering, the person being considered as standing just through Christ before God. And the reason why a justified person must have his duties accepted the same way, as is his person, is because justifying righteousness sets not the person free from sin, save only in the sight of God and conscience; he remaineth still infirm in himself, and standeth still in need of the fresh and continual application of the merits of the Lord Jesus, which also the soul receiveth by virtue of Christ's intercession.<sup>32</sup>

As God accepts the saint's person in Christ, so He accepts the saint's performance in Christ, even though that performance is stained by sin.

As to thy sinful infirmities that attend thee in every work, they cannot hinder thee from laying up treasure in heaven, thy heart being upright in the way with God; nor will he be unrighteous at all to forget thy good deeds in the day when Christ shall come from heaven. . . . And for thy further satisfaction in this, consider, as Christ presents thy person before God, acceptable without thy works, freely and alone by his righteousness, so his office is to take away the iniquity of thy holy things, that they also by him may be accepted of God.<sup>33</sup>

Bunyan saw this as a great encouragement to holiness, that "our performances, though weak and infirm from us, [are] yet accepted of God in Jesus Christ."<sup>34</sup>

In summary, the first fundamental conviction that drove Bunyan's doctrine of sanctification was that true holiness must be evangelical.

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<sup>32</sup> Bunyan, *Israel's Hope Encouraged*, 1.617.

<sup>33</sup> Bunyan, *Paul's Departure and Crown*, 1.737–38.

<sup>34</sup> Bunyan, *Light for Them That Sit in Darkness*, 1.425. See also Bunyan, *The Work of Jesus Christ as an Advocate*, 1.168: "He will accept of the *will* for the *deed*, because he knows that sin will make our best performances imperfect. 2 Co. viii.12."

Evangelical holiness: (1) proceeds from a regenerate nature; (2) accords with the “moral law gospelized”; (3) is empowered, continually and immediately, by the Holy Spirit; (4) is motivated by gratitude for the free justification received by faith alone; and (5) is perfected by the merits of Christ, God accepting of both the person and his performance by virtue of Christ’s righteousness.

The second fundamental conviction that drove Bunyan’s doctrine of sanctification was that true holiness is essential to one’s eschatological salvation. The necessity of sanctification may be approached under two headings. First, sanctification is essential as a component of the whole work of salvation. Bunyan understood “salvation” as a comprehensive term descriptive of the whole application of redemption, inclusive of many essential components, without any one of which the whole work cannot subsist. “But to come to the question—*What is it to be saved?* To be saved may either respect salvation in the whole of it, or salvation in the parts of it, or both. . . . for ‘to save’ is a work of many steps; or, to be as plain as possible, ‘to save’ is a work that hath its beginning before the world began, and shall not be completed before it is ended.”<sup>35</sup> In his 1675 work *Saved by Grace*, Bunyan listed six components of salvation: (1) election; (2) preservation, that time when “God beareth with his own elect, for Christ’s sake, all the time of their unregeneracy, until the time comes which he hath appointed for their conversion”; (3) conversion, comprehending both regeneration and justification by faith; (4) perseverance, which comprehends the whole work of sanctification; (5) death, the intermediate state, and initial glorification; (6) resurrection and final glorification.<sup>36</sup> Of perseverance (including sanctification), Bunyan wrote, “But perseverance is absolutely necessary to the complete saving of the soul, because he that falleth short of the state that they that are saved are possessed of, as saved, cannot arrive at that saved state.”<sup>37</sup> Holiness is the *telos* of redemption, the goal of electing love.

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<sup>35</sup> Bunyan, *Saved by Grace*, 1.337–38.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.337–41.

<sup>37</sup> Bunyan, *Saved by Grace*, 1.339. That Bunyan understood perseverance as comprehending sanctification is evident later in this passage when he spoke of “perseverance in the faith and holiness of the gospel”; *Ibid.*, 1.340.

Two truths strangely, but necessarily joined together, because so apt to be severed by the children of men; for many, under pretence of their being elected, neglect to pursue holiness; and many of them again that pretend to be for holiness, quite exclude the doctrine and motives that election gives thereto. Wherefore the apostle, that he might set men's notions as to these things right, he joins these two together, signifying thereby, that as electing love doth instate a man in the blessing of eternal life; so holiness is the path thereto; and, that he that refuseth to depart from iniquity shall be damned; notwithstanding he may think himself secured from hell by the act of God's electing love. For election designeth men not only to eternal glory, but to holiness of life, a means, thereto. Ep. i.4,5.<sup>38</sup>

But not only is sanctification essential as a component of the whole work of salvation, it is essential as evidence of true conversion and preparation for eternal life in heaven.

Know also that among all the swarms of professors that from age to age make mention of the name of Christ, they only must dwell with him in heaven that do part from iniquity, and are zealous of good works. 2 Tim. ii.19. He gave himself for these. Tit. ii.11–14. Not that they were so antecedent to this gift. But those that he hath redeemed to himself are thus sanctified by the faith of him. Ac. xxvi.18.<sup>39</sup>

Conversely, it is evident that those who do not depart from iniquity do not belong to Christ and do not have the Holy Spirit. “Now, let not any, from what hath been said, take courage to live loose lives, under a supposition that once in Christ, and ever in Christ, and the covenant cannot be broken, nor the relation of the Father and child dissolved; for they that do so, it is evident, have not known what it is to receive the

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<sup>38</sup> Bunyan, *A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity*, 2.511–12. See also John Bunyan, *Profitable Meditations*, ed. George Offor (London: 1860), 24.

<sup>39</sup> Bunyan, *Christ a Complete Saviour*, 1.199. “There are a great many that would be saved by Christ, but love not to be sanctified by God through him. These make a stop at Christ, and will go no further. Might such have pardon, they care not whether ever they went to heaven or no”; *Ibid.*, 1.217.

spirit of adoption.”<sup>40</sup> In response to the objection that Bunyan’s covenant theology amounts to a license to sin, to one who says, “If it be so, then one need not care what they do; they may sin, and sin again, seeing Christ hath made satisfaction,” Bunyan replied, “If I were to point out one that was under the power of the devil, and going post-haste to hell, for my life I would look no farther for such a man than to him that would make such a use as this of the grace of God.”<sup>41</sup> Sanctification is essential to one’s entrance into everlasting life. “They shall not be able to enter in that have not gospel-holiness. Holiness that is the effect of faith is that which admits into the presence of God, and into his kingdom, too.”<sup>42</sup>

In summary, Bunyan defined sanctification as the progressive development of evangelical holiness that is essential to eschatological salvation. But how is this evangelical holiness promoted in the lives of the saints? In *A Treatise on the Fear of God*, Bunyan wrote,

But now this godly fear carries in its bowels, not only a moving of the soul to faith and hope in God’s mercy, but an earnest provocation to the holy and reverent use of all the means that God has ordained for a man to have his conversation in, in order to his eternal salvation. ‘Work out your salvation with fear.’ Not that work is meritorious, or such that can purchase eternal life, for eternal life is obtained by hope in God’s mercy; but this hope, if it be right, is attended with this godly fear, which fear putteth the soul upon a diligent use of all those means that may tend to the strengthening of hope, and so to the making of us holy in all manner of conversation, that we may be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.<sup>43</sup>

According to Bunyan, those means that God employs to make men holy and fit partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light are ordinarily found in and through the ministry of a particular, visible,

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<sup>40</sup> Bunyan, *A Treatise on the Fear of God*, 1.454. “Those that religiously name the name of Christ should, must, depart from iniquity, because else our profession of him is but a lie”; Bunyan, *A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity*, 2.528.

<sup>41</sup> Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, 1.554.

<sup>42</sup> Bunyan, *The Strait Gate*, 1.378. See also Bunyan, *A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity*, 2.545.

<sup>43</sup> Bunyan, *A Treatise on the Fear of God*, 1.467.

evangelical church. The particular, visible, evangelical church is the house of purification in which the virgins who are betrothed to Christ are made fit for the wedding day.

### The Evangelical Church Essential to Evangelical Holiness

Bunyan identified six means of grace that are essential to evangelical holiness, and these six are ordinarily found in and through the ministry of an evangelical church.<sup>44</sup>

First, there is the evangelism of the church. The work of evangelism is not often considered under the heading of ecclesiology, but for Bunyan, evangelism was a congregational ministry. It was through the evangelistic efforts of the “three or four poor women sitting at a door in the sun, talking about the things of God” that Bunyan was awakened to his need of regeneration and justifying righteousness.<sup>45</sup> These saints of the Bedford Church brought Bunyan to their pastor, John Gifford, who continued to evangelize the young tinker. “[H]e invited me to his house, where I should hear him confer with others, about the dealings of God with the soul,” wrote Bunyan of Gifford in *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.<sup>46</sup> The congregation continued to evangelize Bunyan during his prolonged struggle for assurance. “Sometimes I would tell my condition to the people of God, which, when they heard, they would pity me, and would tell me of the promises; but they had as good have told me that I must reach the sun with my finger as have bidden me receive or rely upon the promises.”<sup>47</sup> Gifford likewise persevered in his evangelistic ministry to Bunyan. “At this time, also, I sat under the ministry of holy Mr. Gifford, whose doctrine, by God’s grace, was much for my stability. This man made it much his business to deliver the people of God from all

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<sup>44</sup> Bunyan defined a true church as an evangelical church, a church whose matter is visible saints professing evangelical faith made visible and credible by evangelical holiness, and whose form is a mutual covenant in which the members “give up themselves to the Lord and to one another by the will of God.” It is beyond the scope of this article to present Bunyan’s doctrine of the church. For a systematic analysis of Bunyan’s ecclesiology, see Timothy M. Haupt, *The Palace Beautiful: The Evangelical Independent Ecclesiology of John Bunyan*, 71–140. Portions of the following section are adapted from that chapter.

<sup>45</sup> Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, 1.10.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.15.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

those false and unsound rests that, by nature, we are prone to take and make to our souls."<sup>48</sup> This concept of congregational evangelism is portrayed at numerous points throughout *The Pilgrim's Progress*, not only in the character of Evangelist (patterned after Gifford) who points Christian to the Wicket Gate and later rescues him from legalism at Sinai, but in the evangelical conversations that take place along the way between the pilgrims and other travelers.<sup>49</sup> These conversations doubtless reflect interactions Bunyan had with the members of the Bedford Church, and as an evangelist sent forth from the Bedford Church. It is through the evangelistic ministry of the particular, visible, evangelical church that the elect are brought to evangelical faith and are started on their journey of evangelical holiness.

Second, there is the mutual edification of the church. The church exists to encourage and exhort one another to evangelical faith and holiness. In a poignant passage in *Christian Behaviour* (1674), Bunyan pictured the church as a garden. "Christians are like the several flowers in a garden, that have upon each of them the dew of heaven, which being shaken by the wind, they let fall their dew at each other's roots, whereby they are jointly nourished, and become nourishers of one another."<sup>50</sup> This ministry of mutual edification is repeatedly portrayed in the frequent discourses among fellow pilgrims, and its necessity is depicted in the way Christian prevents Hopeful from turning aside from the King's Highway to peer into the silver mine on the Hill Lucre, and the way Hopeful prevents Christian from committing suicide in Doubting Castle, and the way Christian keeps Hopeful from falling asleep on the Enchanted Ground, and again the way Hopeful helps Christian to die in faith when Christian fears the River of Death might drown him.<sup>51</sup> Bunyan appears to

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<sup>48</sup> Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, 1.20.

<sup>49</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part One*, 3.90, 94–96. For examples of evangelistic conversations, see the interactions with Simple, Sloth, and Presumption; *Ibid.*, 3.103; with Formalist and Hypocrisy; *Ibid.*, 3.103–4; with Mistrust and Timorous, *Ibid.*, 3.105; with Talkative, *Ibid.*, 3.120–25; with Ignorance, *Ibid.*, 3.146, 156–59; and with Mercy, Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part Two*, 3.177–78.

<sup>50</sup> Bunyan, *Christian Behaviour*, 2.570.

<sup>51</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part One*, 3.136–37, 141–42, 153, 163–64. Note also the way the company of pilgrims in Part Two help one another to die in faith; Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part Two*, 3.240–44.

have intentionally structured his narrative in such a way as to drive home the point that neither Christian nor Hopeful would have arrived at the Celestial City without the encouragement and edification provided by the other. Bunyan viewed the church as a “hospital of sick, wounded, and afflicted people.”<sup>52</sup> The church’s commission to help the weak and infirm in faith is vividly depicted in Great-heart’s invitation to Feeble-mind, whom they had rescued from the Giant Slay-good, to join their pilgrim company.

But, brother, said Great-heart, I have it in commission to ‘comfort the feeble-minded,’ and to ‘support the weak.’ 1 Th. v.14. You must needs go along with us; we will wait for you; we will lend you help, Ro. xiv.1; we will deny ourselves of some things, both opinionative and practical, for your sake, 1 Co. viii., we will not enter into doubtful disputations before you; we will be made all things to you, rather than you shall be left behind.<sup>53</sup>

The church’s responsibility to encourage their afflicted brethren is beautifully demonstrated in four letters sent from the Bedford congregation in February 1671 to members who for various reasons, including persecution, were geographically separated from the church.<sup>54</sup> The letters are filled with exhortations to bear up under suffering, to receive tribulation as from the hand of a sovereign God, and to persevere

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<sup>52</sup> Bunyan, *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness*, 1.327.

<sup>53</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress, Part Two*, 3.223. This conversation is immediately followed by the appearance of Mr. Ready-to-halt, who walks on crutches, yet is gladly welcomed into the pilgrim company; *Ibid.*, 3.223–24. Similarly, see the pilgrim’s treatment of Mr. Despondency and Mrs. Much-afraid; *Ibid.*, 3.229–30, 236, 241, 242.

<sup>54</sup> H. G. Tibbutt, ed., *The Minutes of the First Independent Church (now Bunyan Meeting) at Bedford 1656-1766* (Bedfordshire: Bedfordshire Historical Society, 1976), 56–58 (to brother Harrington), 58–59 (to sister Foxe), 59–61 (to Katharine Hustwhat), 61–62 (to John Wilson). Bunyan’s name is signed to all but the second of these letters. All quotations from the *Church Book* are from Tibbutt’s transcription, and will be cited as *Minutes*, page number. Michael Davies contends that the pastoral letters in the *Church Book* bear the marks of Bunyan’s authorship; Davies, “Spirit in the Letters: John Bunyan’s Congregational Epistles,” 331.

in faith and holiness. The church is able to edify the saints because of the river of the water of life that flows through it.

All the warmth that we have in our communion, it is the warmth of the Spirit; when a company of saints are gathered together in the name of Christ, to perform any spiritual exercise, and their souls be edified, warmed, and made glad therein, it is because this water, this river of the water of life, has in some of the streams thereof run into that assembly.<sup>55</sup>

Evangelical holiness is empowered by the Spirit, and the Spirit is found in greatest abundance within the gathered assembly of a particular, visible, evangelical church.

Third, there is the preaching of the Word within the church. Referring to the role of the pastor/elder in preaching the gospel and teaching the Word of God, Bunyan mused:

Call them your cooks, they're skill'd in dressing food  
To nourish weak, and strong, and cleanse the blood:  
They've milk for babes, strong meat for men of age;  
Food fit for who are simple, who are sage.<sup>56</sup>

The saints live upon the meals prepared and served by the cooks of the church, who are its ministers. Once again, *The Pilgrim's Progress* contains many images depicting the role of preaching in the life of pilgrims. Evangelist is a portrait of a pastor, pointing sinners to the Wicket Gate and the way that leads to life, turning them from the futile attempt to remove the burden of guilt through works of the law rather than through faith in the cross of Christ, and preparing the saints to suffer persecution in Vanity Fair. The first emblem shown to Christian in the House of Interpreter, the painting of the "very grave person," is a portrait of a pastor. Interpreter states,

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<sup>55</sup> Bunyan, *The Water of Life*, 3.553.

<sup>56</sup> Bunyan, *A Discourse of the Nature, Building, Excellency, and Government of the House of God*, 2.582.

The man whose picture this is, is one of a thousand; he can beget children, 1 Co. iv.15, travail in birth with children, Ga. iv.19, and nurse them himself when they are born. And whereas thou seest him with his eyes lift up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth writ on his lips, it is to show thee, that his work is to know and unfold dark things to sinners; even as also thou seest him stand as if he pleaded with men; and whereas thou seest the world as cast behind him, and that a crown hangs over his head, that is to show thee that slighting and despising the things that are present, for the love that he hath to his Master's service, he is sure in the world that comes next to have glory for his reward.<sup>57</sup>

When Gifford was elected pastor of the Bedford Church, he “accepted of the charge, and gave himself up to the Lord, and to his people, to walke with them, watch over them, and dispense the misteryes of the Gospell among them.”<sup>58</sup> Christian and Hopeful sang of the Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains:

Thus, by the Shepherds, secrets are reveal'd,  
Which from all other men are kept conceal'd.  
Come to the Shepherds, then, if you would see  
Things deep, things hid, and that mysterious be.<sup>59</sup>

Each of these examples, “unfolding dark things to sinners,” “dispensing the misteryes of the Gospell,” and coming to the shepherds for “things deep, things hid, and that mysterious be,” are allusions to the preaching and teaching ministry of elders.<sup>60</sup> If sanctification is defined as growth and perseverance in evangelical faith and holiness, and

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<sup>57</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part One*, 3.98.

<sup>58</sup> *Minutes*, 17.

<sup>59</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part One*, 3.145.

<sup>60</sup> To these references one could add all of the emblems in the House of Interpreter, for Interpreter, especially in Part Two, could be considered a pastoral figure, as the Spirit's ministry of instruction and interpretation is mediated to pilgrims through the ministry of the Word in the particular, visible church; *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part One*, 3.98–102; Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part Two*, 3.183–90. One could also add Great-heart's instruction to Christiana and Mercy, *Ibid.*, 3.190–93.

evangelical faith and holiness is nourished by the Word of God, both law and gospel, then the preaching of the Word by the pastors of the church is essential to the saints' sanctification.

Fourth, there is the pastoral oversight of the church. An elder is responsible not only to preach the Word but to watch over the souls of those entrusted to his charge, defending them from dangers and guiding them along the path of holiness to their eternal home. The preeminent portrait of this pastoral function is the character of Great-heart, who is assigned by Interpreter (a figure of the Holy Spirit) to provide safe conduct for Christiana and her ever-growing band of pilgrims. Without a conductor, pilgrims are exposed to all manner of dangers; but safety is found in the care of a capable guide, a lesson Christiana and Mercy learn the hard way when they are assaulted by two "Ill-favoured Ones" as soon as they enter the Wicket Gate and begin their journey down the King's Highway.<sup>61</sup> Great-heart leads the pilgrims from the House of Interpreter to the Palace Beautiful, teaching them Christology and soteriology along the way.<sup>62</sup> When they arrive at the Palace, Great-heart slays the Giant Grim, the persecutor who would keep pilgrims out of the Nonconformist church. He then leads them safely past the lions and introduces them to the Porter. He vouches for the pilgrims' sincerity (they face far less examination than does Christian, who had no conductor), and they enter the Palace, while Great-heart returns to the House of Interpreter.<sup>63</sup> When the time comes for the pilgrims to depart the Palace, they send to Interpreter and ask that Great-heart might be sent to guide them the rest of the way to the Celestial City.<sup>64</sup> Interpreter willingly assents, and Great-

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<sup>61</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part Two*, 3.183. Great-heart twice expounds upon his pastoral calling. He tells the Giant Maul, "I am a servant of the God of heaven; my business is to persuade sinners to repentance; I am commanded to do my endeavour to turn men, women, and children, 'from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God'; *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part Two*, 3.210. When Great-heart relates his journey with Mr. Fearing, Honest asks, "Then you knew him to be a troublesome one?" To which Great-heart replies, "I did so, but I could very well bear it; for men of my calling are oftentimes intrusted with the conduct of such as he was"; *Ibid.*, 3.213.

<sup>62</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part Two*, 3.190ff.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.195–97.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.203.

heart leads them safely, slaying giants along the way.<sup>65</sup> It is no coincidence that their journey is considerably easier than was Christian's before them. Great-heart tells Christiana while they are walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, "You cannot imagine how many are killed hereabout, and yet men are so foolishly venturous, as to set out lightly on pilgrimage, and to come without a guide. Poor Christian! it was a wonder that he here escaped; but he was beloved of his God."<sup>66</sup> Such is the benefit of a capable and courageous pastor. Ordinarily, pilgrims do not arrive at the Celestial city without one.

Fifth, there is the worship of the church, by which is meant what the covenanted saints do when they gather together, especially on the Lord's Day, which Bunyan regarded as the Christian Sabbath, a day that "has a divine stamp upon it" and is the "principal manna day," the day when the means of grace are found in greatest abundance.<sup>67</sup> "[G]ospel-worship" is the place where "the saints in the times of the New Testament both meet and edify each other, and also meet their God, and are blessed and refreshed by him."<sup>68</sup> Attendance upon the means of grace that are available in the midst of the gathered church is essential to the health and welfare of the soul. "Praying, hearing, reading; for what are these things ordained, but that we might by the godly use of them attain to more of the knowledge of God, and be strengthened by his grace to serve him better, according to his moral law? Baptism, fellowship, and the Lord's Supper, are ordained for these ends also."<sup>69</sup> But these means of

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<sup>65</sup> Great-heart possesses a "map of all ways leading to, or from the Celestial City," and is careful to consult the map and keep to the way. Bunyan explains in the margin that the map is "God's Book"; *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part Two*, 3.236.

<sup>66</sup> *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part Two*, 3.210.

<sup>67</sup> Bunyan wrote an entire treatise on the subject of the Sabbath day in response to the Seventh-Day Baptists of his day; Bunyan, *Questions about the Nature and Perpetuity of the Seventh-Day Sabbath*, 2.359–85. Bunyan believed that corporate worship is commanded on the Christian Sabbath, for worship upon that day "has a divine stamp upon it"; *Ibid.*, 2.382. It is the "principal manna day"; *Ibid.*, 2.383. The day sanctifies the worship: "I believe, that things done on the Lord's day, are better done, than on other days of the week, in his worship"; *Ibid.*, 2.377. For Bunyan, the Lord's Day is vital to evangelical faith and holiness; indeed, it reveals evangelical faith and holiness; Bunyan, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, 3.600.

<sup>68</sup> Bunyan, *The Holy City*, 3.440.

<sup>69</sup> Bunyan, *A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity*, 2.508.

grace must be used for the appointed ends of increasing evangelical faith and holiness. “For all these things we should use to support our faith, to mortify the flesh, and strengthen us to walk in newness of life by the rule of the moral law.”<sup>70</sup> The means of grace must be attended with fear and reverence. “There flows from this fear of God great reverence of his majesty, in and under the use and enjoyment of God’s holy ordinances. His ordinances are his courts and palaces, his walks and places, where he giveth his presence to those that wait upon him in them, in the fear of his name.”<sup>71</sup> Not only must the means of grace be used in godly fear, they must be used in faith. “First, then, that man that doth take up any of the ordinances of God—namely, as prayer, baptism, breaking of bread, reading, hearing, alms-deeds, or such like; supposing thereby to procure the love of Christ to his own soul, he doth do from a legal, and not from an evangelical or gospel spirit.”<sup>72</sup> To neglect the means of grace is to call into question the sincerity of one’s faith. “Not that faith and hope are deficient, if they be right, but they are both of them counterfeit when not attended with a reverent use of all the means: upon the reverent use of which the soul is put by this grace of fear.”<sup>73</sup>

Finally, there is the discipline of the church. Church discipline is essential, not only for the purity of the church, but for the sanctification of its individual members. Though Bunyan wrote relatively little upon the subject, the *Minutes* of the Bedford Church tell the story of a congregation that took seriously its authority and responsibility to discipline its members.<sup>74</sup> The church followed a three-step process of

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<sup>70</sup> Bunyan, *A Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity*, 2.508. “Only here will thy wisdom be manifested—to wit, that thou grow in grace, and that thou use lawfully and diligently the means to do it”; Bunyan, *The Greatness of the Soul*, 1.147. Those come rightly who “come to God by Christ for a blessing upon that means of grace which God has afforded for the succour of the soul, and the building of it up in faith; knowing that as the means, so a blessing upon it, is from God”; Bunyan, *Christ a Complete Saviour*, 1.226.

<sup>71</sup> Bunyan, *A Treatise on the Fear of God*, 1.463; see also *Ibid.*, 1.441. Note Bunyan’s comments on impropriety during sermons; Bunyan, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, 3.607.

<sup>72</sup> Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, 1.516.

<sup>73</sup> Bunyan, *A Treatise on the Fear of God*, 1.466.

<sup>74</sup> See the extended poetic treatment of church discipline in Bunyan, *A Discourse of the Building, Nature, Excellency, and Government of the House of God*,

discipline. First, the sinning brother was admonished by members of the congregation appointed for the task. Next, if the sinning brother did not respond, he was “withdrawn from,” meaning communion was withheld until the church was satisfied with his repentance. This second step could last months, even years. The church was quick to admonish, but remarkably patient and cautious in taking the final step of excommunicating the unrepentant. From 1656 to 1688, the Bedford Church placed over twenty-five individuals under discipline, excommunicating five.<sup>75</sup> The goal of church discipline is always the promotion of faith and holiness. The member who walks in sin must be cut off from the church, like dead branches from the vine, that the rest of the branches might bear fruit. But discipline is also designed to promote faith and holiness in the life of the erring brother, that he might be restored to the fellowship of the saints.

If he falls not, but in the second charge,  
 Spread not his wickedness abroad at large.  
 But, if thou think his sorrow to be sound,  
 Forgive his sin, and hide it under ground.  
 If he shall stand the first and second shot,

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2.587–89. See also on the subject of church discipline, Bunyan, *Solomon’s Temple Spiritualized*, 3.495; Bunyan, *The Barren Fig-Tree*, 3.573; Bunyan, *Differences in Judgment about Water Baptism, No Bar to Communion*, 2.615; Bunyan, *A Confession of My Faith, and a Reason of My Practice*, 2.604.

<sup>75</sup> These figures are based upon the incomplete records found in the *Church Book*; actual figures may be higher. See *Minutes*, 25–37 (Oliver Dicks—sheep stealing); 25–27, 30–31 (Martha Radwell—“evill carriages”); 31–34 (John Childe—joining another congregation without permission); 37–64 (Robert Nelson—disorder, absenteeism); 40–45 (Humphrey Merrill—conformity to the Church of England); 40–42, 68 (Brother Coventon—absenteeism); 39–64 (Richard Deane—absenteeism, scandalous reports); 39–40, 44 (Sister Warner—absenteeism, scandalous reports); 43–70 (William Whitbread—absenteeism); 76 (Sister Witt—“railling and other wicked practices,” indebtedness); 76–77 (Elizabeth Bisbie—immodesty); 76 (Elizabeth Maxey—disobedience to parents); 76–77 (Nehemiah Coxe—causing division); 80 (Sister Cooper—attending Anglican services); 83 (Edward Dent—financial neglect, indebtedness); 84 (Mary Fosket—gossip); 84 (John Stanton—child abuse, wife-beating); 85 (Sister Hawthorn—“unseemly language”); 85–90 (John Wildeman—slander).

he before the church, repenteth not,  
 Deal with him as the matter shall require,  
 Let not the house for him be set on fire.  
 If after all, he shall repent and turn  
 To God, and you, you must not let him burn  
 For ever under sense of sin and shame,  
*You must his sin forgive in Christ his name.*<sup>76</sup>

### The Evangelical Church Essential to Eschatological Salvation

Bunyan believed that evangelical holiness was essential to eschatological salvation, and that ordinarily, the evangelical church was essential to evangelical holiness. He wrote,

Wherefore, they are deceived that think to go into the holiest, which is heaven, when they die, who yet abandon and hate the holy place, while they live. Nay, Sirs, the way into the holiest is through the holy place; the way into heaven is through the church on earth; for that Christ is there by his word to be received by faith, before he can by us in person be received in the beatific vision. The church on earth is as the house of the women, spoken of in the book of Esther, where we must be dieted, perfumed, and made fit to go into the bridegroom's chamber, or as Paul says, 'made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Es. ii. Col. i.12.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, by implication, to exclude a visible saint from the evangelical church was to endanger his eschatological salvation. This provides at least one rationale for the open-communion position for which Bunyan argued so forcefully during the 1670s. Though Bunyan was a credobaptist, he denied that baptism was the initiating ordinance into the church, whether the universal, invisible church or the particular, visible church. "The person that is baptized stands by that a member of no church at all, neither of the visible, nor yet of the invisible. A visible saint he is, but not made so by baptism; for he must be a visible saint

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<sup>76</sup> Bunyan, *A Discourse of the Building, Nature, Excellency, and Government of the House of God*, 2.588, italics original. The "second charge" refers to the second admonishment (Mt 18:16).

<sup>77</sup> Bunyan, *Solomon's Temple Spiritualized*, 3.497.

before, else he ought not to be baptized.<sup>78</sup> An analysis of the communion controversy between Bunyan and the Baptists Thomas Paul, John Denne, Henry Danvers, and William Kiffin is beyond the scope of this article.<sup>79</sup> The arguments on both sides are complex, and the ecclesiological implications immense. But this factor helps to explain the passion and vigor with which Bunyan argued his position. Bunyan wrote,

I am therefore for holding communion thus, because the edification of souls in the faith and holiness of the gospel, is of greater concernment than an agreement in outward things; I say, it is of greater concernment with us, and of far more profit to our brother; than our agreeing in, or contesting for the business of water baptism. Jn. xvi.13. 1 Co. xiv.26. 2 Co. x.8; xii.19. Ep. iv.12. 2 Ti. iii.17. 1 Co. viii.1; xiii.1-4. That the edification of the soul, is of the greatest concern, is out of measure evident because heaven and eternal happiness are so immediately concerned therein. Besides, this is that for which Christ died, for which the Holy Ghost was given, yea for which the scriptures and the gifts of all the godly are given to the church; yea, and if gifts are not bent to this very work, the persons are said to be proud or uncharitable that have them; and stand but for cyphers or worse among the churches of God. Farther, edification is that that cherisheth all grace, and maketh the Christians quick and lively, and maketh sin lean and dwindling, and filleth the mouth with thanksgiving to God. But to contest with gracious men, with men that walk with God; to shut such out of the churches; because they will not sin against their souls [i.e., by being baptized in violation of their conscience regarding paedobaptism], rendereth thee uncharitable. Ro. xiv.15, 20.<sup>80</sup>

If we shall reject visible saints by calling[,] saints that have communion with God, that have received the law at the hand of Christ, that are of an holy conversation among men; they desiring to have communion with us, as much as in us lieth, we take from them

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<sup>78</sup> Bunyan, *A Confession of My Faith, and a Reason of My Practice*, 2.606. See also *Ibid.*, 2.605; Bunyan, *Differences in Judgment about Water Baptism, No Bar to Communion*, 2.618–19, 630.

<sup>79</sup> See Timothy M. Haupt, *The Palace Beautiful*, 141–204.

<sup>80</sup> Bunyan, *A Confession of My Faith, and a Reason of My Practice*, 2.611.

their very privileges, and the blessings to which they were born of God.<sup>81</sup>

It is no small thing to exclude a saint from the “house of purification.” Where else will he be prepared for heaven and made fit to appear before the King? And for those eunuchs charged with keeping the house of purification and overseeing the virgins’ preparation, what would the King say to them if they excluded one whom He had invited, and rejected one whom He had accepted?

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<sup>81</sup> Bunyan, *A Confession of My Faith, and a Reason of My Practice*, 2.614.

## BOOK REVIEWS 91-134

***New Word Biblical Themes: Mark.* By Christopher W. Skinner. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2025. 207 pp. \$26.99, Paperback. ISBN 9780310126850.**

Having written multiple chapters and articles about aspects of Mark's Gospel and having coedited multiple books on Mark, Christopher Skinner offers his expertise in this critical introduction to Mark and selected theological themes in it. Compared to Peter Orr's recent theological introduction to Mark, *The Beginning of the Gospel* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2023), Skinner treats fewer theological foci in Mark, but Skinner is wider and deeper on the historical contexts of those subjects than is Orr. After an introduction treating historical questions about the origins of Mark, Skinner overviews Mark's reception history and then spends two chapters each on Jesus's identity and on the kingdom of God in Mark. He concludes with a chapter on Markan discipleship.

Skinner's introduction to Mark is a brief account of the origins of Mark's Gospel. With most scholars, Skinner considers the Gospel of Mark to be the first written Gospel, published shortly after the destruction of the Second Jewish Temple in AD 70, authored by a Christian named Mark. Regarding the genre of Mark, Skinner briefly equivocates whether Mark is an ancient biography (pp. 2–3). On this point he not only goes against the emerging consensus of New Testament scholars but also overstates the differences among contemporary scholars regarding the genre of Mark. Even those who do not label Mark as an ancient biography acknowledge that Mark incorporates many aspects of ancient biography into his narrative. Skinner rightly notes the ongoing debate regarding the provenance of Mark and its original audience. He contends that Mark most likely originated in Syria but was also “disseminated to Christian communities throughout the Roman Empire” (p. 17).

Skinner next overviews Mark's reception history. He defends the hypothesis of Markan priority to argue that Matthew, Luke, and John are among the earliest receptions of Mark. He then distills nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship on Mark. He narrates how successive generations of scholars used various methodologies to interpret Mark: from source criticism to form criticism to redaction criticism to narrative criticism, which Skinner uses in this book. Compared to other critical methodologies, narrative criticism is uniquely appropriate for examining

Mark's theological themes, since "Mark's uniquely crafted story provides us with his own distinctive theological contribution to the canon of Scripture" (p. 44).

In two chapters on Jesus's identity in Mark, Skinner examines Mark's narrative presentation of Jesus as the Messiah and as the Son of God, the two titles Mark himself applies to Jesus from the beginning of his Gospel (Mk 1:1). After summarizing Second Temple Jewish notions of the Messiah, Skinner overviews how Mark affirms that Jesus is the Davidic king sent by God and endowed with God's Spirit to wage war. But Mark's understanding of Jesus's messianic identity is distinct: Jesus's war is spiritual against Satan, not physical against Rome, and Jesus becomes enthroned by means of His death and resurrection. Jesus is, thereby, Messiah in ways contrary to some Jewish expectations. Not only Jews but also Romans had a concept of a Son of God. Mark uses "Son of God" as roughly synonymous with "Messiah/Christ," though "Son of God" emphasizes even more than "Messiah/Christ" Jesus's unique relationship with God.

Ultimately, Skinner contends that the kingdom of God in Mark is both immediately powerful and presently secretive. Jesus brings God's kingdom in power by healing people of diseases and of demons. The secrecy of the kingdom is the theme of Mark 4:11-12, but throughout Mark, "being an insider or outsider is not a function of physical proximity to Jesus, nor is it directly related [to] one's gender, nationality, or present religious commitments. Rather, being (or perhaps, *becoming*) an insider is all about comprehending the essence of Jesus's mission and displaying a willingness to follow" (pp. 151-152).

Fittingly, then, Skinner concludes his book with a chapter on discipleship in Mark. By narrating the activities of Jesus's disciples and Jesus's own teachings, Mark shows that discipleship consists of following Jesus, doing the will of God, denying oneself, persevering to the end. Ironically, Jesus's own disciples are at least as often cautionary tales for subsequent readers as they are positive examples. However, Jesus uniquely gives readers a positive example to follow by His actions. Jesus exemplifies the self-denial He commands of His followers. Furthermore, Mark emphasizes Jesus's compassion for others and His courage in the face of death.

Much commends Skinner's book to a wide audience. Though focused on Mark, the second chapter on reception history is an accessible

introduction both to the Synoptic Problem and to prominent critical methodologies applied to all four Gospels in the past two-and-a-half centuries. Graduate students will benefit from Skinner's overview of Jewish and Greco-Roman backgrounds to "Messiah" and "Son of God." Though those discussions may be too advanced for undergraduate students, they would also find most of this book accessible and a good starting place for doing further research on Mark particularly and Gospel backgrounds more generally. Skinner's occasional diagrams and his categorized bibliographies of resources for further reading at the end of every chapter are pedagogically useful.

Of course, no book is flawless. Theologically conservative readers will disagree to varying degrees with Skinner's hypotheses about the origins of Mark, and they will find his theologically inconclusive discussion of Jesus's identity as the Son of God insufficient. Skinner concludes that it is an open question whether Mark presents Jesus as being divine. Thankfully, Skinner does point readers to *The Pre-Existent Son* by Simon Gathercole, which thoroughly argues for Jesus's divine identity as the Son of God, not only in Mark but also in Matthew and Luke (p. 105n28).

These caveats aside, Skinner commendably and capably introduces readers to three major themes in Mark from a narrative, critical perspective: Jesus's identity, the kingdom of God, and discipleship. Graduate students will most benefit from this book, but advanced undergraduates would also find it helpful. Though academic in tone, this book even has sections that may prove fruitful for pastors to consult, particularly on spiritual warfare and on discipleship.

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***Making Sense of Man: Using Biblical Perspectives to Develop a Theology of Humanity.* By Vern S. Poythress. P&R Publishing, 2024. 784 pp. \$49.99, Hardcover. ISBN 9798887790381.**

Throughout history, God seems to have used cultural moments to sharpen the church's understanding of specific doctrines. In the Reformation, it was the doctrine of salvation; in the mid-twentieth

century, it was the doctrine of Scripture. Today, it is the doctrine of humanity. Vern Poythress's *Making Sense of Man* is, therefore, a timely work on that doctrine. Poythress is a professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, teaching New Testament, biblical interpretation, and systematic theology. Poythress' works are numerous and encompass a vast array of subjects, and he consistently writes with both expertise and precision. This book is the latest in his long line of quality works.

Poythress covers a breadth of content across thirty-five chapters and four appendices, seeking to show how various perspectives on the biblical text lead us to the Reformed view of humanity. The book is divided into seven parts. Part one discusses the creation of humanity, particularly evaluating various proposals for how to understand the image of God. Part two is methodological, outlining Poythress's use of presuppositional apologetics; his use of semantics, analogy, and metaphysics; and his use of *Lex Christi* as a framework for understanding humanity. Part three discusses more about the creation and nature of humanity, returning to the image of God, and it evaluates humanity's relationship to time and humanity's nature prior to the fall. Part four focuses on the soul, seeking to answer whether there are two parts to humans (body and soul) or three (body, spirit, and soul). Part five discusses the covenant that God made with Adam prior to the fall and its implications for salvation. Part six then applies the doctrine of humanity to various aspects of daily life, including sexuality and free will. Finally, part seven discusses the nature of the fall. Each chapter concludes with a connection to Acts 2, a prayer, and a set of study questions.

In terms of content, the book is well written. Poythress argues his claims thoroughly and makes his case well, as usual. Poythress has a way of writing that is both scholarly and friendly. While one might expect a book on the subject of human nature to spend significant time focusing on the issues of the current cultural moment (such as sexuality, transhumanism, etc.), Poythress instead develops a fully-orbed theology of humanity. He discusses these cultural issues to some degree, but his book is not reactionary. This is a strength of it. Readers are taught to have a full understanding of the doctrine of humanity, which in turn prepares them for considering these cultural issues and any others that may arise as time and society progress.

Poythress seeks to draw necessary inferences from biblical theology as it relates to the doctrine of humanity (p. 5). He especially wants to

show how we are to interpret the Bible to get these implications, and he therefore dedicates two chapters (7–8) to methodology. Poythress largely accomplishes these goals. The book is replete with Scripture citations, and Poythress’s understanding of these biblical texts are clear.

While I find this book commendable, I believe Poythress’s audience is a bit too broad. He writes, “This book is written so that it will be understandable and profitable for almost any Christian who has begun to study the Bible seriously” (p. 4). In some regards, Poythress is the perfect writer for this audience. His writing style is not overly complex, and it is easy to follow the logical flow of what he is writing. By those measurements, I could give the book to any member of my church who is interested in anthropology and trust that he or she can at least grasp the argument even if they do not understand the bigger conversation. Nonetheless, I would be concerned that this hypothetical church member may not understand the nuances—and, in some cases, the main premises—of the various arguments Poythress makes. Poythress often surveys various views before defending his own position. That is a commendable and necessary practice, but these surveyed views are more niche than lay readers might be accustomed to. For example, Poythress’s survey of various views of the image of God includes a discussion of Meredith Kline’s view of the image of God to images of the Spirit (pp. 218–220), a view not often taught in churches. I question whether non-academic members of many churches would be familiar with this view. In this regard, the book seems to be more advanced than the statement of intended audience may suggest. An abridged version of the volume that spends more time on Poythress’s views rather than these other surveys would be beneficial for a more lay-level audience.

If one is looking for more direct engagement with the issues of the current day, Owen Strachan’s *Reenchanting Humanity* or a volume on ethics like John Jefferson Davis’ *Evangelical Ethics* might be preferred. However, for providing a unique perspective on the biblical basis for a full doctrine of humanity, Poythress’s volume is a welcome addition to the conversation, and I recommend it. The book serves best as a resource for theologians or as a textbook for an advanced class on anthropology, and seminary libraries would benefit from possessing this book. Non-academic readers may enjoy this book as a means to deeply study the topic of anthropology, provided they have some familiarity with the landscape of anthropology, but I would not recommend the book as a

first introduction to the topic. Nonetheless, for readers who enjoy a deep study of a theological issue, Poythress's work is commendable. His work fits a niche within the field of anthropology and brings a unique perspective to the doctrine. Poythress' works often bless me as I read them; this book is no exception.

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***Self-Instruction Materials on Non-Narrative Discourse Analysis.*** By Stephen H. Levinsohn. Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2022. 166 pp. \$52.95, Hardback. ISBN 978-1-55671-545-7.

Stephen Levinsohn is a senior linguistics consultant with SIL International. As the title suggests, this book is designed to teach readers to conduct discourse analysis of non-narrative texts. The intended audience is linguists who are engaged in translation. The work builds on Levinsohn's previous work: Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Self-Instructional Materials on Narrative Discourse Analysis* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2011). In *Non-Narrative Discourse Analysis*, Levinsohn assumes the reader has already worked through his previous material and often points readers to sections of that book for foundational concepts. The topics covered in this book focus on features that "present particular problems in translation" (p. 1). These problems often arise because language features are handled in different ways in source and receptor languages, especially when there is a mismatch between Verb-Object (VO) and Object-Verb (OV) languages or Verb-Subject (VS) and Subject-Verb (SV) languages.

Chapter 1 provides brief instructions for charting non-narrative texts for analysis, but primarily directs readers to the previous volume for details on charting. Chapter 2 discusses the differences between instruction and persuasion, explaining that instruction primarily uses deductive reasoning while persuasion primarily uses inductive reasoning. Levinsohn also lays out the distinction between theme-line and supportive material, identifying four types of supportive information. Levinsohn notes that the greatest mismatch between VO and OV languages occurs

when other motivational material comes in instructional texts. In VO languages, the instruction usually follows the exhortations, but in OV languages, the instruction usually occurs in the middle of inclusios.

Chapters 3 and 4 cover signaling relationships between propositions and constituent order. Levinsohn explains that different languages encode logical relationships under different circumstances, and translators must recognize those circumstances in their receptor and target languages to indicate the correct relationship. Concerning constituent order, he notes, “VO languages prefer head-dependent ordering, while OV languages favor dependent-head ordering” (p. 35). Different types of intersentential progression (parallel, sequential, or inclusio) also impact constituent order. Likewise, points of departure begin sentences with constituents that provide a starting point for communication and anchor a clause to its context. Languages often (though not always) treat points of departure in similar ways; thus, “a first option is to render a point of departure as a point of departure” (p. 54, emphasis original). Levinsohn concludes with Comrie’s Principle of Natural Information Flow: “to the extent that the syntax of the language permits, the established information in the utterance will precede the nonestablished information” (p. 55). Levinsohn cautions that this principle applies across many languages, yet translators often fail to follow it.

Chapters 5 and 6 move on to focal and thematic prominence. Levinsohn differentiates between focus, “the part [of an utterance] which indicates what the speaker intends as the most important ... change to be made in the hearer’s mental representation” (p. 57), and prominence, “any device whatever which gives certain events, participants, or objects more significance than others in the same context” (p. 58). Creating focal prominence often leads languages to violate the principle of natural information flow by preposing the focal (and nonestablished) information before established information in an utterance. On the other hand, thematic prominence draws attention to an established referent that will play a significant role in the subsequent discourse. Translators must recognize how different languages signal prominence to convey the correct emphasis in translation.

Chapters 7 and 8 conclude the volume by discussing the organization of larger sections of discourse. Chapter 7 addresses the internal organization of sections, covering different ways exhortations are made

more or less potent, how backgrounded material is signaled, and the devices used to highlight propositions. Chapter 8 addresses boundary features, explaining that paragraphs (or sections) are grouped as semantic units because they have a single theme and not because of the presence of given surface features. Thus, the surface features he discusses provide evidence of boundaries but are insufficient on their own to indicate them. Levinsohn also warns against assuming boundary-marking surface features will operate the same way in different texts and warns against artificially inserting boundaries when none exist.

*Self-Instruction Materials on Non-Narrative Discourse Analysis* has much to commend it. Throughout the work, Levinsohn includes application questions that relate to the provided texts in four languages, fully charted in the appendices: Koine Greek (VS/VO), Lower Tanudan Kalinga (VS/VO), Bariai (SV/VO), and Dungra Bhil (SV/OV). These questions direct the reader to immediately apply what they are reading. Levinsohn also offers answers to the questions he poses, guiding readers in their initial work with the material. He also encourages readers to select an example text in a language on which they are working and suggests ways to apply the material to it. These features make this book a great teaching tool. Moreover, in the introduction, Levinsohn makes himself personally available to his readers by providing them with his email and inviting them to contact him with their work if they are struggling to understand any concept in the book or its application. Levinsohn's focus on language mismatches also helps the reader anticipate ways that different languages not covered in the volume will interact with the given language features. The deliberate choice of example languages with different typological constituent orders helps facilitate the broad application of this volume. Levinsohn's charting method unlocks features of unfamiliar languages, enabling readers to still glean from the principles involved even if they cannot read the language.

Levinsohn's general work has been part of a controversy in biblical studies over the balance between methodological purity and eclecticism in applying linguistic theories to the biblical text. Levinsohn's work has consistently engaged in methodological eclecticism, and the present volume is no exception. In the opinion of this reviewer, the insights in this volume add further evidence to the value of eclecticism over methodological purity. While his work is aimed at translators, the

insights he offers can aid biblical interpreters seeking to understand unfamiliar constructions in Greek or Hebrew. He works through the letter to Philemon and also provides a number of examples from Ancient Hebrew, so readers intent on tools to aid in biblical interpretation will benefit from this volume.

Often, a drawback to reading linguistic literature is that the terminology can be unfamiliar to readers coming from a background in theology, but Levinsohn's language in this volume is quite accessible. He consistently marks unfamiliar terms in bold and defines them, allowing the reader to engage with his material without encountering a terminological barrier. A real drawback to this volume, though, is that it cannot stand on its own. Levinsohn never intended it to work that way, but a reader wanting to learn about discourse analysis in non-narrative material is forced to begin with narrative material because this volume relies so heavily on the previous volume. This decision by Levinsohn likely stems from many years of training students in discourse analysis, but the reader wanting to read this volume on its own will be disappointed. However, the volume remains a valuable resource for those wanting to grow in discourse analysis.

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***Alvin Plantinga*. By Greg Welty. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2023. 178 pp. \$16.00, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-62995-853-8.**

Alvin Plantinga has done more for the discipline of Christian philosophy than anyone else in the past sixty years. Due to the number of publications Plantinga has produced in his career, discerning which work to start with or figuring out how all the pieces of his philosophy fit together is a daunting task. However, Greg Welty has done a phenomenal job in synthesizing and critiquing Plantinga's philosophical arguments. Welty's *Alvin Plantinga*, as part of the Great Thinkers series, is a helpful introduction to anyone who is wanting to dip their toes into the world of Christian philosophy and Christian apologetics.

Dr. Greg Welty is professor of philosophy at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and is the author of *Why Is There Evil in the World?* as well as coeditor of *Calvinism and Middle Knowledge: A Conversation*. Welty writes as someone who admires Alvin Plantinga and has been deeply impacted by Plantinga's work. Welty should be praised for his ability to separate his admiration for Plantinga enough that he can provide some honest evaluations of Plantinga's work, especially in light of the Reformed tradition of the Christian faith. The *Great Thinker* series also covers other philosophers and theologians from across history such as Thomas Aquinas, Francis Bacon, Richard Dawkins, David Hume, Karl Marx, and several others.

Dr. Bill Davis, a former student of Plantinga, wrote the forward, which is followed by Welty's preface. Welty's goal in writing *Alvin Plantinga* is three-fold: to provide a summary and commentary regarding the what and the why of Plantinga's arguments; to clarify which points of the Calvinist or Reformed tradition that Plantinga adheres to and which points he rejects; and to help the reader learn how to sift the "wheat from the chaff" as far as what is helpful and what is hurtful in Plantinga's arguments (p. 15). Welty begins with a profile of who Alvin Plantinga is, where Plantinga has come from, and why he is included with the "Great Thinkers." In other words, Plantinga's inclusion in this series of books is explained by covering the significance of his career thus far as well as giving a miniature biography of Plantinga's life. However, Welty is forthcoming about the limitations of this book in that there was not sufficient space to cover Plantinga's "considerable and substantive work in metaphysics and in philosophy of mind" (p. xxii).

Welty covers Plantinga's approaches to faith and reason. Plantinga developed what is known as the faculty-based approach to faith and reason, which basically views faith and reason as two types of knowing. Plantinga's role as one of the central figures in the Reformed Epistemology movement in 1983 is also discussed in the second chapter. Next, Welty discusses Plantinga's argument for "warranted Christian belief" (p. 31). In the third chapter, Welty discusses Plantinga's contributions towards a Christian response to the problem of evil, which usually refers to "any significant case of pain and suffering" (p. 39). Plantinga offers two arguments against the logical problem of evil, and these arguments are what is known as an undercutting defeater and a rebutting defeater (terms that are explained in the chapter). Welty offers

an evaluation of these arguments before addressing Plantinga's responses to the evidential problem of evil.

Subsequently, Welty covers Plantinga's contributions to arguments in favor of theism. Welty frames Plantinga's contributions this way: "While Plantinga is a relatively recent contributor to this very old extraordinarily complex discussion, his position is both significant and easily summarized: God's existence has not been disproved by argument, is rationally permissible to accept, and is supportable by way of argument" (p. 57). Plantinga's contribution to this area includes his arguments against the problem of evil, but Welty focuses on Plantinga's rational permissibility argument, the parity argument from other minds, and arguments from natural theology. Welty naturally follows up Plantinga's theistic arguments with a chapter covering Plantinga's views on the divine attributes. While there are many divine attributes that could be covered, Welty focuses on the attributes that tend to be more controversial and debated among Christian philosophers- simplicity (God is not made up of parts), omniscience (God is all-knowing), and transcendence (God is eternal or timeless). Plantinga's views on the supposed conflict between science and religion are discussed next, which entails answering questions like "Does biological evolution undermine the doctrine of divine creation?" (p.92).

Welty takes a step back from Plantinga's philosophical arguments and apologetic contributions to discuss Plantinga's method for participating in Christian philosophy, which is based on the belief that there is no such thing as religious neutrality. Welty discusses Plantinga's methodological principles and distinct activities of Christian philosophy as well as Plantinga's "eight ways to approach the truth of distinctive Christian claims" (p. 113). Welty, then, evaluates whether Plantinga's own Christian philosophy demonstrates his method. In the final chapter of *Alvin Plantinga*, He examines all that he has discussed about Plantinga's philosophical work in order to provide some clarity as to whether Plantinga can be considered to be reformed or Calvinist in his theology. Welty distinguishes between Reformed beliefs that are essential in order to be considered Reformed and those Reformed beliefs that are not essential to be considered Reformed. The latter are beliefs that are common amongst Calvinists but are not unanimously accepted. In Welty's examination, he examines which of Plantinga's arguments that the Reformed believer would have to reject based on the essentials of the

Reformed tradition, and he demonstrates how Reformed views could be added to other Plantingan arguments that do not reject Reformed essentials.

Dr. Welty does an excellent job in not only educating his reader about the gem that Alvin Plantinga is and has been to the world of Christian philosophy and apologetics, and Welty also treats Plantinga with the utmost fairness when examining and evaluating his work. Furthermore, Welty really does a service to his readers by demonstrating how to charitably use the arguments and methods of Plantinga that line up with Reformed Theology and leaving out those things that do not line up. Welty demonstrates how not to throw out the Plantingan baby with the bath water. This book would be useful to Christians who have, or intend to have, meaningful conversations with non-Christians about the truth claims of Christianity. Welty provides the reader with tools so that those who are unfamiliar with philosophical jargon can comprehend Plantinga's work. I will end this review with Welty's own words, "We all fall short in various ways, but not all ways of falling short are created equal...Plantinga's body of work has made significant contributions to mature philosophical reflection...while at the same time being strongly influenced by the Reformed tradition" (p. 147). This quote demonstrates the charity to which all Christians should aspire to when engaging with each other.

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***More than a Sermon: The Purpose and Practice of Christian Preaching.*** By Douglas D. Webster. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2024. 344 pp. \$24.99, Paperback. ISBN 9781683597520.

Douglas D. Webster (PhD, University of St. Michael's College, Toronto School of Theology) is professor of pastoral theology and preaching at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University. He has served in church leadership for over fifty years in various locations, including Birmingham, Denver, San Diego, New York City, and Toronto. In this book, Webster aims to stimulate an in-depth conversation on preaching

while exploring what it means to proclaim Christ (p. xx). He accomplishes this through the two major divisions in his book. Part one focuses on the purpose of preaching. For Webster, proclaiming Christ is all about living a life that reflects Scripture (p. 4), emphasizing truth over technique (pp. 24–26), and preaching Christ-centered sermons by focusing on the metanarrative of Scripture (pp. 91–95).

In part two, Webster unpacks the nuts and bolts concerning the practice of preaching. He proposes dividing the year into seven preaching periods. These periods are the Fall season, Advent/Christmas, Winter, Lent/Easter, Pentecost, Spring, and Summer (p. 127). He then devotes part two of his book to focusing on this preaching calendar and specific occasions. These occasions include Advent and Christmas sermons, Lenten sermons, Easter sermons, memorial sermons, wedding sermons, crisis sermons, and preaching for social impact. In each sermonic season or occasion, Webster encourages preachers to use biblical theology to explore the metanarrative of the Bible and show the centrality of Christ in each sermon. Showing the centrality of Christ in every sermon (and eventually from cover to cover) will strengthen the faith of the generation Webster labels “unbelieving believers” (p. 84).

In this book, Webster makes at least two contributions to the field of preaching. First, he furthers the conversation between preaching and biblical theology. He builds on Bryan Chapell’s Christ-centered preaching model when he proposes using biblical theology to explore the metanarrative of the Bible in each sermon.

Webster addresses an issue that has risen among many preachers who strive to preach expository sermons. The problem comes from a misunderstanding that expository preaching is always verse-by-verse preaching. Many preachers strive to preach expository sermons and therefore preach passages verse-by-verse or sometimes even word-by-word. What results is a sermon that focuses entirely on the immediate context and the human author’s words.

Verse-by-verse preaching fails to consider the Divine Author’s use of the passage on the canonical level. Instead of allowing the immediate context to cast light on the greater context, the immediate context becomes the end. This oversight leaves much textual meaning concealed and often results in sermons being based on a single verse or phrase. Webster addresses this mistake when he contends, “A verse-by-verse methodology may inadvertently compete against the whole council of

God” (p. 93). He is right. Expository preaching is not always verse-by-verse preaching. Every word is equally inspired (2 Tim 3:16), but that does not mean every word or verse warrants an equal amount of preaching time. Too many sermons today are labeled “expository” when they are bogged down in the details of a text and missing the greater thrust of the pericope.

Why not treat the text on the pericopal level first? Preach the main idea of the pericope, then connect that pericope to the metanarrative. Doing so emphasizes the immediate context (human author’s intention) as well as the greater context (Divine Author’s intention). Pericopal preaching provides rich, textual instruction, while exalting Christ by seeing Him on the grander level. Expository preaching begins with the specific unit of thought in that passage, then connects to its book, then to the metanarrative.

Webster’s second contribution is the instruction he provides for specific preaching occasions. He gives excellent examples of Christ-centered preaching for each of his seven preaching occasions. Furthermore, he identifies seasons of the year where preaching a specific theme may be appropriate (p. 127). He suggests planning your preaching calendar around the seven seasons of the year. These seasons are Fall (the school year beginning), Advent/Christmas, Winter, Lent/Easter, Pentecost, Spring (the end of school), and Summer.

Again, Webster provides sound advice: preachers would do well to capitalize on specific occasions with appropriate themes, such as Easter and Advent/Christmas. Also, for many, back to school means back to church. Capitalizing on these seasons is good pastoral advice. Finally, when a crisis happens, people often run to church for answers. Webster provides excellent instruction for each occasion with a Christ-centered emphasis. Preaching always requires pastoral discernment.

At the same time, we preachers do not preach because seasons exist; we preach because God has spoken. Therefore, the preacher’s preaching calendar should first be influenced by the Word of God itself. I believe preaching through books of the Bible, pericope by pericope, while using biblical theology to connect each sermon to the metanarrative to exalt Christ is sufficient to accomplish Webster’s goal of making disciples and strengthening the faith of unbelieving believers (p. 84). However, praying over which books to preach and using a little pastoral

discernment in choosing which books to preach based upon seasons is sound advice.

Webster's call to preach Christ from the metanarrative in every sermon is helpful to a generation of expository preachers who are still eager to understand the intricacies of expository preaching. Pastors, students, or any expositor will benefit from his instruction. I recommend reading Bryan Chapell's *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Baker Academic, 2018) first.

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***Daily Doctrine: A One-Year Guide to Systematic Theology.* By Kevin DeYoung. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2024. 409 pp. \$32.99, Hardcover. ISBN 1-4335-7285-0.**

The past 25 years have witnessed the publication of several extensive systematic theologies by authors such as Michael Horton, Robert Letham, Douglas Kelly, Stephen Wellum, and Joel Beeke. However, these works are often inaccessible or too time-consuming for many laypeople. Into this gap, Kevin DeYoung—Senior Pastor at Christ Covenant Church and an Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary—has published a book on systematic theology that seeks to bridge the academy and the pew. In *Daily Doctrine*, DeYoung addresses the traditional topics of systematic theology in a way that is accessible for "busy pastors, students, leaders, and laypeople" (1).

*Daily Doctrine* is organized around 260 readings (five per week for 52 weeks). This format makes it easy to read the book daily and have some buffer for missed days. Alternatively, one can read the book cover-to-cover in a few sittings. DeYoung divides the chapters into eight—or nine depending upon how you count—loci, roughly following the heads of systematic theology: prolegomena, theology proper, anthropology, covenant theology, Christology 1 and 2, soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology.

In *Daily Doctrine*, DeYoung is condensing and popularizing classical Reformed Presbyterian theology from figures like Turretin, Hodge,

Bavinck, and Berkhof. In many chapters, he will reference one of these figures in the footnotes, though he also invokes other individuals like Francis Junius and William Perkins. As DeYoung notes in the introduction, he is a translator of this classical Reformed theology: “not from one language to another, but from one register to another. That is to say, I think I can best serve the church by reading the old, dead guys (and some living people too), digesting their technical arguments and terminology, taking the best of their insights, and then writing with clarity and concision for busy pastors, students, leaders, and laypeople” (1). DeYoung aptly delivers on his approach. He focuses on concisely explaining doctrine. He does not take the next step of applying it; for instance, in discussing God’s sovereignty, DeYoung doesn’t apply it to anxiety about one’s health.

Despite DeYoung’s general focus on classical Reformed Presbyterian theology, he does interact with other views prevalent in the broader Reformed evangelical community in the West. For instance, he discusses credobaptism (314–20) and other views of polity, such as congregationalism (341). However, DeYoung intentionally avoids interacting regularly or extensively with other Christian traditions like Wesleyans—let alone with liberal theology or Roman Catholicism (1). To be sure, he occasionally contrasts biblical teaching with the Council of Trent, but this is not a pattern as it is in some major systematic theologies (245, 251, 254). Likewise, he largely avoids the latest scholarly debates, though he occasionally engages them (e.g., *New Perspective on Paul* on p. 258).

*Daily Doctrine* has many strengths. From a purely aesthetic standpoint, its physical layout is beautiful and easy to read. Each day’s chapter is short enough to be readable, long enough to convey meaningful content, and atomic enough that readers do not need to complete multiple chapters together. As such, the book can serve multiple purposes: an introductory textbook, a theology refresh, a year-long devotional, and a concise reference guide. Consequently, the book’s utility is broad: men preparing for ordination exams, pastors seeking to theologically train their lay elders, and small groups wanting to learn historic Reformed theology.

From a content standpoint, DeYoung does a masterful job achieving both brevity and clarity. To quote Calvin, *Daily Doctrine* exemplifies “lucid brevity.” Further, DeYoung does not assume a high level of

knowledge by readers. Where necessary, he begins his explanation of topics with helpful definitions of terms that are either complex or not commonly known. The book's accessibility does not come from oversimplifying content. DeYoung discusses topics like divine impassibility (53), republication (146), and Autotheos (169). The book also contains robust Scripture and subject indices that make it even easier to use as a reference. Finally, the tone in *Daily Doctrine* is highly commendable. DeYoung is respectful towards his theological siblings like Reformed Baptists and his writing is brimming with joy. As he notes in the introduction and shows throughout, "writing this book has been a dream come true" (1). *Daily Doctrine* shows how contemplating seemingly dense doctrine can be a source of joy and praise to God.

For what the book seeks to do and from the author's theological standpoint, it does an exceptional job. Nonetheless, some readers may wish for broader engagement with other Protestant denominations or other traditions like Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy. Likewise, some readers may wish for one more click of the dial towards explicitly making practical applications and connections from the rich doctrine.

To conclude, *Daily Doctrine* is an excellent and accessible summary of classical Reformed theology. This book will benefit any reader from the most well-read theology professors to new Christians.

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***From Membership to Discipleship: The Path to Spiritual Formation and a World-Impacting Life.* By Thomson K. Mathew. Kottayam, Kerala: Thomson K. Mathew, 2024. 230 pp. \$19.99 Paperback. ISBN 978-1737978022.**

In his latest book, Thomson Mathew, Professor Emeritus and former Dean of the College of Theology and Ministry at Oral Roberts University, provides a robust and timely critique of the contemporary ecclesiastical landscape. Dedicating the book in memory of Dr. Wayne Faring, his undergraduate Bible professor, whom Mathew describes as the man who "pointed me to Christ." Mathew masterfully identifies the central

problem of the global church today: consumer Christianity and “membership maintenance.” For Mathew, discipleship and spiritual formation, on the other hand, is the solution to a healthy 21st-century church.

Chapter by chapter, the author lays out a path forward for the Church. By firmly establishing his readers in the Kingdom of God in the first few chapters, he defines discipleship as a necessary response to the Gospel. Rather than “membership” in the church, Mathew argues that Bible-believing Christians have settled for a relaxed, consumer-driven faith that asks little of the individual and offers few avenues for spiritual growth. Followers of Christ are called to make disciples, Mathew argues, and discipleship is the process of conforming to the image of Christ for the purpose of reaching others. This “world-impacting life” that Mathew titles his book after is not something we can achieve on our own; it is the byproduct of living in the correct context.

Mathew goes into painstaking detail about the process of spiritual formation. He distinguishes between biblical knowledge and the “divine work of grace.” Mathew points to the failure of churches that have confused Bible-informed Christians with Bible-transformed Christians. Offering a helpful “adaptable ministry paradigm,” Mathew asserts that spiritual formation is the work of the Spirit, through the local body, and through our regular practice of learning and applying Scripture to our lives. Mathew’s chapter on sanctification was particularly strong. Mathew balanced the tension between our responsibility to cooperate with the divine call to holiness and the reality that God is sovereign over the process. Mathew spends a great deal of time addressing the work of the Holy Spirit and the role of the Church, as Matthew’s background is in the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement. However, his chapter on the “means of grace” will be helpful to the larger evangelical community.

Mathew also tackles the often-difficult questions about vocation and leadership in ministry. He draws on his educational background in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and chaplaincy credentials to help readers understand the concept of ministerial identity. All believers are ministers, Mathew argues. Mathew’s concept of discipleship necessitates that every believer take up their “role in the ministry of Jesus Christ.” Mathew spends significant time developing ministerial identity in church leaders, but he also makes it clear that a “world-impacting life” requires the everyday layman to begin seeing their work and social

spheres as their mission field. Mathew applies principles of andragogy, or adult learning, to help church leaders better steward their churches' spiritual growth. Mathew pushes back on a culture of "preaching to the fed" by exhorting leaders to move from a mentality of "spoon-feeding" to one that values interaction and on-the-job training.

Mathew addresses suffering head-on in one of the book's most impactful chapters. He zeroes in on the "prosperity-leaning" ideologies that have infected parts of the global church. Discipleship, the author argues, often looks like suffering. In this chapter, Mathews equips the reader for the inevitable difficulty of a "world-impacting life." This was a welcome chapter to a book that can sometimes shy away from the harsher realities of the Christian life.

*From Membership to Discipleship* is robustly referenced, drawing on both Scripture and current theological texts. Mathew does an excellent job of making a complex topic accessible to the lay reader without talking down to his audience. The content of this book would make for fantastic reading material in a seminary setting, but the author has packaged it in a way that one's local church leadership team could walk away with gospel-centered, practical insights. Mathew focuses on the global church throughout the text, but I found his diagnosis of the problems to be particularly poignant for Western culture. Church attendance and "nominal" Christianity are at an all-time low in the United States, and Matthews' book will help leaders identify areas where current systems may be inhibiting spiritual growth.

Mathew devotes a chapter toward the end of the book to discussing the importance of moving forward in a "post-COVID" world. He opines on the church's move to digital ministry and how younger generations will shape the future of church leadership and does an excellent job of providing direction while holding fast to the fact that the "pathway" toward discipleship never changes. His description of a "world-impacting" life was particularly striking to me. He is not advocating that Christians move out and try to change the world through political or social means; he envisions Christians impacting the world through multiplication, not addition. The author leads others to Jesus, and those disciples lead others to Jesus, and so on.

Mathew has written a theological gem. *From Membership to Discipleship* effectively dismantles the growing "maintenance mindset" of the Western church and provides a biblical pathway toward spiritual

formation. This book would be a welcome addition to the library of any reader of theology. Pastors and church leaders must make disciples if we are to see “spiritually healthy” churches. Rather than being content with “member-heavy” churches, we need to demand vitality and spiritual formation if we want to reach the lost.

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***A Theology of Play: Learning to Enjoy Life as God Intended.* By Kevin M. Gushiken. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2024. 176 pp. \$24.99, Paperback. ISBN 9780825448652.**

For most adults, play is relegated solely to childhood. Like Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:11, we tend to put childish things behind us, particularly the intentionality of play. In adulthood, play is diminished to the insignificant, incidental, and immaterial. Adults rarely consider God’s good purposes in a life filled with play.

Kevin Gushiken’s book, *A Theology of Play: Learning to Enjoy Life as God Intended*, is an effort to redefine play from childish activities to a God-endowed anthropological expression. Following the paths of C. S. Lewis and G. K. Chesterton, Gushiken understands the expressions of play as a necessary component of human growth as believers. As the Dean of the School of Bible and Ministry at Lancaster Bible College, Gushiken builds a theology of play, while also utilizing stories and personal anecdotes to illustrate his points.

Gushiken posits his argument in his definition of play: “[play is] the God-given ability and permission to fully enjoy moments in life as God intended, with freedom and pleasure” (p. 20). While Gushiken never comprehensively delineates what specific activities define play, he rather describes play as whatever activities are ethically permissible and pleasurable within God’s creation. Gushiken’s goal is not merely to build a theology of play, but rather to promote play within the Christian life: “The end goal is to cultivate a lifestyle of play” (p. 18).

While play is foundational to living in God’s creation, Gushiken describes barriers that limit Christians in pursuing play. In identifying

barriers to play, Gushiken identifies one of his foremost concerns within Christendom—lack of enjoyment. He points to theology, life experience, work, and overall busyness as obstacles to play. Rather than making work paramount, Gushiken argues instead for play to be central in the Christian's life, regardless of situation or circumstance. Christians can still find joy in playing by delighting in God, even during suffering and trials: "Playing is less about the activity and more about the state of being at rest under the sovereignty of God" (p. 72).

*A Theology of Play* is a needed reminder that God desires his creation to enjoy and delight in him (Psalm 37:4). Gushiken helpfully identifies common arenas of the Christian life devoid of joy and play; harboring bitterness against another, being self-critical of our perceived deficiencies, and even believing a theology of functional stoicism. Evangelical Christians need to be reminded to biblically thrive in life, rather than merely survive. Readers will be benefited by this needed and timely reminder to enjoy life as God graciously intended.

While *A Theology of Play* possesses a needed reminder to enjoy life through play, it is not without faults. These faults are largely demonstrated through questionable exegesis. At times, one wonders whether the author's personal opinions informed his interpretation of biblical texts. For instance, Gushiken argues that play comes from loving oneself. He grounds this thought in claiming Jesus commands self-love in Matthew 22:39. "We are to love God. We are to love our neighbor. And we are to love ourselves" (p. 49). Yet Jesus's point is the two greatest commandments are decidedly opposed to loving anything other than God and neighbor respectively. Gushiken commits the fallacy of using the standard (love others as much as you love yourself) as the command (to love oneself). Enjoying and delighting in the Lord does necessitate acceptance of who God has created us to be. However, that acceptance is based upon who God is, rather than who we are. Predicating play upon self-acceptance is a potentially dangerous proposition towards humanism. The goal of the Christian life is never self-love, but rather the life-long pursuit of pleasing Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:9).

The exegetical concerns continue as Gushiken considers the reality of how cultures play differently. He claims cultural play is neutral and should be equally accepted for their inherent diversity. While Gushiken's overall message of cultural humility is well taken, his exegesis and subsequent applications leave more questions than answers. Pointing to

Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11, Gushiken argues that “the redemption of Jesus Christ liberates sinful expressions that historically have accompanied lived realities of gender or ethnicity...this verse emphasizes an abolishment of sinful influences” (p. 96). Yet Paul’s overarching message of redemption is not about cultural distinctives, but about equality in redemption. Regardless of external distinctives, the same grace of God saves us through the blood of Jesus Christ. Salvation is not about cultural expressions but about sinners saved by the grace of God regardless of culture.

Similarly, Gushiken writes: “He is not the Savior of a culture but of all cultures (Rev. 7:9-11)” (p. 104). Certainly, it is true that the gospel is not culturally bound and that every tribe, people, and tongue will be represented in heaven. But Christ is the savior of sinners, not cultures. Christians must be diligent to take the gospel to every nation and encourage enjoyment of the Lord within each culture. But we must equally be clear that salvation is not a collective work but an individual transformation.

While some minor exegetical concerns remain (e.g., David assaulting Bathsheba, Joseph vacillating between forgiveness and revenge, etc.), the final questionable exegetical issue is Gushiken’s understanding of forgiveness. Gushiken describes Jesus’s forgiveness at the cross as directed primarily toward the system rather than individuals. “Yet, I believe Jesus was referring not only to the guards but to the system...Jesus was asking for forgiveness of the system that propagated such conduct” (p. 118). Gushiken then leverages this exegesis to his primary point that play requires forgiving organizations as well as ourselves: “We need to forgive ourselves because punishing ourselves (a form of emotional penance) prevents us from experiencing true freedom” (p. 120). Going one step further, Gushiken believes the parable of the prodigal son includes the notion of self-forgiveness: “The younger son was able to play because he had forgiven himself and received the father’s forgiveness” (p. 122).

These spurious interpretations do not read consistently with either the texts or the biblical narrative. Jesus’ pronouncement of forgiveness in Luke 23:34 was directed toward those who had committed the sin of crucifying him. Forgiveness covers the sin that precedes it. Similarly, the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 gives no indication of forgiving self but rather the beauty of receiving underserved forgiveness from the

offended. And nowhere does the Bible indicate, promote, or call God's people to forgive themselves, but rather to relish in the undeserved gift of God's forgiveness (Psalm 32:1-7). Living a life of play requires believing and resting in God's forgiveness, rather than learning to forgive ourselves.

*A Theology of Play* has many helpful insights on God's good design in creating humans as playful beings. Christians would be wise to intentionally invest in enjoying life as God intended. Readers would also be wise to note exegetical concerns throughout the book and read accordingly. Those who read with discernment will be challenged and encouraged to enjoy life by enjoying first the giver of life.

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***Genesis-Numbers.* By Iain M. Duguid, Jay Sklar, Christine Palmer, and Ronald Bergey. ESV Expository Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2025. 1392 pp. \$60.00, Hardcover. ISBN: 9781433546280.**

The ESV Expository Commentary series, edited by Iain Duguid, James Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar, has the desired aims of being exegetically sound, biblically theological, globally aware, broadly reformed, doctrinally conversant, pastorally useful, application-minded, and efficient in expression (pp. 11-12). This review seeks to provide a brief analysis of the structure of *Genesis-Numbers*, followed by a critical evaluation for the purpose of providing some helpful insights for preachers, teachers, and any student of God's Word who might be interested in the resource. This volume, being the first in its series, but the twelfth volume published, has served to complete the series. It contains contributions from Iain Duguid (*Genesis*), Jay Sklar (*Exodus*), Christine Palmer (*Leviticus*), and Ronald Bergey (*Numbers*).

The commentary of each biblical book begins with an introduction, and each introduction follows a mostly similar pattern: an overview of the book; an examination of the title, author, date and occasion; a discussion of genre and literary features; an investigation of the book's theology and its relationship to the rest of Scripture and to Christ; a

section on preaching helps and interpretive challenges; and finally, an in-depth exegetical outline of the entire book. These introductions are helpful to the reader in providing the “big picture” of each book, and placing it in its historical and biblical context, as well as examining how each book can shape one’s understanding of doctrines that are unique to the book. The introductions strike a good balance of providing necessary background information and helpful intertextual and theological insights, while also not getting too far in the weeds of text-critical and background issues that can be a trait of a more technical commentary.

Following the introduction, the volume progresses by an examination of the biblical text, seeking to move through the exegetical outline provided in the introduction. Each major division begins with the English text of the ESV as well as a brief overview and outline of the particular section. The commentary of the authors comes next, which is the largest portion of each major section. The comments progress in a mostly pericope-by-pericope manner, as opposed to a verse-by-verse advancement. There are certainly exceptions to this when one particular verse requires in-depth attention—Duguid’s commentary on Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 being an example—but this remains the consistent format of the commentary and serves the series’ stated purpose of being “efficient in expression,” and “not a word-by-word analysis but a crisply moving exposition” (p. 12).

The authors’ comments on the text are made with exegetical precision that might be described as semi-technical. They occasionally work within the original Hebrew, but primarily deal with the English translation. Those who have little-to-no training in the biblical languages should not feel overwhelmed with the content of the commentary. On average there are approximately three to four footnotes per page that provide deeper exegetical analysis as well as the secondary sources that were consulted. These footnotes, however, are typically not very in-depth and do not distract from the regular reading flow of the commentary.

Following the author’s comments on the biblical text, each major section concludes with what has been termed a “Response” section. These are shorter segments that serve to connect the examined text with the rest of Scripture, and are more Christ-centered, theological, and applicational in nature—all defining marks of the commentary series. This pattern for the commentary—the ESV translation, Section Overview, Section Outline, Comment, and Response—is the consistent

pattern of every major section throughout the entire commentary—and the series as a whole.

Overall, this commentary serves as an excellent theologically conservative resource for anyone desiring to study or preach from the first four books of the Bible. I appreciate the more biblical-theological approach that the commentary takes in its examination of the text, helping the reader to better grasp the unity and intertextual nature of Scripture. The content of the commentary strikes a good balance of being easy and enjoyable to read, while also proving to be exegetically sound and theologically rich. As mentioned above, the introductions are a great example of this balance. They are filled with excellent hermeneutical and theological insights, but it was a pleasant surprise to not have to wade through scholarly discussions of the Documentary Hypothesis, or other text-critical issues. In light of this balance, and in agreement with the series' stated goal of being "pastorally useful," I perceive the commentary to be more helpful to pastors as they engage the text at the pericope level for preaching, than to scholars who desire to study the text at a critical and technical level in the original languages.

There are a few drawbacks to the commentary. The first, for those preferring a physical copy, is simply its size. At nearly fourteen hundred pages, due to its larger paper and font, the commentary is physically substantial. It is not a book that is easy to take on the go but is better to be reserved for simply reading from your office or study. Secondly, and a bit ironically, some might criticize the commentary for not including the entire Pentateuch into one volume, as Deuteronomy has been placed with Joshua-Ruth in volume two. I can see how this might lead the reader to a somewhat disjointed view of the Pentateuch and hinder one's ability to more clearly observe the unified shape of the first five books. Thirdly, and finally, the "Response" segments tended not to be as exegetically robust as the "Comment" segments. There were numerous times where deeper exegetical connections could have been made across the canon, but instead these sections tended to be a little looser exegetically and were more conceptually driven, rather than text driven.

These drawbacks, however, should not inhibit a desire for adding the commentary to one's library—especially a pastor's library. I found the content on all four books to be filled with insightful observations that serve to build one's understanding of the text and purpose of the books as a whole, and to ultimately lead one to see how all of Scripture points

to the person and work of Jesus. In conclusion, I highly recommend the commentary and would encourage one to, please, take up and read!

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**Better Ways to Read the Bible: Transforming a Weapon of Harm into a Tool of Healing.** By Zach W. Lambert. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2025. xiii + 216 pp. \$19.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1587436680.

Today, many people view the Bible as an outdated book that is no longer relevant, meaningful, or beneficial to modern society. As a result, many have stopped reading it. Author, Zach W. Lambert, who holds a Master of Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary and is pursuing his doctorate at Duke Divinity School, is also the founder and senior pastor of Restore Austin Church in Austin, Texas. He points out that a significant reason people avoid the Bible is that they have experienced it not as a good book but as a weapon used to shame, scold, judge, condemn, marginalize, and oppress (pp. 6-7). Lambert believes this perception arises from reading the Bible through harmful lenses.

Instead of continuing to read the Bible through harmful lenses, Lambert encourages readers to adopt new lenses that promote healing. He divides the book into three parts, containing ten chapters. In the first two chapters, Lambert presents and defends the argument that every time someone reads the Bible, they interpret it. He asserts, "We all come to the biblical text with biases. We all interpret through lenses" (p. 35). He acknowledges, "Even though we can't remove all our lenses and come to the Bible with objectivity, we can choose which lenses we wear when interpreting Scripture" (p. 36).

In Part Two, chapters 3 to 6, Lambert explains several harmful lenses used when reading the Bible. These include The Literalism Lens: "The Bible Says It, I Believe It, That Settles It;" The Apocalypse Lens: "It's All Gonna Burn Anyway;" The Moralism Lens: "Well, That's Not Biblical;" and The Hierarchy Lens: "Submit to Authority as You Submit to God." In contrast, Part Three, chapters 7 to 10, he introduces healing lenses such as The Jesus Lens: "The Scriptures Point to Me;" The Context Lens: "The

One Who Seeks Will Find;” The Flourishing Lens: “I Have Come That They May Have Life Abundantly;” and The Fruitfulness Lens: “By Their Fruit You Will Recognize Them.” Lambert’s organization helps readers easily identify the opposing harms and benefits of different approaches to reading the Bible. This structure allows for a clear and coherent presentation of his argument, making *Better Ways to Read the Bible* an accessible read. Readers can quickly grasp the ideas Lambert wishes to convey.

Lambert states, “Bad Bible interpretation hurts people, but the answer to bad Bible interpretation isn’t throwing away the Scriptures. The answer to bad Bible interpretation is good Bible interpretation” (p. 196). Some of the lenses Lambert recommends for approaching God’s Word are significant. For example, being Christ-centered, “We must interpret all of Scripture through the lens of Jesus” (p. 123), and remaining faithful to the biblical text and context (p. 135) are classic principles for studying and applying the Bible. These lenses should be used skillfully to explore and understand the Word of God. Indeed, “we must do everything we can to understand its various aspects” (p. 135).

However, Lambert has taken a radical stance by completely rejecting a literal reading and understanding of the Bible. He writes, “We can choose Jesus and reject literalistic interpretations that cause harm. In fact, if we are going to take the Bible seriously, I think we have to” (p. 60). He passionately advocates for liberal views, including equality and diversity (p. 108), feminism (p. 144), and flourishing and liberation theology (pp. 150-154). Lambert argues against the moral and hierarchy lenses to support the freedom of divorce by explaining, “The Bible does say that God hates divorce, but that is because God hates everything that oppresses and marginalizes people” (p. 86). By employing the fruitfulness lens, he supports LGBTQ+ inclusion, contending that “Jesus’ words in Matthew 19 acknowledge people outside the sexual and gender norms of his time. To put it another way, Jesus recognizes sexual and gender minorities without condemnation” (pp. 174-175).

These perspectives illustrate the many differing views on how to apply various lenses when reading the Bible. Lambert’s arguments thus open up numerous debates concerning the understanding and application of God’s Word in life. As Lambert concludes with a thought-provoking statement: “There are better ways to read the Bible than what many of us have been taught—ways that lead to liberation and fullness of life for

absolutely everyone” (p. 197). While Lambert encourages readers to minimize bias when approaching Scripture, his liberal lens is apparent in his interpretations and arguments. Indeed, the book highlights the importance of reading texts within their context and emphasizes keeping Jesus at the center of the biblical message. However, it also presents liberal viewpoints that most conservative Christian readers may find challenging to accept. Therefore, it is advisable to approach *Better Ways to Read the Bible* with critical thinking or at least a cautious mindset, as it contains both beneficial insights and potentially harmful ideas.

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**Evangelical Pharisees: The Gospel as Cure for the Church’s Hypocrisy.** By Michael Reeves. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023. 112 pp. \$13.57, Paperback. ISBN 978-1433581175.

Dr. Michael Reeves has juxtaposed the term Evangelical with the word Pharisees. Some might call this an oxymoron, but maybe it’s not. And herein lies Reeves’s main purpose – not to attack evangelicals, but rather, to call for a reformation within the evangelical church. To be sure, Reeves’s call is mostly targeted at western evangelicals.

The term evangelical has different meaning, depending on location. It is not simply a North American word; it is employed frequently outside the United States without political or cultural connotation. Constantine Campbell knows this and, no doubt, Thomas Kidd does too (see Campbell’s 2023 *Jesus v. Evangelicals: A Biblical Critique of a Wayward Movement* and see Kidd’s 2019 *Who is an Evangelical: The History of a Movement in Crisis*). But Reeves, a British scholar and self-professing evangelical, also seeks to contribute to the conversation by doing exactly what Jesus did with his disciples in Luke 12:1 when He warned them, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

For Reeves’s readers, the backstory for *Evangelical Pharisees* is important to know. This is because Evangelical Pharisees is actually a follow up book to *Gospel People: A Call for Evangelical Integrity* (published by Reeves in 2022). Without this context, it may be difficult

to understand what Reeves sets out to accomplish in his sequel. In *Gospel People*, Reeves's goal was straightforward – he was seeking to clarify what the gospel is so that people could be united around it rather than united around the term evangelical (which may or may not be the most helpful term). While Reeves is certainly in favor of preserving the term evangelical, he is not interested in fighting for a label per se. Rather, he is more interested in fighting for being “people of the gospel.”

According to Reeves, the term evangelical should be defined theologically, which led him to demonstrate in *Gospel People* the biblical and historical pedigree of the term. Reeves sought to accomplish his goal by making his biblical appeal from the letter to the Romans. What prompted Reeves to write the first book was his fear that the current tribalism within evangelicalism would be accelerated, if attempts were made too quickly to ditch the term evangelical, only to replace it with something new that would be just as misunderstood. Here, knowing a bit of the history of the term evangelical can be helpful for Reeves's readers because his academic path has been impacted by three key figures: historian David Bebbington, theologian J. I. Packer, and the Anglican Pastor John Stott. Stott's influence on Reeves is most noticeable, being traced back to their time together at All Souls Church in London. In short, John Stott simplified Packer's sevenfold definition of evangelical under three essential marks: (1) the Bible (2) the Cross and (3) the Spirit. We note this because the impact of Stott's theological simplification can be seen in Reeves's well known 2012 publication *Delighting in the Trinity* (more than 200,000 copies sold!). But, in both *Gospel People* and *Evangelical Pharisees*, Reeves once again picks up Stott's threefold definition of the term evangelical by employing what Reeves calls “the three Rs of the gospel” – Revelation, Redemption, and Regeneration. Reeves's readers will notice, in the table of contents, that the three Rs of the gospel provide the structure for both *Gospel People* and *Evangelical Pharisees*.

After writing *Gospel People*, Reeves thought it needed a sequel. He anticipated a type of knee-jerk reaction from certain readers which could indicate a type of spiritual hollowness or self-righteous satisfaction. For readers who would (too) quickly agree with his call for evangelical integrity, Reeves wanted to ask an important follow up question – “Do you actually live with integrity to what you say you believe?” In other words, do you have gospel integrity? By asking this question, Reeves is

not looking for a predictable response, something like – “Yes, yes, head and heart have to go together; I need to be living out my theology.” Rather, Reeves wants to go a step further. He wants to look underneath the outward performance in order to see one’s affections and loves. Thus, Reeves is not making a call for orthodoxy in *Evangelical Pharisees*. Rather, he is after orthokardia. According to Reeves, gospel integrity happens when the gospel has been sufficiently worked down into our heads and hearts. This is the greatest need of the church today. *Evangelical Pharisees* is driven by this thesis, and Reeves supports his thesis by calling evangelicals to remember Jesus’ words in Luke 12:1, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” For Reeves, hypocrisy is a lack of integrity in both head and heart, and, if hypocrisy was a danger for Jesus’ disciples, it is also an ongoing danger for the church today. According to Reeves, the temptation for the modern-day believer is to fall into a posture of self-reliance and, furthermore, to seek the glory of man more than the glory of God (John 12:43). For Reeves, even the moral blips we are seeing today in evangelicalism may indicate a deeper problem than just “failing to live out one’s theology.” The solution is not a moral scrub. The solution is not simply moral integrity. The solution, according to Reeves, is the gospel of Jesus, and with the gospel, comes gospel integrity. Reeves’s readers will notice that that last chapter of *Gospel People* is Reeves’s point of departure for *Evangelical Pharisees*. Again, according to Reeves, the greatest need for the church today is not better leadership, better training, healthier giving, more orthodoxy, or even church planting. Rather, it is gospel integrity.

According to Reeves, the Pharisees looked to be orthodox, but they loved the glory of men. They were blind to who God is which made them blind to who they were. For Reeves, the Pharisees are the exact opposite of gospel integrity because they denied “the three Rs of the gospel”: (1) the Revelation from the Father (2) the Redemption by the Son and (3) the Regeneration through the Spirit. These three denials by the Pharisees represent three theological mistakes, and Reeves outlines them in the middle chapters of *Evangelical Pharisees*. The Pharisees approach to revelation lacked spiritual perception (cf. John 5:38-39). The Pharisees also saw no real need for redemption (cf. Luke 18:9-14). And, finally, the Pharisees disregarded their need for regeneration (cf. Matthew 15:1-9). Thus, in the heart of the book, Reeves outlines the Pharisees’ theological mistakes in order to show that, by extension, evangelicals can make the

same mistakes. Yet, according to Reeves, underneath all three of these mistakes was the Pharisees' root problem: they loved the glory of man more than the glory of God (John 12:43).

Yes, juxtaposing the term evangelical with the term Pharisees is obviously a risk. Yet, *Evangelical Pharisees* is a good reminder for us regarding some of the challenges that come with applying the four gospels in our western churches – without making everyone a Pharisee. Making everyone a Pharisee would certainly be a mistake in the opposite direction. Gospel assurance for the believer comes with the doctrine of justification and can be experienced now. Reeves would agree, but he probably could have made this point clearer. *Evangelical Pharisees* is also a good reminder that we need to be careful not to simply read Paul's use of righteousness into Matthew's, for instance, or vice versa. If we learned anything from the former "New Perspective/s on Paul" conversation, we learned that. Yet, some, like Scot McKnight, may not appreciate Reeves's caricature of the Pharisees. In sum though, the real strength of Reeves's book may be the reminder that we never move beyond the gospel. In this way, a call for reformation may be just what western evangelicals need.

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***Metaphysics and Gender: The Normative Art of Nature and Its Human Imitations.* By Michele M. Schumacher. Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2023. 193 pp. \$29.95, Hardcover. ISBN-13 978-1645852902.**

Transgender ideology has become the center point of political and religious dialogue. The binary of man and woman is as ancient and concrete as light and darkness. Yet, if that is so, how can something so concrete shift so suddenly in culture? Michele Schumacher takes the issue of transgenderism head on. In *Metaphysics and Gender*, she offers a Thomistic critique of the Sartrean atheistic and existentialist philosophy that undergirds the transgender ideology of Judith Butler and Simone de Beauvoir. Schumacher is certainly qualified for the task. She holds a Doctorate in Sacred Theology (S.T.D) and is currently a

private docent at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. For over two decades, she has written on the issue of feminism, sexuality, and marriage, including *Women in Christ: Towards a New Feminism* (2004) and *A Trinitarian Anthropology: Adrienne von Speyr and Hans Urs von Balthasar in Dialogue with St. Thomas Aquinas* (2014).

Schumacher divides her book into six chapters, plus an introduction and conclusion. In the introduction, Schumacher frames her argument in terms of art and the artist. Gender ideology, built upon the philosophy of John-Paul Sartre, rejects the existence of human nature and, therefore, the idea that humanity is God's artwork. In rejecting God and nature, man's purpose is liberation and autonomous self-expression. Man becomes his own artist. His identity and body are free to be whatever he desires.

In chapter 1, Schumacher unmasks gender ideology in its effects on transgenderism and sex reassignment surgeries. She presents a litany of research and statistics documenting the failure of gender-affirming surgeries and therapies. In chapter two, Schumacher focuses on the gender philosophy of Judith Butler, who argues that identity and gender are socially constructed. Schumacher warns, "The God-made universe is being replaced by a man-made one: virtual reality is becoming chillingly real!" (p. 30). This social construction operates through societal norms of permissible and impermissible behaviors. Ultimately, Judith Butler, following John-Paul Sartre, argues that an individual's subjective sexual behaviors are universalized by creating a norm. Hence, for transgenderism to escape oppression, it must supplant heterosexuality as the new societal norm.

Schumacher returns to the relationship between art and nature in chapter 3. She asserts, "Nature does not imitate art. Both human art and ethical action are necessarily—that is to say, naturally—limited by divine art" (p. 44). In this chapter, Schumacher introduces Aristotelian-Thomistic causation. God, the efficient cause of reality, fashions each created substance with an internal form that gives it its material shape and directs it to its end. Human art, on the contrary, externally shapes God's divine artwork, giving it an accidental form. Yet the accidental form leaves the substantial form, and its corresponding ends, unchanged. Following Thomas Aquinas, Schumacher argues that substances are naturally inclined towards their good ends. God has

impressed upon man's nature a law that directs man to his proper actions and ends.

In chapter 4, Schumacher explains Thomas's understanding of human freedom. Thomas argues that freedom is the ability for humans to pursue their good ends and obtain perfection. She sets this against Sartre's idea that human freedom is self-determination. For Sartre, humans are free to choose their own ends and thus their own morality. Schumacher states, "Sartrian freedom thus distinguishes itself from the classic metaphysical version thereof by its radical uprootedness from human nature, which is to say that it is both unmoored and unoriented, like a ship without a compass" (p. 66). She shows, that for Sartre, man seeks to become God. Even desire, especially sexual desire, keeps one from true freedom.

In chapter 5, Schumacher articulates the Aristotelian-Thomistic doctrine of hylomorphism (though she never uses this technical word). All substances are a combination of form and matter. God, the true artist, shapes matter by giving it a form. Thus, biological powers, especially procreation, are endowed by the soul as the form of the body. Like begets like. The transhumanists, by reshaping matter not only reject that things are ordered from within, but in doing so, they lose the procreative powers of the soul. In the latter half of the chapter, Schumacher explains several reproductive technologies that seek to overcome biological limitations, and therefore, the natural procreative powers of the soul.

In chapter six, Schumacher highlights the consequences of transgender ideology. She dives into the role of language and knowledge in trans ideology. Classical theology and metaphysics argue that words refer to real objects that exist independent of an intellect. Words, then, refer to reality, they do not create reality. Transgender ideology argues the opposite. Words create and destroy. Hence, to misgender someone is an act of violence. Ultimately transgender ideology is a denial of reality based on feelings. In response, Schumacher asks, "Why do your feelings trump my knowledge" (p. 148).

In her conclusion, Schumacher reminds readers that though man is like God, the creator-creature distinction must be maintained. God's word creates out of nothing. Man's words must correspond to what God created.

A few critiques are in order. First, Schumacher masterfully weaves together diverse sources into a coherent and compelling narrative. Her

presentation of the philosophical foundations of transgender ideology is excellent. Her quote heavy writing allows Sartre and Bulter to speak for themselves. Yet, her strengths may be her weakness. Her voice is lost amid a sea of quotations. Each page is filled with footnotes and is academically dense. Certainly, anyone working at the academic level in anthropology, metaphysics, and ethics will find this work a gold-mine of information. That said, the book is not for the lay reader. Schumacher assumes Thomistic metaphysics. Therefore, the reader versed in Thomism and Aristotelian causation will get the most out of the book. Those who are not, even if academically trained, will find the read cumbersome and highly technical.

Schumacher is clearly arguing for gender essentialism and hylomorphism. However, she fails to address the question of gendered souls. She assumes Thomism but does not consider the fact that Thomas argued that gender is inseparable accident of matter. Thomas's view on gender seems at odds with his own metaphysics. Thomas was operating with faulty biology. John Finely, who Schumacher cites, argues that the concept of gendered souls is more in line with Thomas's metaphysics. Edith Stine also argued for gendered souls. Schumacher may assume that gendered souls is the obvious implication if the bodies powers are determined by the substantial form. Yet the fact that Thomas rejected gendered souls warrants an explanation on Schumacher's part. One could imagine an argument for transgenderism based upon a non-gendered soul. If men and women share the exact same substantial form, then maybe gender really is just a construct.

Like many Roman Catholic anthropological works, she provides a wonderful defense of biological essentialism. A more thorough treatment of the soul as the substantial form of the body would have been helpful. Nevertheless, academic books on gender that are rooted in classical-realist metaphysics are lacking in protestant theology. For that reason, protestants should especially read Schumacher's book.

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*The Storied Life: Christian Writing as Art and Worship.* By Jared C. Wilson. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2024. 203 pp. \$22.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-0-310-15573-7.

One of the most gifted writers in the evangelical church is Jared Wilson. How appropriate that he would author a book on writing, but it is much more than that. He tells us:

There is a way to write that costs the writer very little. And then there are Writers. There is a contemplation of the art and an undertaking of the craft that engages all we are and all we have, as if the ink on our page is drawn from our very blood.... Your writing is divinely gifted, eternally scaled, and gloriously weighted (pp. xiii, xv).

Wilson is Assistant Professor of Pastoral Ministry at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Author in Residence, and General Editor of *For the Church*. He also serves as the primary preaching pastor and the director of the Pastoral Training Center at Liberty Baptist Church in Liberty, MO. He is the author of over twenty books, including *The Gospel Driven Church* and *Gospel Wakefulness*. Wilson makes a salient point about writing, writers, and God: “The call to write is a call to see as many ways as possible that God is telling stories in the world. The call to write is a call to press deeper into The Story. And when we do, we find that we are not just being called to ‘make stuff,’ but to be made. God’s calling is in fact a storying of us” (p. 191).

Wilson structures his book into two sections comprised of nine chapters. His sections explain to the potential writer What is Story? and How to Cultivate Story? in one’s life. The first chapter highlights What Makes Writing Good. Wilson informs us that good writing is curious, musical, imaginative, truthful and evocative. His target audience, the Christian writer “should not think of themselves as originating anything but rather adorning what we’ve inherited” (p. 17), and this storyteller is a storied person (p. 25). Chapter 2 (The Story of Liturgy) attempts to answer What actually makes writing Christian? Wilson suggests it is the writer’s worldview and the way it reflects the Divine Author’s story of the world: “For writing to be well thought of as Christian, it must reflect The Story” (p. 29). Church each week is a remembrance of The Story: “We walk in each Sunday, as we wake up each morning, with a kind of gospel amnesia. Rehearsing together the great works of God, central to us through the person and work of Jesus Christ, recenters us, restabilizes,

renews us” (p. 37). The Liturgy of Story (Chapter 3) provides a call to participate in the story, not just as an observer or reader. It is a call to engage, it puts the reader in the scene, it has a quality of transcendence, a climactic turn and an air of redemption. A writer needs to remember as they approach the end of their work that “there is no substitute... for the proclamation of the glory of Jesus, for there is no revelation greater, no appearing more powerful, no resolution more redemptive than that of Christ’s” (p. 61).

Chapter 4 (Writing as a Spiritual Act) focuses on the questions: Can art be spiritual? Can not-religious work be spiritual? He makes his case from Luther. The Christian cobbler fulfills his Christian responsibility not by putting crosses on his shoes, but by making quality shoes (p. 71). The fifth chapter (Finding Your Voice) occurs when you know yourself but, more importantly, you know God. This sanctifying work comes through the process of reading, writing, discovering who you are and finding your elusive Christian voice. The sixth chapter (The Adornment of Excellence) reveals this through organization and structure, grammar and composition, uniqueness and beauty and by loving your reader. The goal is to enhance the how of the expression [your writing] in a way that adorns the excellence of your story, thesis, or theme” (p. 115).

Chapter 7 (The Promise and Perils of Platform) focuses on getting your writing published. Wilson instructs the writer to “make the thing” (construct a thesis or central theme), consider self-publishing versus traditional publishing, and understand the need to be noticed and platforming your work as a stewardship. The eighth chapter (Writing as Warfare) inspires us “that to aspire to the writer’s life is to aspire to hard things... [but that is] what makes the writing life great” (p. 155). Wilson instructs the potential writer on dealing with criticism, writer’s block, on the writer’s space and kicking at the darkness till it bleeds daylight. The final chapter (Writing as a Calling) reminds every believer, “The presence of the call is intrinsic to Christian theology and practice. You cannot be a Christian and not consider the calls of God upon your life” (p. 178). This fleshes itself out in writing as vocation and avocation, the calls to write, the inexorable urge, and answers the question why write?

There are no concerns about this work. Wilson accomplishes what he sets out to do. He shows Christian writers how to write and provides a basis (even a theology) for doing so and the ultimate reason—the glory of God! It is instructional, motivational, and encouraging. Beyond its

obvious noted aim, it illumines other areas worth mentioning. First, it honors the image of God. It is refreshing to see an author affirm and attach the creativity in mankind (in this case Christian writing) to the Creator: “As consciously storied persons, no matter what we are creating, we must see it as a reflection of the one who has made everything beautiful in its own time (Eccl. 3:11) and who does all things well” (p. 76). Wilson goes on to further introduce us to the creative Christ: “Being more properly connected, through Christ, the exact imprint of God’s nature, to the imago Dei in us, we begin to take on his interest in creating and creativity” (p. 99). Lastly, it elevates the preaching of God’s Word while also encouraging and instructing the preacher in his preaching. Preachers are wordsmiths: “Most of us could not point to a particular message from a preacher that changed our lives. But we can recall certain portions of messages, phrases, exhortations, or insights that made a tremendous spiritual impact on us” (p. 10). Like the writer, the “true aim of preaching is to exalt Jesus Christ from the Word of God.... The goal of preaching is not that people walk away thinking What a great preacher! but What a great Jesus! (p 115).

Indeed, Wilson has done yeoman’s work and glorified God in the process by equipping the writing cubicle, the pulpit, and ultimately, the pew. This volume is a welcome addition to the library of all those who are seeking to hone their writing and/or preaching skills. It would serve well on the bookshelf next to C.S. Lewis’ *On Writing (and Writers)* (HarperOne, 2022) or Leland Ryken’s *The Christian Imagination (A Writer’s Palette Book, 2002)*. A final word from the *Storied Life of Jared Wilson*: “To get to the glory, you have to go through the chaos. If you’re a writer, you already know you can’t write much of anything worth much of anything without getting a little banged up, maybe a little bloody. But we know what our Lord does with blood” (p. xvi).

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***Multisite Churches: Biblical Foundations and Practical Answers.*** By Dustin Slaton. Grand Rapids: Kregel Ministry, 2023. 391 pp. \$18.62, Paperback. ISBN 978-0825471339.

Multisite churches are a fast-growing segment of evangelicalism. According to Dustin Slaton, there were only ten documented multisite churches in 1992 and over five thousand by 2018 (p. 22). Despite the exponential growth in the number of multisite churches, there has been relatively little written to defend the biblical and theological basis for the multisite model. Conversely, there has been a substantial amount of criticism aimed at multisite churches. Therefore, Slaton set out to “provide a simple theological foundation that gives credibility to multisite churches as a legitimate biblical church model” that is thorough enough for pastors who are considering the validity of the multisite model while remaining accessible enough for lay people (p. 33).

The book is divided into three parts, with the first part devoted to an overview of the multisite church movement. The first chapter surveys the most notable literature on the movement, showing the diversity of definitions and categories used by various authors. For this book, Slaton settles on a modified version of the definition given by Surratt, Ligon, and Bird, in *The Multi-Site Church Revolution*: “A multisite church is one church meeting in multiple separate physical campuses. These locations may be in the same city or region, or they may be in different cities, states, or nations. A multisite church shares a common vision, budget, and leadership” (p. 64). Chapter two uses that definition to show that there were some churches and ministries that functioned as multisite churches before the modern movement, which can be dated as early as the founding of Perimeter Church in Atlanta in 1977—possibly the first church started with the expressed intention of becoming multisite—or as late as a Leadership Network meeting of multisite church leaders that took place on September 11, 2001 (p. 65, 81). After a brief excursus into multisite churches in the SBC, chapter three turns its attention to the basic assumptions of the multisite church movement. This chapter highlights what is driving most multisite churches—mainly the Great Commission and a desire to be wise stewards of resources within what multisite church leaders consider biblical boundaries.

The second part of the book—the next twelve chapters—focuses on building healthy multisite churches. Slaton references Mark Dever’s *Nine*

Marks of a Healthy Church and the International Mission Board's "12 Characteristics of a Healthy Church" but ultimately settles on eleven marks of a healthy church: preaching, the ordinances, church membership, church discipline, church leadership, corporate worship, discipleship, prayer, evangelism and missions, stewardship, and community (p. 109). Within each chapter, Slaton provides the biblical basis for the practice, a historical survey of the practice, and a reflection on how multisite churches approach each practice. He ends this part of the book with a chapter that encourages multisite churches toward faithfulness in each of the practices addressed.

The final part of the book answers critiques of multisite churches. Slaton first addresses critiques that are specific to certain multisite models, not the movement as a whole (p. 231). He admits that some critiques are valid concerns and suggests ways that some multisite churches are working toward solutions (p. 232). He argues that some of the critiques levied at multisite churches are issues that single-site churches deal with as well, such as the dangers of celebrity pastors (p. 233). Finally, he argues that some of the critiques of multisite churches miss the mark completely, such as the idea that multisite churches are not interested in supporting other churches (p. 244). The next chapter addresses critiques that apply to all multisite churches because they are more theological in nature and deal with the very idea of a multisite church (p. 245). The first several critiques Slaton addresses arise primarily from understanding the church as an assembly. Slaton answers by arguing that the church should be understood primarily as a covenanted community of believers (p. 254). When the church is defined as a covenanted community, then critiques of the church's gathering, the church's governance, and the church's shepherding do not raise questions about the church's ontology, but of its practice. Next, multisite churches are critiqued for being novel, but Slaton shows that there is precedent for multisite churches in early Baptist life, and support for multisite churches can be found in earlier Baptist theologians (p. 264). Finally, Slaton addresses the critique that multisite churches are in conflict with church planting by citing hard data that shows multisite churches are actually more likely to be involved in church planting than single-site churches (pp. 273–274). Slaton then closes the book with a brief conclusion in which he offers his hopes and prayers for biblically based multisite churches.

Slaton's work has a number of strengths that deserve recognition. First, his survey of relevant literature is an excellent orientation to the conversation around multisite churches. It offers the reader a comprehensive overview of the various models of multisite churches and directs the reader to the most important writers on the topic. Second, his extended treatment of the marks of healthy multisite churches provides helpful direction and fodder for further reflection for those seeking to lead multisite churches in a biblically-faithful way. His model of working from the biblical witness through historical examples to contemporary application is a good example for churches to follow as they wrestle with important questions. Third, his answers to the critiques of multisite churches were thoughtful and proved that support of multisite churches is not merely a pragmatic decision.

One suggestion that may have strengthened the book is to have some of the foundational biblical-theological material near the beginning. Slaton's responses to the critiques of multisite churches show clear biblical-theological thinking and offer some interesting categories for thinking about the church. For example, his argument that the church should be viewed primarily as a covenanted community instead of an assembly is a helpful proposal. Having that stated on the front end would have better guided and informed the more practical reflections. Further, offering a constructive understanding of the church from a multisite perspective at the beginning of the book could mitigate the common critique that multisite churches are making pragmatic, rather than principled, decisions.

In a number of places in the book, Slaton states that there is a lack of theological work in support of multisite churches (p. 24). Slaton has made a valuable addition to that literature with *Multisite Churches*. The book does what Slaton said he aimed to do—it provides a biblical foundation for multisite churches in a format that is helpful for pastors and accessible to lay people.

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*Introduction to Spirituality: Cultivating a Lifestyle of Faithfulness.* By Gary Tyra. Grand Rapids, Baker, 2023. 208 pp. \$24.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-5409-6522-6.

Being a Christian means adopting a new lifestyle. When Christians are not taught how to practically cultivate this new lifestyle, their spiritual growth is hindered and their witness is diminished. For Christians wanting a greater understanding of how to grow in faithfulness to God, *Introduction to Spirituality* is a helpful resource. In *Introduction to Spirituality*, Pentecostal author Gary Tyra teaches Christians how to make wise choices for their spiritual formation (p. 2). Tyra uses the apostle Paul as his primary mentor for Christian spirituality and the late Christian philosopher Dallas Willard as a close second (pp. 162-163). Tyra serves as professor of biblical and practical theology at Vanguard University of Southern California.

Tyra's thesis is: "the Pauline exhortation to 'keep in step with the Spirit' is foundational to the cultivation of a theologically real, Spirit-empowered, Christ-emulating, God-the-Father-pleasing Christian spirituality—a fully trinitarian spirituality that involves more than an episodic engagement in a set of disciplines" (pp. 7-8). Essentially, the Christian life should not be minimized to practicing spiritual disciplines because Paul's encouragement to cooperate with the Spirit is the doorway to considering a "a bigger picture" understanding of Christian spirituality (p. 13). Tyra divides his book in three sections.

The first section explains the convictions of Christian spirituality. Tyra contends for a spirituality that is both mental and experiential, one that consists of intellectual content and personal experience. Christianity is not just about mentally assenting to right doctrines, but it involves real-life experience as well. He examines philosophical realism to explain his point. Philosophical realism holds that (1) reality exists independent of what human minds project onto it, (2) humans can know reality as it is (rather than just a perception of it), and that (3) language, though imperfect, can be used to describe reality as it is. Simply put, adhering to philosophical realism is important because it means that humans can have direct experiences with the Trinity. The Christian experience described in Scripture is not an illusion, like anti-realists believe, but real. For Tyra, accepting trinitarian realism is necessary in Christian spirituality (pp. 29-30). Accordingly, Christians should adopt

an “I-Thou” mentality, rather than an “I-It” mentality. The former (“I-Thou”) opens the possibility of a direct, ongoing relationship with God, while the latter (“I-It”) makes God merely an object of study.

The second section details the commitments of Christian spirituality. While the Spirit is responsible for bringing about newness of life in the Christian, the Christian is not excused from putting in effort to cooperate in the process. Christians must continually surrender to the Spirit’s work (p. 65). To “keep in step with the Spirit” is to also learn how to have an ongoing mentoring relationship with Jesus. Tyra surveys devotional classics throughout church history to defend his point about a day-to-day, moment-by-moment practice of Christ’s presence. Authors mentioned include Brother Lawrence, Thomas á Kempis, and Thomas Kelly. Then, just as Christ was sent on mission by the Father, Christ sends his disciples on mission. Tyra writes, “the goal of our... ministry should be to see individuals and their sociocultural environments reconciled to God and then transformed in God-pleasing ways” (p. 100). Christians must contextualize the gospel and proclaim it to people of all cultures, waiting expectantly for the Spirit’s transformative action.

The third and final section addresses the customs of Christian spirituality. Tyra gives practical guidance for cultivating a lifestyle of “praying without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17) such as conversing with God the first moment of each day, practicing a habit of continual surrender, and to prayerfully search the Scriptures to grow in discerning the Spirit’s promptings. To “keep in step with the Spirit” implies obeying the Spirit’s promptings to act on something, meaning Christians must grow in the process of discerning, obeying, and trusting the Spirit (pp. 115-117). Tyra writes, “My pastoral experience has been that it is when God’s people engage in [a fervent crying out to God in prayer and a rigorous study of the Scriptures] at the same time and in theologically real ways that we acquire the ‘ears’ we need to ‘hear’ what Jesus, through the Spirit, is saying to us” (p. 114). Tyra encourages Christians to persevere through the challenges they face when growing in their ongoing mentoring relationship with Christ (“I-Thou”), ultimately so that they can be a blessing to others.

To conclude his book, Tyra shares a touching personal testimony about how a cancer diagnosis in his life challenged him to practice what he had written. The fruits of cultivating a lifestyle of faithfulness are most clearly evidenced in times of adversity and anxiety (p. 173). Tyra

challenges Christians to persevere in their wise choices for spiritual formation because it prepares them to endure adversity, and the anxiety adversity produces, in a God-pleasing way. Overall, Christian spirituality is a lifestyle driven by the missional motive of making God known to others. Christians should view everything they do as a means of joining God in his mission to spread the gospel (p. 169).

Tyra set out to provide a broad understanding of Christian spirituality based upon Paul's exhortation to "keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal 5:25). Through philosophical and theological considerations, Tyra provides an accessible and convincing introduction to Christian spirituality for laypersons and academics alike, although it better suits academics. While Tyra succeeds in providing a broad account of Christian spirituality, two concerns are noteworthy. First, given Tyra's Pentecostal background, his proposal for cultivating an unceasing prayer life (1 Thess 5:17) assumes praying in tongues remains a possibility today. Whether praying in tongues is still possible may trouble readers of other denominations, prompting further evaluation of Tyra's perspective on prayer. Second, since Tyra provides a bigger picture of Christian spirituality, he contends that what constitutes as a spiritual discipline should also be broadened. In other words, for Tyra, zooming out and seeing the big picture of Christian spirituality should have as its byproduct a more generous consideration of what can be labeled a spiritual discipline (p. 170). Fittingly, a wealth of spiritual disciplines and spiritual formation literature has appeared in recent decades, such as Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*, Willard's *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Donald Whitney's *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, and lately Matthew Bingham's *A Heart Aflame for God*. Tyra's perspective on spiritual disciplines contributes to the ongoing conversation of what the biblical basis is for spiritual disciplines in the Christian life and what should count as one.

Tyra's greatest strength is his digestible, big picture of Christian spirituality. Christian spirituality assumes trinitarian realism, believing humans can directly experience each member of the Trinity. Tyra exhorts Christians to make wise decisions for cultivating a God-pleasing lifestyle given trinitarian realism. His book, however, raises questions about whether anything can be labeled a spiritual discipline just because its motive is missional. Nevertheless, the contents of Tyra's book are consistent with its title and thesis. He succeeds in introducing a

compelling picture of Christian spirituality, providing biblical considerations for how Christians can cultivate a lifestyle of faithfulness to God (p. 176).

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PhD Graduates (2026)  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

PhD Graduates (2026) from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, with their PhD emphases, dissertation title and supervisory committee members.

**May 2026 – PhD Graduates**

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Dr. Thor Madsen 1<sup>st</sup> Reader and Dr. Rustin Umstattd 2<sup>nd</sup> Reader

**Robert Douglas Barnwell, PhD-Biblical Studies (Biblical Theology)**

*The Impact of Expressive Individualism on Regenerate Church Membership*  
Dr. Rustin Umstattd 1<sup>st</sup> Reader and Dr. Robert Matz 2<sup>nd</sup> Reader

**Robert A. Bayles, PhD- Biblical Studies (Systematic Theology)**

*A Missiological Application of Classical Trinitarian Theism*  
Dr. Sam Parkinson 1<sup>st</sup> Reader and Dr. John Lee 2<sup>nd</sup> Reader

**David R. Beauchamp, PhD – Applied Theology (Missiology)**

*How Churches Should Interact with Governing Authorities: Deriving a Nonpartisan, Gospel-Centered Approach from Paul's Interactions in the Book of Acts and His Guidance to the Churches*  
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**Daniel Canalejo PhD-Biblical Studies (Biblical Theology)**

*The Davidic Covenant and Sacred Space: How Referent Expansion Validates Zion Theology*  
Dr. Blake Hearson 1<sup>st</sup> Reader and Dr. Todd Chipman 2<sup>nd</sup> Reader

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Dr. Thor Madsen 1<sup>st</sup> Reader and Dr. Seth Pankratz 2<sup>nd</sup> Reader

## Midwestern Journal of Theology

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Dr. Jason Duesing 1<sup>st</sup> Reader and Dr. William Albert 2<sup>nd</sup> Reader

**Claude L. White Jr., PhD – Theological Studies (Preaching)**

*The New Testament Citations of Noncanonical Writings: Implications for Contemporary Christian Preaching.*

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Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2023.

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