

JBTS

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Current Issues in Pastoral Theology: An Editorial Introduction

JUSTIN L. MCLENDON, EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF SPECIAL ISSUE

Justin teaches full-time at Grand Canyon University and is a Managing Editor of JBTS

This special issue of the *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* features articles exploring current issues in pastoral theology. The articles within this issue address academic and ecclesial concerns across the evangelical spectrum. In keeping with the mission of JBTS—to relay content that is original and yet accessible—this issue contains articles uniquely formulated to speak to seminary students, busy ministers, and scholars academically engaged in the broad field of pastoral theology. This issue includes an even selection of articles from scholars working within various academic institutions, in addition to articles from pastors engaged in the trenches of everyday pastoral ministry. In sum, this issue offers a distinct set of voices from varied backgrounds, ministry methodologies, and denominational alliances.

What is Pastoral Theology?

What is pastoral theology, and where is its place in the broader fields of the theological disciplines? Answers to this question are elusive due to the conflation of terminology in current academic and ecclesial discourse. Part of the confusion centers on the relationship between practical theology and pastoral theology and how these disciplines are related yet distinct. These two fields are sometimes discussed interchangeably without providing any distinction between the two, further complicating discourse within contemporary discussion. For example, Richard Osmer defines practical theology as “the branch of Christian theology that teaches the members of the Christian community how to perform certain practices and to embody the mission of the church in a particular social context.”¹ The strength of Osmer’s definition rests in the *performing* of theology within the broad Christian community. Thus, practical theology could include homiletics for some, counseling for others, and broadly speaking, for others it could include various components of generalized pastoral theology. Thus, the discipline of *practical theology* serves as the larger umbrella to each of its sub-disciplines, but it is important to note that while pastoral theology is a sub-set of the larger field of practical theology, it too is subject

1. Richard R. Osmer, “Practical Theology,” in *Mapping Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, eds. Kelly M. Kopic and Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 319.

to being a catch all term for disciplines which do not easily fall within the greater discipline of practical theology.

In other words, the discipline of practical theology includes subjects as broad as homiletics, counseling, and pastoral theology, and according to Elaine Graham, practical theology goes so far as to include “interactions with a range of non-theological disciplines, such as the modern psychologies, social and cultural theory, anthropology, and philosophy.”² Within this expansive view of practical theology, one could make the discipline of practical theology apply to nearly any other field, particularly those centered upon human interactions. On the other hand, pastoral theology, as a sub-discipline of practical theology, includes practices such as general pastoral ministry, prayer, discipleship and numerous other practices most often associated with the specific duties of ecclesial ministry. In current discourse, preaching is viewed both as a sub discipline of practical theology (homiletics), and a specific duty of pastoral theology.³

Complicating matters further, some theologians use the term pastoral theology as the larger umbrella term rather than the common usage of practical theology. For example, Alister McGrath follows this line of thinking in his helpful but oversimplified distinctions of the theological branches.⁴ McGrath considers the “architecture” of theology to include biblical studies, systematic theology, philosophical theology, pastoral theology, and church history. Christian theology has a “strongly pastoral dimension” to it, says McGrath, and this important dimension is “generally inadequately reflected in the academic discussion of theology.”⁵ Citing the Puritans as the best examples of those unwilling to distinguish rich theological depth with pastoral applicability, McGrath notes the historic ministries of Richard Baxter and Jonathan Edwards as examples of a rich theological expression committed to the life of preaching, worship, prayer, and pastoral care.

Other theologians speak of practical theology and pastoral theology by their close relationship to systematic theology. Ray Anderson suggests, “the discipline of practical theology extends systematic theology into the life and praxis of the Christian community.”⁶ John Frame goes further, suggesting that practical theology is “a department of systematic theology,” and practical theology “asks a particular

2. Elaine Graham, “Practical Theology,” in *Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, eds. Ian A. McFarland, David A. S. Fergusson, Karen Kilby, et. al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Accessed January 5, 2018, ProQuest ebrary.

3. For further reading on these distinctions, see Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2001), 23–34; Pete Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry, and the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 1–7.

4. Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*, 2nd ed. (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 4–9.

5. *Ibid.*, 7.

6. Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2001), 23.

question of Scripture, among the other questions of systematics. That question is: how should we communicate the Word of God? Thus, it deals with preaching, teaching, evangelism, church-planting, missions, media communications, and so on.”⁷ Frame’s definition of practical theology encompasses the usual slate of practices within its field, but his insistence on the discipline’s close relationship to systematic theology mirrors a growing trend to view pastoral theology with the nomenclature of applied systematic theology.⁸

In this issue, we have chosen to use the term pastoral theology because of its acute focus on the qualities and duties of the church’s primary theological communicator, the pastor. The eleven articles in this issue seek to address critical issues of pastoral significance both broadly and specifically, while relating these concerns to students, local church pastors, and the scholars who work specifically within the flourishing discipline of pastoral theology.

The Revitalization of Pastor Theologians

Alister McGrath cited a joke theologians have of clergy: “You have a look at their bookshelves, and you notice that there is a cut-off point. After a certain date, they seem to stop buying theological works. And that’s when their brains died.”⁹ Whatever one may say about the formulation of this humorous, light-hearted jab, McGrath’s overall point presses into several ongoing conversations between scholars and clergy.

First, there is a tendency for pastors to conclude that theological study is achieved in *full* during the formative years of seminary. In this sense, pastors could falsely believe that a few theology courses in their seminary program sufficiently provided the totality of depth and breadth needed for a lifetime of faithful and fruitful ministry. In line with McGrath’s humorous quip, in this sense, pastors with this mindset quit purchasing theological books when their seminary days concluded, thereby restricting their theological breadth to a modest span of time, eventually resulting in an intellectual death sentence to their theological development.

Under these circumstances, the humor fades and the stunning reality emerges regarding the importance of ongoing theological rigor well after the seminary degrees are placed neatly on one’s office wall. Pastoral ministry requires a lifetime

7. John Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 9. Emphasis in original. Additionally, John Feinberg makes a similar connection in his editorial introduction to the volumes within the *Foundations of Evangelical Theology Series*, where he states, “systematic theology is not just for the understanding. It must apply to life, and it must be lived.” See John Feinberg, “Series Introduction,” in Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Incarnate Son: The Doctrine of Christ*, *Foundations of Evangelical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 19.

8. See Pete Ward’s terminology of “Reembracing Applied Theology” in Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology*, 3–7.

9. Alister E. McGrath, “Theology and the Futures of Evangelicalism,” in *The Futures of Evangelicalism*, edited by Craig Bartholomew, Robin Parry, and Andrew West (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003), 16–17.

commitment to ongoing learning and study, for often theological challenges must be confronted by pastors with open Bibles rather than theologians with updated CVs. Pastors are on the front lines of theological warfare each week as they occupy their pulpits and throughout the week as they use Scripture to address a myriad of practical concerns. In God's kind providence, he has provided an abundance of quality seminaries for those whom he calls to vocational ministry, and the best of these seminaries urge their graduates to keep their hunger alive for biblical and theological studies well after they graduate.

McGrath's lighthearted joke also speaks to a second conversation among scholars and pastors, often a result of the lingering residue of twentieth century pragmatism. Specifically, what is the relationship between pastor theologians and professional academic theologians? If pastors quit purchasing theological books upon their seminary graduation, can they in any real sense be considered theologians? But the blame lies within the academic community as well, where some scholars have worked to sharply distinguish their work from the work of the local church. John Webster lamented this tendency, stating: "The clear distinctions which some members of the academic theological guild draw between proclamation and critical reflection are part of the pathology of modern theology: our forebears would have been distressed by the way in which theology has succumbed to the standardization of discourse in the academy and the consequent exclusion of certain modes of Christian speech."¹⁰ Just a casual glance into church history validates Webster's emphasis, for one can hardly bifurcate pastor and theologian when observing the ministries of the Reformers, the Puritans, and many of their theological heirs in subsequent decades, theological traditions, or continents.

Over the last few years, a surplus of books, conferences, and ministries have emerged which seek to recover ground in this important conversation. These voices seek to ground pastoral ministry within a theological framework rather than a pragmatic one. For example, Kevin Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, in *The Pastor as Public Theologian*, urge pastors to view their ministerial role as the church's primary theologian.¹¹ Todd Wilson and Gerald Hiestand produced two recent books calling upon pastors to "resurrect and ancient vision" and embrace their roles as pastor

10. John Webster, *Word and Church: Essays in Christian Dogmatics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 211.

11. Kevin Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015).

theologians.¹² There is an invigorating relationship between the academy and the church, and these developments are strengthening these connections for all involved.¹³

These varied contributions provide a sweeping rebuttal to a common approach of pastoral ministry, which emerged from the popular mega-church culture and the overall modern church growth movement which often overlooked the importance of a robust theology. Thankfully, a passionate plea for pastors to recover a historical and biblical view that pastoral ministry is first and foremost a theological calling exists, and contemporary ministers must dispel a mentality seeking to bifurcate pastoral ministry and theological reflection. Pastors are theologians, and as G. C. Berkouwer said, “Dogma is a living reality within the house of God; here it sounds as the love song of the congregation. Concern for dogma is concern for faith. The task of theology is to help preserve the doxology of dogma.”¹⁴ Pastors are on the front lines of these endeavors, and their roles grow in importance each day.

An Introduction to the Contents

This issue contains eleven articles written by those from the academic guild as well as those involved in weekly pastoral ministry.

In the first article, Josh Branum’s analyzes the Pauline qualifications for eldership considering the shepherd metaphor. Branum shows how the shepherd metaphor is utilized throughout both the Old and New Testaments, by various authors, and in a variety of contexts leading to its culmination in the life and ministry of Jesus. He further explains the New Testament’s emphasis of Jesus as the great shepherd and how this role is later applied to elders and their roles within churches. With Branum’s analysis, readers are provided a fresh analysis of this crucial aspect of the pastoral office.

Gary Shultz discusses the renewed emphasis on pastors as public theologians and offers an important perspective on the role of theological preaching for the pastor theologian. He demonstrates how preaching is the theological act that grounds all other aspects of pastoral ministry even as it is grounded itself by that ministry. Shultz suggests preaching is the connecting center of the pastor-theologian’s ministry, resulting in effective pastoring and a robust ecclesial theology for gospel advance.

12. Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015). Also, Hiestand and Wilson followed with an edited volume that addresses the pastor theologian from the perspective of church leadership constructs. See Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, *Becoming a Pastor Theologian: New Possibilities for Church Leadership* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016).

13. For example, see the developments of this emphasis in Daniel L. Akin and R. Scott Pace, *Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 1–16.

14. G. C. Berkouwer, *A Half Century of Theology: Movements and Motives*, ed. and trans. Lewis Smedes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 216.

The following article by Jonathan Master focuses on the importance of preaching the Psalms. Master specifically focuses on Psalm 46 where he offers four recommendations for effective preaching in general, with emphasis in preaching the Psalms. Master understands preaching as a means of grace God specifically ordained for both the evangelization of the nations and for the building up of the church and this framework buttresses his emphases throughout his contribution. In the second part of his article, Master provides a sample sermon on Psalm 46 where he implements each of his four recommendations.

Matthew Ward provides the fourth article in this issue. Ward writes to address the role and importance of worship leaders to the theological leadership of the church's worship. Ward provides practical guidance on the critical role worship ministry has in articulating a contextualized theology within local churches. He provides helpful instruction for pastor theologians considering ways to be more thoughtful with the theological issues of a church's worship.

Joshua Chatraw's article shifts the conversation from the pastor's role as shepherd, his identity as a preaching theologian, and the importance of a healthy worship contextualized with theological reflection to articles specifically addressing the wider roles of the pastor theologian. Chatraw addresses the crucial subject of apologetics for pastor theologians. He helpfully summarizes the four common apologetic approaches and discusses their potential strengths and weaknesses. Chatraw then helps readers by offering a way forward for pastor-apologists through a person-specific approach.

Benjamin Espinoza's article calls for pastor theologians to rethink common approaches to racial reconciliation within broader evangelicalism. Espinoza believes pastors occupy a critical role in forging new paths of progress in this crucial area. In his article, Espinoza calls for pastor theologians to capture and project a vision and plan for developing a rich ministry of racial reconciliation. He calls upon pastors to situate racial reconciliation as a gospel issue rather than merely a political one. He then urges pastor theologians to seek an ecclesial response worthy of the gospel. Espinoza believes pastor theologians must be the agents of racial conciliation in both ecclesial and academic spaces.

Owen Strachan's article focuses upon the contributions of Harold Ockenga for modern twenty-first century evangelicalism. Strachan believes Ockenga's influential pastoral ministry offers twenty-first century pastor theologians an example of a richly theological pastorate, and a pulpit that majored in doctrine over storytelling and sentimentality. Strachan offers five considerations for the rising generation of shepherds of God's flock, considerations that together urge the church to invest in the doctrinal formation, personal courage, and theistic confidence of its pastors.

Douglas Estes follows with a helpful perspective on pastor theologians and scholarship. Estes believes there is a critical need for pastor-scholars to serve the Church by advancing theological knowledge. He advocates for a utilization of the

written word to dialogue with an important part of modern society—scholars and educated readers—through the form of scholarly discourse. For many Christians, pastors are the only theologians whose written word will capture the attention of a busy laity.

Michael Goheen provides an engaging article on the overall discipline of pastoral theology. He advocates for a renewal of pastoral theology from a missional mode. Goheen argues modern pastoral theology suffers from three primary assumptions which cripple its witness. Goheen then sketches the missional turn in the 20th century and notes its considerable impact beginning with ecclesiology, and then on theology and leadership. Goheen's understanding of mission provides a solid theological foundation for the renewal of pastoral theology.

Andrew Zantingh's article furthers Goheen's thesis and shows its practical development within pastoral care. Zantingh's pastoral and academic background provide the backdrop to this formulation of pastors as leaders of ecclesial discipleship. He constructs theological contours reframing pastoral care in the missional mode and offering a concrete example of this kind of pastoral care in action. Finally, Zantingh sketches a dynamic approach to theological education to further equip pastors for the missional pastoral care he advocates.

This issue concludes with Marcus Serven's thorough examination of John Calvin's pastoral ministry. Serven believes Calvin has been misinterpreted, misread, and misunderstood and a renewed interest in this giant of the faith is warranted for effective pastoral care. Serven wants readers to know more of Calvin than his views on the doctrines of election, predestination, and reprobation, or his pivotal role in the prosecution of the arch-heretic Michael Servetus.

Serven demonstrates that Calvin was the preeminent pastor of Geneva during the time of the Protestant Reformation. In his analysis, Serven presents Calvin as a careful and effective shepherd of souls, and one whose theological studies formed his pastoral work.

Each of these articles vary in scope, theological perspective, and audience. Several articles address beginning and intermediate students seeking helpful reflections on pastoral ministry. The opening articles on pastors as shepherds, the role of theological preaching, how to preach the Psalms effectively, and the critical relationship between pastors have with the worship ministries of the body are intended to help students and pastors reflect deeply on each of these critical pieces. Other articles seek to provide more helpful reflections upon the ongoing conversations in recent scholarship regarding pastors as the public theologians of ecclesial ministry. The contributors who offered perspectives specifically geared toward pastor theologians sought to move the needle and add critical perspectives on these expanding conversations. Other articles sought to reorient the discipline of pastoral theology in hopes of providing a more robust identity to this critical discipline in its missional obligations. Scholars within pastoral theology will find

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each of these articles helpful and meaningful contributions to this flourishing field. Finally, the article focusing John Calvin's pastoral care essentially integrates the highlights from each of the previous articles for Calvin's pastoral ministry embodied each of the emphases.

Contributors to this special issue provide students, pastors, and scholars fresh perspectives for further discussion into the critical discipline of pastoral theology.

Elder as Shepherd: Implicit Use of the Shepherd Metaphor by the Apostle Paul

JOSH BRANUM

Josh Branum (PhD in Applied Theology, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary) serves as the Family Pastor at Faithbridge Church in Jacksonville, FL.

Abstract: This paper analyzes the Pauline qualifications for eldership considering the shepherd metaphor. In this analysis, the author argues that Paul presents qualified elders as “good shepherds,” those of the utmost integrity, who are able to manage the flock of God well. The shepherd metaphor is utilized throughout both the Old and New Testaments, by various authors, and in a variety of contexts. From a New Testament perspective, the shepherd metaphor is used most frequently in reference to Jesus, but is later applied to elders. While one might expect the Apostle Paul, the author of the so-called “Pastoral Epistles,” to make much use of this metaphor, he only explicitly uses the shepherd metaphor on two occasions. This seeming omission has led some to dismiss it as a central aspect of his teaching. However, Paul demonstrates a heavy reliance on the shepherd metaphor implicitly, particularly in the qualifications for eldership in the books of 1 Timothy and Titus.

Key Words: eldership, shepherding, leadership, ministry

Introduction

In church life, the presence of effective leadership determines the effectiveness of everything that follows. Whether it is ministry programming, vision casting, or simply day-to-day operations, everything within the church hinges on the effectiveness of its leadership. In surveying the biblical texts, one discovers several themes and principles related to leadership. One of the most prominent themes is the metaphor of the leader as shepherd. The use of the shepherd metaphor finds its beginning in the Pentateuch, although not as explicitly as one might expect. The imagery presented is not overly metaphorical, but after being examined by later biblical authors, one discovers the latent symbolism throughout the first five books of the Bible.¹ Primarily, this imagery is applied to God, as he is the one who leads his nation, Israel, through the wilderness. The remaining books of the Old Testament, while replete with examples of human shepherd leaders, continue to present God as the true shepherd of Israel. In like

1. Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), 78.

manner, the New Testament establishes Jesus as the Good Shepherd. He is the one who cares for the sheep and leads them because they know his voice (Jn 10:3). As was God's habit in the Old Testament, human agents were appointed to shepherd God's flock following Jesus' resurrection (Jn 21:15–17).

With the flock of God growing in a new body called the “church,” it became evident that new leaders must emerge to shepherd the people. Mark Dever notes, “As with any gathered body of people, the church must be led.”² Paul's habit became to install leadership in each of the churches he planted as soon as possible.³ As early church history progressed, these church leaders evolved into New Testament eldership. In discussing eldership, while one might expect the Apostle Paul, the author of the so-called “Pastoral Epistles,” to make much use of this metaphor, he only explicitly uses the shepherd metaphor on two occasions. This seeming omission has led some to dismiss it as a central aspect of his teaching. However, Paul demonstrates a heavy reliance on the shepherd metaphor implicitly, particularly in the qualifications for eldership in the books of 1 Timothy and Titus. In the sections that follow, the shepherd metaphor will be examined specifically from the passages that pertain to eldership. The most important texts are Acts 20:28–31; Eph 4:11–16; and 1 Pet 5:1–4, as they relate to pastoral calling, competency, and character.

Pastoral Calling (Acts 20:28–31)

In Acts 20, Paul addresses a group of Ephesian pastors regarding their role as leaders within the church. This speech is important because it captures the only speech given in the Bible by the Apostle Paul to a group of people that are already Christians.⁴ Proper church leadership was of the utmost importance in early church, as it still is today. The reasons for its significance are many, all stemming from the shepherding role delegated to elders. First, the flock of God, newly manifested as the church in the book of Acts, required constant oversight and protection. In Acts 20:28, Paul states, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.” The verses that follow clarify the need for such careful oversight: “I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:29–30). The toxin of false teaching will have disastrous consequences on the flock, making the prevention of it a top priority for the

2. Mark E. Dever, “The Church,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 796.

3. John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 159.

4. Conrad Gempf, “Acts,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. by D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), Acts 20:13.

shepherd. John Hammett indicates that solid biblical teaching is the means by which the shepherd provides this protection.⁵

Second, the church is the flock of God, implying that ownership does not belong to its human agents, but to Jesus Christ. He is the one who “obtained [it] with his own blood” (Acts 20:28b). Leaders are called by God to shepherd his people, indicating that the authority for their position rest in him. The most capable leader is simply unqualified if he is not first called by God to serve. For the Ephesian elders, Paul taught clearly that their shepherding role was only second to the role of Christ Jesus. Through the Holy Spirit, he is the one who guides the church in appointing them and who calls them to this task.⁶ Moreover, as followers of Jesus, elders must see themselves as sheep primary, exercising authority on behalf of their Shepherd. Laniak maintains, “Authority is a feature of the shepherd’s role, but one comprehensively qualified by the reminder that elders are caring for the flock of God...Humility [must be] the distinguishing mark of their service.”⁷ Humble service generates from the understanding that the flock of God is the flock of God, not man.

One final aspect of the necessity for proper leadership in this passage is the requirement that leaders be on constant guard. In Acts 20:31, Paul exhorts, “Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears.” Paul had such concern for the Ephesian church that he had warned them continually of false teaching for three years. His love for them is demonstrated in the fact that his admonition had often come with tears. Truly, love for the flock will demand constant oversight. As Gary Bredfeldt notes, “Leaders cannot be lulled into a sense of complacency. They must be aware that they are engaged in a battle for the truth.”⁸ Compassion and love define the mission of the shepherd. Constant battling of false teaching proceeds from this type of heart. With Christ as the model, elders shepherd the flock of God with an understanding of what is at stake, that is, the souls of men (Heb 13:17).

Pastoral Competency (Eph 4:11–16)

Paul presents several roles of leadership within the church, assuming that each is a gift from God. In Ephesians 4:11, he presents the following roles: “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers.” This verse connects the role of shepherd with the role of teacher, indicating the overlap of both

5. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 163.

6. Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 617.

7. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 233–34.

8. Gary Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 2006), 59.

roles.⁹ Unfortunately, in many churches, the two roles have been distinguished as not relating to one another. Instead, shepherding has been isolated to areas of pastoral care, such as “pastoral visitation, personal counseling, and ministry in times of sickness (see esp. James 5:14) and grief.”¹⁰ However, “[p]astoral care, though encompassing more than teaching only, is *predominately* a matter of teaching.”¹¹ In other words, while critical areas of ministry, these matters do not coincide with Paul’s rationale for church leaders. Rather, the verses that follow indicate the teaching purpose for these leadership roles.

Church leaders were given by God “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:12–13). Implicit within this passage is the need for competent leadership. If church leaders are to “equip the saints for the work of ministry,” then they must be capable of doing so. This responsibility connects the aspects of calling and competency, since those called of God are also gifted by God to lead.

Since verse 12 speaks of “building up the body”—that is, the church—it is likely that the verses that follow refer only to work done by shepherd-teachers.¹² Through the ministry of teaching, church leaders equip believers to possess a unified biblical worldview and knowledge leading to sanctification.¹³ The work of the church leaders connects vitally to the spiritual growth of believers. Turner reminds us that “[w]hile the imagery so far could almost suggest that the church grows towards an independent manhood *like* Christ’s, the switch of imagery at the end of v 15 reminds the reader that Jesus is Lord (*head*) of the whole process, and the church is intended to grow into more intimate union with him.”¹⁴ Shepherds serve the flock of God, which exist for his glory and by his power (Col 1:15–20).

Pastoral Character (1 Pet 5:1–4)

Outside of Paul, the most explicit link between eldership and the shepherd metaphor occurs in the book of 1 Peter. Thus far, Paul has presented the connection between oversight, teaching, and shepherding. Peter continues in this vein. In 1 Pet 5:1–4, he states,

9. William W. Klein, “Ephesians,” in *Ephesians-Philemon of The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 12:115–16.

10. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 163–64.

11. Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher*, 59.

12. Klein, *EBC* 12:115.

13. *Ibid.*, 12:120.

14. Max Turner, “Ephesians,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), Eph 4:17.

Josh Branum.: *Elder As Shepherd*

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

This passage contains many similarities with the previous two discussed. For example, both Acts 20:28 and 1 Pet 5:1 indicate Christ's death on the cross as foundational to the shepherding task. Peter and Paul understood that the gospel must influence the manner of leadership within the church. Contrary to the corrupt false shepherds described in the Old Testament, these shepherds must realize that their ultimate service is to the chief Shepherd, and their final reward will come from him.¹⁵

Moreover, several qualifications are given in this passage, outlining character traits that shepherds must possess. First, shepherds must serve willingly, "not under compulsion" (1 Pet 5:2). This willingness speaks to the motivation of the shepherd, whether he is truly able to serve in the way he is called. The only motivation acceptable is a desire to serve the chief Shepherd in advancing the gospel and building up his church.¹⁶ Second, Peter writes that elders must not approach shepherding for "shameful gain," or from the perspective of how they might benefit personally from the sheep. This type of motivation would tempt elders to exploit the flock to secure greater profit for themselves. Rather than feeding the flock through the word of God, these shepherds would feed themselves from the flock.¹⁷ As Laniak observes, "Feeding on the flock is a sign of predators, not shepherds."¹⁸ The gospel motivates shepherds to lay down everything for the sake of the flock.

The Shepherd Metaphor and the Pauline Qualifications for Eldership

With the above foundation, it is now possible to examine the implicit use of the shepherd metaphor in the Pauline qualifications for eldership specifically. Paul presents two separate lists of qualifications, one in 1 Tim 3:1–7 and the other in Tit 1:5–9. Notably, these two passages represent the primary texts on qualifications for eldership in the New Testament, with a much more succinct list in 1 Pet 5:2–4,

15. David H. Wheaton, "1 Peter," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 1 Pet 5:1.

16. Roger M. Raymer, "1 Peter" of *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord et al. (Wheaton: Victor, 1985), 2:855.

17. Cf. Ezek 34:7.

18. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 233.

as discussed above. Since the role of elder is often described using the shepherd metaphor, these passages should be examined from that perspective.

Paul presents qualified elders as “good shepherds,” those of the utmost integrity who can manage God’s flock well. The implicit use of the metaphor is clear throughout these passages. For example, the term “overseer” in itself is analogous to a shepherd tending his flock. He is the one who cares for the flock, watches over the flock, and is ultimately responsible for its protection and wellbeing. This concept is reinforced in the qualification to “manage his own household well” (1 Tim 3:4). Furthermore, the various qualifications related to character emphasize the need for personal holiness in the life of the elder. Personal holiness distinguishes true shepherds from false ones. Those shepherds who do not hold to the character traits listed by Paul might use their position to abuse and take advantage of the church, behavior that is stringently rebuked throughout Scripture using the shepherd metaphor. Elders that do maintain these standards will also have credibility in their teaching ministry, a unique responsibility attached to the position. Teaching is how the elder “feeds” the flock of God, providing nourishment through the truths of Scripture.¹⁹ Each of these areas will be discussed below, emphasizing the crucial link between shepherding and eldership.

The Role of Oversight in Shepherding

As shepherds, elders are responsible for the flock of God entrusted to their care. This responsibility demands elders to be competent in oversight. It is clear from Acts 20:28–31 that Paul understood the connection between shepherding and oversight. In both 1 Timothy and Titus, the term *ἐπίσκοπος* (episkopos or “overseer”) is used for elders, demonstrating the importance of this area of leadership. Related to shepherding, the concept of watching or overseeing is often used throughout Scripture to speak comprehensively about the many roles of the shepherd.²⁰ Whether by protection, nurturing, or guidance, the shepherd maintains responsibility for the wellbeing of the flock. Several areas of qualifications relate directly to oversight, namely managing one’s household well and serving as God’s steward.

Oversight of one’s household is a primary indicator as to whether one is ready to serve as an elder or not. Truly, before one can aspire to shepherd the larger flock of God, he must be able to shepherd the smaller flock of his family. This qualification is unfortunately not the case for many elders. J. Oswald Sanders, noted author on spiritual leadership, observes that the “[f]ailure to keep home in order has kept many ministers and missionaries from their fullest potential.”²¹ Understanding this vital link between shepherding at home and shepherding within the church, Paul broke

19. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 163.

20. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 233.

21. J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 43.

with the standard practice of his day by holding leaders accountable for their personal lives. There must be no distinction between church and personal life for those who shepherd the flock of God.²²

The second aspect of oversight is the ability of the elder to serve as God's steward. This qualification appears only in Titus and is clearly linked with oversight. In Tit 1:7, Paul contends, "For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach." The term translated "God's steward" is οἰκονόμος (*oikonomos*), which denotes a servant who manages the household on behalf of his master.²³ Given the wealth of responsibility that such a servant would have, it is of the utmost importance that the master have full confidence in his loyalty as a subject.²⁴ Overseers of the flock of God must demonstrate absolute faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, Lea and Griffin note, "The conjunction ["For"] (*gar*) which begins v. 7 indicates that Paul was continuing his thought from v. 6 and actually making a logical connection between his statements on the elder's home life and the church."²⁵ This observation validates the connection between oversight and shepherding. Bredfeldt also speaks to a connection between oversight and shepherding, "In a real sense, biblical shepherds—that is, the pastor-teachers of Ephesians 4:11—are stewards of the flock of God. As such, biblical leaders have a sacred trust for which they will give an account."²⁶ Before one can serve as a manager for God's household, he must first learn to "manage his own household well" (1 Tim 3:4).

The Role of Personal Holiness in Shepherding

Understanding the importance of oversight in the life of the shepherd, Paul established other qualifications for the type of man that the shepherd must be. Bredfeldt explains, "These leaders were to be selected primarily on their virtuous character, because godly character is the surest outward indicator of the work of the Spirit of God in a leader's life."²⁷ Godly character manifests itself in the personal holiness of a shepherd. Paul outlines several qualifications in 1 Timothy and Titus related to the area of personal holiness.

Concerning one's example, Paul indicates that elders must live lives "above reproach" and "blameless" (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:6). These two qualities serve as summaries, providing a broad framework that includes a variety of elements. For example, Paul lists that an elder must be "sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable," all qualities

22. Andreas Köstenberger, "1 Timothy" in *Ephesians-Philemon of The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 12:526.

23. Cf. Luke 12:42.

24. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 164.

25. Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, "1 Timothy" in *1, 2 Timothy, Titus of The New American Commentary*, ed. David S. Dockery et al. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 282.

26. Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher*, 58.

27. *Ibid.*, 97.

that would allow the shepherd to serve the chief Shepherd well. The elder must have a reputation that matches the position to which he is called, that models the example of the one who called him. Moreover, a man of high character would serve as a worthy example for his sheep, while at the same time being “well thought of by outsiders” (1 Tim 3:7).²⁸ Sanders comments, “The character of the elder should command the respect of the unbeliever, inspire his confidence, and arouse his aspiration. Example is much more potent than precept.”²⁹ More than anything else, the elder must be filled with the gospel to the extent that it is visible by those around him.³⁰

Paul declares in 1 Tim 3:3 that the elder is “not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.” These negative statements present things that would be detrimental in the life of the elder, thus harmful to the sheep as well. Paul states that an elder must not be addicted to alcohol, as it may lead to other issues as well. Without question, “[a] leader cannot allow a secret indulgence that would undermine public witness.”³¹ Though not because of drunkenness, David’s “secret indulgence” demonstrates the principle behind it through its devastating effects on his shepherd leadership. Shepherds are called to higher standard, one that honors Jesus Christ and serves his flock well.

Moreover, it is interesting that a love for money is “a distinguishing feature of the false teachers in Ephesus (1 Tim 6:5–10).”³² False teachers would not maintain the same standard as true ones. Their lack of personal holiness illustrates the importance of morality in shepherding. In combating such heresy, “[f]or a Christian leader to have the same spiritual disease would be a fatal sickness for spreading the truth.”³³ As illustrated in the lives of many Old Testament shepherds, the desire for personal gain perverts the role of the shepherd. These false shepherds prey on the flock they are called to lead and protect. Elders must instead follow the example of Christ, who gave himself for the flock. In other words, selflessness is a hallmark quality for New Testament eldership. Only from this perspective can an elder truly be called a shepherd.

The Role of Teaching in Shepherding

Since elders are called to “shepherd the flock of God,” part of their responsibility involves feeding the flock with healthy food. For Christians, this food comes in the form of solid biblical teaching, which in turn, can be used to dismiss false teaching.³⁴ The qualification of being “able to teach” is unique to the role of elder, distinguishing

28. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 167.

29. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 41.

30. Dever, “The Church,” 797.

31. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 41.

32. Lea and Griffin, *NAC* 34:111.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 163.

it from other areas of church leadership, such as the role of deacon. Köstenberger observes that this distinction “indicates that teaching—and the commensurate authority—is to be a special prerogative and responsibility of overseers.”³⁵ This trait also corresponds to Paul’s connection of teaching with shepherding in other areas. In Acts 20:28–31, Paul exhorted the Ephesian elders to oversee the flock of God with the utmost care, being aware of the effects of false teaching. The qualification in 1 Tim 3:2, as well as Paul’s exhortation in Acts 20, “shows that an overseer needed the ability both to explain Christian doctrine and to refute or oppose error.”³⁶ Paul later confirms this perspective in his letter to Titus, “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Tit 1:9). Elders must possess a solid biblical foundation so that they might properly provide nourishment for the flock of God.

It must be noted that the teaching role has more to do with shepherding than simply provision. Teaching is also how the shepherd leads the flock.³⁷ With the prevalence of false teaching, “[t]eachers lead when they teach in such a way as to free learners by the power of the truth.”³⁸ Moreover, this aspect of teaching should be supported by the elder’s personal holiness. Following the shepherd requires trust on behalf of the sheep (Jn 10:3–5). The flock must know that their shepherd is not only teaching biblical truth, but is being personally affected by it as well.

Conclusion

Shepherding as a metaphor has manifested itself throughout Scripture in many different ways, relating to both God and his chosen human agents. New Testament elders modeled their leadership after Jesus, who himself is the Good Shepherd. Paul illustrated this model by the requirements he included for eldership in 1 Timothy and Titus. Elders are to serve as overseers, watching over the flock of God and providing for its needs. The responsibility is primarily one of teaching, as that is how the shepherd both feeds and leads the flock with the word of God. Personal holiness undergirds this responsibility, creating trust for the flock through the elder’s high character.

Paul’s implicit use of the shepherd metaphor is highly evident in the qualifications listed above. All the standards Paul presents are manifested in the positive shepherds in the Old Testament and are perfectly modeled by Jesus. Men who met these standards would be worthy of serving as an undershepherd to the Good Shepherd. Moreover, Paul commanded that the elder “must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim 3:7). While

35. Köstenberger, *EBC* 12:526.

36. Lea and Griffin, *NAC* 34:111.

37. Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher*, 48.

38. *Ibid.*, 64.

not explicitly using the shepherd metaphor in this passage, his use of the metaphor elsewhere helps explain the significance of the qualifications. Rather than presenting an arbitrary list of qualifications, Paul outlines a comprehensive description of what good shepherds would be like. Elders are shepherds, and only those who maintain the principles of these qualifications can be said to reflect the Good Shepherd.

Theological Preaching and Preaching Through Theology: The Priority of the Pastor-Theologian

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Abstract: Over the last several years a renewed call for the re-emergence of pastor-theologians has occurred within Evangelicalism. The distinguishing mark of the pastor-theologian is that his broader theological ministry to the church and the academy is explicitly grounded in his pastoral ministry, and his broader theological ministry strengthens and reinforces his pastoral ministry. While pastoral ministry has many facets, its foundation is the ministry of the Word, and the heart of the ministry of the word is preaching. Therefore, preaching the Word should be the priority and aim of the pastor-theologian, not only in his pastoral ministry, but in his broader theological ministry. This article will establish this truth by demonstrating how preaching is the theological act that grounds all other aspects of pastoral ministry even as it is grounded itself by that ministry. It will then explore how that truth should impact the pastor-theologian's broader theological ministry, leading it to be biblical, confessional, and culturally relevant, even when directed towards the academy. Preaching is the connecting center of the pastor-theologian's ministry, resulting in effective pastoring and ecclesial theology that not only reinforce one other but together preach the good news of the gospel to the world.

Key Words: pastor-theologian, preaching, pastoral ministry, ministry of the Word, academic theology, ecclesial theology

Introduction

To many in the church and the academy today, the term “pastor-theologian” sounds like an oxymoron, another amusing attempt to combine two words that seem to contradict one another. While the same person might have been a pastor and a theologian at one time, certainly that is not the case today.¹ Theologians are scholars

1. The division between theology and the pastorate is a more recent development. See Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Recovering a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 69–97.

and intellectuals, concerned with issues that are probably important, but irrelevant to the lives of real people. Pastors are practitioners, concerned with the “real work” of the ministry and therefore focused on leadership principles, managing programs, and therapeutic techniques.² Unfortunately, both academic theologians and pastors reinforce this stereotypical divide between pastoral ministry and theology. Academic concerns rather than ecclesial or ministerial concerns often dictate the structure and content of evangelical theological scholarship, which serves to minimize the value of those ecclesial concerns and cast doubt upon the ability of pastors, no matter how well-educated, to make meaningful theological contributions.³ On the other hand, pastors typically face pressure from their congregations, broader culture, and even from themselves to do anything but engage in theological ministry, which after all is an academic pursuit that has nothing to do with practically pastoring a church.⁴

This divide between pastoral ministry and theology has led to what Todd Wilson and Gerald Hiestand call “the theological anemia of the church,” and “the ecclesial anemia of theology.”⁵ The church no longer looks to pastors as a whole for intellectual leadership that addresses the crucial issues facing believers today. In many cases, pastors are not capable of providing that intellectual leadership, instead relying on the “professional theologians” to pick up the slack. Yet, whether they realize it or not, pastors are the theological leaders of the churches they pastor, and those churches will always reflect that theological leadership, or lack thereof. Separating pastoral ministry from theology has resulted in a severe theological deficit in our congregations, which in turn leads to a severe ethical deficit, compromising the integrity and witness of the church. Likewise, theological scholarship is affected when ecclesial concerns are minimized or dismissed. Because of their social locations, academic theologians often engage different questions than pastors do, and then answer those questions according to the dictates of the academy rather than the church.⁶ Yet the ultimate purpose of theology is to benefit the church, addressing the pressing issues of the day in such a way as to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, build them up into the body of Christ, and help them achieve the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph 4:12–13).

In response to this current state of affairs, over the last several years there has been a renewed call within evangelicalism for the re-emergence of pastors who do

2. Ibid., 1–15.

3. Gerald L. Hiestand, “Pastor-Scholar to Professor-Scholar: Exploring the Theological Disconnect Between the Academy and the Local Church,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 70.2 (2008): 361–66.

4. Marva J. Dawn and Eugene Peterson, *The Unnecessary Pastor: Rediscovering the Call*, ed. Peter Santucci (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 3–4.

5. Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 13–14.

6. This is not meant to denigrate academic theology or indicate that faithful academic theology cannot benefit the church. Academic theology is an essential discipline. The relationship between academic theology and ecclesial theology should be complementary, not competitive. See Ibid., 76–78.

the work of pastor-theologians.⁷ While every pastor should be a theologian and lead their churches theologically, pastor-theologians as a vocation are different from other pastors in that they engage in theological ministries beyond their local churches, including the work of academic theology.⁸ What distinguishes pastor-theologians from other theological scholars is that their theological work is explicitly grounded in the identity, social location, and ministry of the pastorate. In this way, pastor-theologians help bridge the gap between local church ministry and academic theology, bringing theology to bear on every aspect of their pastoral ministry, and allowing pastoral ministry to inform their broader theological ministry.

This does raise the question, however, of what this looks like and how this actually happens in practice. How does the identity, social location, and ministry of the pastorate inform academic theology, and how does that kind of theological work make a difference in everyday pastoral ministry? One of the primary connection points is found in preaching. While pastoral ministry has many facets, its foundation is the ministry of the Word, and the heart of the ministry of the word is preaching. Therefore, preaching ought to be the foundational ministry and goal of pastor-theologians, both in their pastoral ministry and their broader theological ministry. This article establishes this truth by demonstrating how preaching is the theological act that grounds all other aspects of pastoral ministry even as it is reinforced itself by that ministry. It will then explore how that truth should impact the pastor-theologian's broader theological ministry, leading it to be explicitly biblical, confessional, and relevant to the church and culture, even when directed toward the academy. Preaching therefore lies at the heart of the pastor-theologian's ministry. Recovering and practicing this truth is a key step in reintegrating pastoral ministry and theology. Through preaching, the pastor-theologian's pastoral ministry and broader theological ministry should ultimately reinforce one another, together communicating the good news of the gospel to the church, both local and universal.

Preaching as The Foundation of Pastoral Ministry

Pastors engage in a number of essential responsibilities. In his classic work on pastoral theology, Thomas Oden includes chapters on administering the ministry of the church, leading the worship of the church (emphasizing the ministry of prayer),

7. E.g., *Becoming a Pastor Theologian: New Possibilities for Church Leadership*, ed. Todd Wilson and Gerald Hiestand (Downers Grove: IVP, 2016); Hiestand and Wilson, *Pastor Theologian: The Power to Comprehend with All the Saints: The Formation and Practice of a Pastor-Theologian*, ed. Wallace M. Alston Jr. and Cynthia A. Jarvis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); and Vanhoozer and Strachan, *Pastor as Public Theologian*.

8. While in one sense, all pastors ought to identify themselves as pastor-theologians, in that the work they do is inherently theological, some pastors are called to become what Hiestand and Wilson call "ecclesial theologians," pastors who write "theological scholarship in conversation with other theologians, with an eye to the needs of the ecclesial community." *Pastor Theologian*, 85.

presiding over the ordinances, preaching, teaching, equipping others for ministry, pastoral visitation, pastoral counseling, crisis ministry, and benevolent ministry.⁹ These responsibilities are based on biblical instructions like shepherding and feeding the flock of God (John 21:15–17; 1 Pet 5:2), proclaiming the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), presenting people mature in Christ (Col 1:23–29), equipping people for works of service (Eph 4:12–16), leading people to reach others for Christ (Matt 28:18–20), and keeping watch over yourself and the flock that Christ has given you (Acts 20:28).¹⁰ Faced with these numerous responsibilities, each of them overwhelming in their own way (cf. 2 Cor 2:16), a divide can infiltrate the pastor’s thinking and ministry. Theology, biblical studies, and all of that over “stuff” learned in seminary might be good for preaching and teaching, but it’s not much help when it comes to everything else. Cultural and congregational pressure to act as a therapist, CEO, manager, or political organizer only exacerbates this divide.¹¹ Eugene Peterson elaborates on his experience, which he believes is typical of many pastors:

None of my learned advisors ever suggested that I give up my Christian faith so that I could be successful at this pastor business; but what they did do by implication was suggest that I give up on Scripture as having anything definitive to do with the pastoral vocation in contemporary America. Scripture was good for preaching, but when it came to running a church, organizing a congregation, managing conflict, training church school teachers, and getting out the publicity on the new missions emphasis, the Holy Scriptures didn’t offer much. Isaiah, after all, never had to run a stewardship campaign; Jeremiah didn’t know the first thing about conflict management...My advisors were happy to supply me with up-to-date texts written by various experts in the field, showing me how to be relevant to culture.¹²

Yet what makes pastoral ministry unique, and not just another helping profession, is that it is gospel-focused, Scripturally-determined, and explicitly theological in all of its facets, not just preaching and teaching. Even while elucidating the pastor’s many responsibilities, Scripture emphasizes that the pastor’s particular ministry is the “ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4). John Calvin appeals to 1 Corinthians 4:1, (“Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”), Titus 1:9 (“holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those

9. Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York: HarperCollins, 1983), v–vi.

10. Derek Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor: Understanding our Calling and Work* (Chicago: Moody, 2004), 49–63.

11. William H. Willimon, *The Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 55.

12. Dawn and Peterson, *Unnecessary Pastor*, 7–8.

who contradict.”), and “similar passages which frequently occur,” and concludes that pastors have two particular functions: proclaiming the gospel and administering the sacraments.¹³ After outlining the pastor’s qualifications from 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9, Mark Dever concludes, “The essence of the elder’s office is found in teaching—ensuring the Word of God is well understood.”¹⁴ This does not mean that pastors should only preach and teach, but that the ministry of the Word should be the foundation and priority in everything the pastor does. Preaching the word works to theologically ground all of the pastor’s ministry even as that ministry serves to reinforce and ground the pastor’s preaching.

Preaching Grounds Pastoral Ministry

The ministry of the Word is broader than preaching the Word, which is why the Bible can describe several different pastoral responsibilities while summarizing pastoral ministry as the ministry of the Word. The ministry of the Word includes any evangelistic, discipling, training, equipping, or counseling encounter that communicates or teaches the Word, either publicly or privately, in a formal church setting or beyond such a setting.¹⁵ This ministry can be done behind a pulpit or lectern, in conversation over coffee, in an e-mail or on Facebook, by writing a book, or in any other way people communicate words to one another. While preaching is not the entirety of the ministry of the Word, however, it is the foundation of the entire ministry of the word. What makes preaching unique is that it addresses the entire church with the same word, giving theological direction to everything the church believes and does, including its ministries, evangelism, discipleship, training, equipping, and counseling. As Peter Adam defines it, preaching is “the explanation and application of the Word to the congregation of Christ, in order to produce corporate preparation for service, unity of faith, maturity, growth, and upbuilding.”¹⁶ Therefore, preaching sets the tone for the pastor’s broader pastoral ministry of the Word, including leadership, administration, and other facets often assumed to be non-theological. Preaching fills out and reinforces the content and direction of the pastor’s ministry.

This elevation of preaching as the heart of the pastor’s ministry of the Word is also seen in what the Bible tells us about the church’s responsibilities concerning the ministry of the Word.

13. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 4.3.6.

14. Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 56.

15. Peter Adam, *Speaking God’s Words: A Practical Theology of Preaching* (Vancouver: Regent, 2004), 59–61.

16. *Ibid.*, 75.

The ministry of the Word is not the special province of the pastor, it is the duty of all God's people.¹⁷ The Thessalonians believers shared the Word so widely that Paul felt like he didn't need to add anything to it (1 Thess 1:8). Peter exhorted believers to make a defense to anyone who asks about the hope they have beyond this life (1 Pet 3:15). Paul tells the Ephesians to put on the "preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph 6:15) and take up the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:17). The Colossians were to "let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another" (Col 3:17), and the Thessalonians were told to admonish each other as well (1 Thess 5:14). Titus was to make sure the older women were equipped to teach the younger women from the Word of God, so that the younger women would live out those principles like they should (Titus 2:3–5).

Yet, for all of the church's responsibility to carry out the ministry of the Word, nowhere does the New Testament call upon believers as a whole or the church in general to preach as it commands pastors to preach (e.g., 2 Tim 4:2). Preaching the Word as defined above is a distinct, particular ministry of the pastor.¹⁸ One of its chief purposes is to lead to an effective ministry of the Word on the part of the entire church. Paul's instructions to the Colossians in Colossians 3:16 to teach and admonish one another with the Word in all wisdom come after his description of his own preaching ministry in Colossians 2:28 as admonishing and teaching the Word in all wisdom. As Jonathan Griffiths states, "Clearly their ministry to one another takes its cue from the ministry of the apostle Paul, and parallels his in significant ways."¹⁹ The same pattern can be observed in 1 Thessalonians (1 Thess 5:12–14) and Titus (2:1, 3–5). Pastors are to be stewards of the Word, faithfully preaching the messages God has given them to preach from his Word, and then the church is to steward the messages they have heard, leading to life and blessing (2 Cor 2:15–16).²⁰

In this way, preaching, as the heart of the pastor's ministry of the Word, is meant to ground the rest of the church's ministry and therefore the rest of pastoral ministry: leading and administering the church, seeing people brought to Christ, ensuring that people are discipled, equipping the church for service and witness, counseling, pastoral care, and all the rest. When pastors preach the Word faithfully, week-by-week proclaiming the gospel, each ministry of the church is positively impacted. If the preaching is theologically robust, expounding on the great truths of God from Scripture, it will over time lead each ministry in the church to be the same, strongly rooted in the truth of the gospel. This is the pastor's special role in the congregation,

17. Jonathan I. Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical-Theological Study*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove: IVP, 2017), 45–49.

18. *Ibid.*, 49.

19. *Ibid.*, 47.

20. Jason C. Meyer, *Preaching: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 25–29.

and the heart of the pastor's theological ministry in a local context, "to serve others by building them up into Christ through the ministry of the Word."²¹

Pastoral Ministry Reinforces Preaching

Yet the rest of pastoral ministry is just as central to the theological act of preaching as preaching is for it. Just as preaching grounds pastoral ministry, pastoral ministry reinforces and works to ground preaching. Preaching is a pastoral act, the act of a shepherd who tends the sheep by feeding them (John 10:9; 21:15, 17; 1 Pet 5:2). Yet a shepherd is not someone who drops in on his flock from time to time with a necessary word, but one who lives and ministers among them. As John MacArthur states concerning the ministry of the pastor, "It is not leadership from on high so much as leadership from within. An effective shepherd does not herd his sheep from the rear but leads them from the front. They see him and imitate his actions. The most important aspect of spiritual leadership is the power of an exemplary life."²² This exemplary life the pastor is supposed to model is typically seen and experienced by the church in acts of ministry and leadership beyond the pulpit. A pastor's leadership, administration, counseling, visitation, discipling, outreach, and everything else will work to make his preaching heard and believed.²³

As the ministry of the Word is carried on by others in the church, extending from the pastor's ministry of the Word, it will begin to have the same effect as the pastor's ministry, reinforcing the pastor's preaching because it is being practiced. Far from being an academic abstraction or a distraction from the real work of ministry, theology is then central to everything the pastor does and leads the church to do. Preaching that proclaims a Scriptural understanding of all of life, applies the Scriptures to all of life, drives the ministry of the pastor, and determines the ministry of the congregation, lies at the heart of this, and is therefore should be a primary focus of the pastor. Theologically robust pastoral ministry will work to ground preaching even as it is grounded by that preaching, which means that even amid the busyness of a pastor's life, as pastors work to fulfill of their biblical responsibilities, the distinct ministry of the ministry of the Word must remain the priority.

While all pastors should strive for theologically rich ministries centered by preaching that extends to everything they do as pastors, and while their ministries might not look all that different at this level from those of pastor-theologians, it is

21. Vanhoozer and Strachan, *Pastor as Public Theologian*, 22.

22. John MacArthur, Jr., "What is a Pastor to Be and Do?," in *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry: Shaping Contemporary Ministry with Biblical Mandates*, ed. John MacArthur, Jr., Richard L. Mayhew, and Robert L. Thomas (Dallas: Word, 1995), 29.

23. This is typically expressed in books on preaching through the rhetorical concept of *ethos*. Bryan Chapell defines *ethos* as, "the perceived character of the speaker; determined most significantly by the concern expressed for the listeners' welfare." *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 26.

particularly important for pastor-theologians engaged in doing theological work beyond their local context to prioritize preaching.

Pastor-theologians must consciously work to preach theologically. This includes working to apply their theological work beyond their churches to their churches, translating it into preaching even as they put it into practice as pastors. In this way churches are not only built up doctrinally and ethically, but theology is seen for what it really is, the sound doctrine of the church that leads people to experience and live out God's grace (Titus 2:1–15), and not merely the province of academia. As Thomas Currie notes, a local church in a particular place what theology is for, and where it is ultimately meant to be practiced: "Yet all of these important disciplines [theology] are taught for the sake of the body, that is, for the sake of the body's own witness to the joyfully disturbing presence of Christ in the world."²⁴

Preaching as The Foundation and Goal of Ecclesial Theology

As pastor-theologians work to preach theologically so that they may pastor theologically, they also work in theological ministry beyond their local church. A pastor-theologian's particular contribution to theology is to explicitly do theology as a pastor, for pastoral purposes, and not simply with a pastoral perspective. The context and social location for theology matter. As David Clark states, "Experience always embeds theoretical commitments."²⁵ Ministering to people in different situations not only informs one's theology but helps to shape and express one's theology. Marital counseling cannot help but affect one's doctrine of sin or understanding of Ephesians 5:22–33; preaching the funerals of people as different as the ninety-year old saint or the week old baby will certainly impact one's eschatology or view of Revelation; leading a deacons' meeting one night and a business meeting the next cannot help but shape one's ecclesiology or understanding of the Pastoral Epistles. As Hiestand and Wilson elaborate, "One cannot help but be shaped in profound ways by the steady rhythm of such experiences, and consequently, one's theology is likewise shaped. Pastor are not, of course, the only Christians called upon to give counsel and care in the face of such circumstances. But without question, the vocational *Sitz im Leben* of the pastorate uniquely tests and shapes one's theology in way the vocational context of other social locations does not."²⁶ So this means that just as pastor-theologians bring theology, including academic theology, into preaching, so they to work to bring preaching into theology.

24. Thomas W. Currie, III, "The Theological Significance of Administration in Pastoral Ministry," in *The Power to Comprehend with All the Saints: The Formation and Practice of a Pastor-Theologian*, ed., Wallace M. Alston, Jr., and Cynthia A. Jarvis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 375.

25. David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology* (Foundations of Evangelical Theology, Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 109.

26. Hiestand and Wilson, *Pastor Theologian*, 89. See also Todd Wilson, "The Pastor Theologian as Cruciform Theologian," in *Becoming a Pastor Theologian: New Possibilities for Church Leadership*, ed. Todd Wilson and Gerald Hiestand (Downers Grove: IVP, 2016), 69–77.

Pastor-theologians aim to do more than inform, consider theoretical or historical questions simply for their own sakes, or maintain a neutral, typically “academic” perspective. Instead, the goal of pastor-theologians’ theological work is the same as their preaching: life-change, or a broader ministry of the Word that leads people and churches to follow Jesus in every area of their lives. This is not to say that many academic theologians are not motivated by pastoral concerns, do not do their theological work for the church, or that they do not attempt to change others in a positive way through their work, it is rather an acknowledgment that they are not pastors, and that vocational difference affects theology and how it’s done. In addition, the strictures of academia often leave pastoral concerns unexpressed or underemphasized, while pastor-theologians make these concerns overt, the self-conscious purpose of their vocation.²⁷ Pastor-theologians address important questions generated and informed by pastoral ministry, and they address those questions while preaching through their theological work. What this looks like is theology that is unapologetically biblical and confessional, while also explicitly relevant to cultural and ecclesial concerns.

Theology that is Biblical and Confessional

Preaching presupposes and demonstrates one’s theology of Scripture as well as one’s confessional tradition (which are usually related). Pastors do not typically introduce each sermon explaining their theological presuppositions or why they are opening up the Word of God. Instead, they seek to bring truth to bear on life, and in the process demonstrate their convictions about why that truth matters and how that truth impacts other important truths. If done well, preaching is applied theology, both in form and content. In contrast, much of academic theology is concerned with matters of prolegomena, whether that means how to do theology or how to properly understand the Bible, or even what the Bible or theology is supposed to be. These matters are important and have their place, but a preoccupation with them can lead to what Millard Erickson calls “a sort of imperialism about professionally produced theology.”²⁸ What Erickson means is an impression that theology is only for those who understand such issues, and inaccessible to all others. This in turn exacerbates the divide between pastoral ministry and theology, serving to reduce theology to a discussion that does not really impact peoples’ lives, even believers or pastors. As Helmut Thielicke warns theology students, this divide and reduction are why so many people in the church are skeptical of seminary educations.²⁹

27. Hiestand and Wilson, *Pastor Theologian*, 90.

28. Millard J. Erickson, “On Flying in Theological Fog,” in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, ed., Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 338.

29. Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, trans. Charles L. Taylor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 3–5.

Pastor-theologians will not ignore issues of prolegomena, but as theologians outside the academy they can establish their convictions about these issues and then put them into practice, without continually having to defend their methodology or reference opposing arguments. Pastor-theologians are freer to appeal directly to the recognized authorities of their confessional traditions, such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, or John Wesley, without having to continually demonstrate an awareness of secondary literature and other possible interpretations of the subject. Likewise, Pastor-theologians can more directly appeal to the Scriptures and expound the great truths of the Scripture, without explicitly defending their right to do so. Two contemporary examples of this can be found with N. T. Wright and John Piper. In the introduction to his work *Surprised by Hope*, for example, Wright explains that he is not going to address some pertinent issues that he could address about death and what lies beyond it. Instead, he is going to approach the issue as a biblical theologian for the edification of the church, and then he proceeds to do just that.³⁰ Piper, in his book *Counted Righteous in Christ*, one of his more academic works, does something similar. He explains in his introduction how his preaching from Romans 1–8 led him to consider a book on justification, and then in the first chapter how he approaches this work in a scholarly way, but as a pastor with pastoral concerns, standing on the truth of Scripture.³¹ Pastor-theologians aim to preach through their theological work by expounding the truth of Scripture under the authority of Scripture, no matter their level of sophistication or intended audience.

Theology that is Relevant to the Church and Culture

Because pastor-theologians aim to preach through their theological work, they aim to make their work explicitly relevant to ecclesial and cultural concerns. Practical application, or living out the biblical truth that is spoken and heard, is the goal and purpose of preaching. As Calvin Miller puts it, “Without application there is no sermon. Application is what gets the Sermon off the Mount, and down in the valley where the toilers live out their days. Once people know what the Bible says, their next questions are: So what? How to? Where do I start? Sermons must take the information they dispense and tell the church what to do with it.”³² This application is both for the direct audience of the sermon, the church, and the broader culture within which the church lives. Effective preachers contextualize biblical truth, speaking directly to those in their churches in ways that they can understand, while also reframing their church’s questions, reshaping their church’s concerns, and redirecting their church’s

30. N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), xi–xiv.

31. John Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ: Should We Abandon the Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 13–15; 21–23.

32. Calvin Miller, *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 79.

hopes, all in light of the broader culture.³³ In this they aim to help their people live rightly within culture and even positively impact their culture.

Theology has a similar purpose and goal as preaching, in that it ought to communicate truth in a way that the church understands so that the broader culture is impacted. One could even properly define theology as the discipline which gives a coherent explanation of the truths of Scripture in the context of a culture, communicating those truths in contemporary language and applying those truths particularly considering contemporary concerns.³⁴ Pastor-theologians write theology for the same reason they preach, to apply truth, and they seek to apply truth in theology, as in preaching, by speaking to contemporary concerns that must be addressed. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is an example of what this looks like. *Life Together* was written to describe what a real Christian community should look like, directed at a people who confessed Christianity but didn't know what it meant to live as Christians living among other Christians. Bonhoeffer begins his book by quoting Psalm 133:1 on unity, and then states that in the following pages he and the reader would "consider a number of directions and precepts that the Scriptures provide us for our life together under the Word."³⁵ From the beginning his theological work is framed as relevant for a specific ecclesial and cultural need. *The Cost of Discipleship* is similar, in that it is written for a church in a culture that doesn't really know what it means to follow Jesus as his disciples, but needs to know. Bonhoeffer also introduces this book by stressing the need to hear Jesus in his Word, and explains that this is what his focus will be.³⁶ These ecclesial concerns stand in sharp contrast to some of Bonhoeffer's earlier works, such as *Sanctorum Communio* or *Act and Being*, which did not share these pastoral concerns.³⁷ Pastor-theologians apply their theology, looking not only to inform, but to edify the church and impact the culture.

Conclusion

Pastor-theologians bring theology into the pastorate and the pastorate into theology. They do this by engaging in theological ministry beyond their local ministries. This dual role means pastor-theologians are uniquely positioned to help churches recover theologically robust ministry, bridging the unfortunate divide between theology and ministry. At the same time, pastor-theologians can bring pastorally robust theology into the academy, helping recover an ecclesial purpose and emphasis

33. Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 99.

34. E.g., Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 8.

35. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: HarperCollins, 1954), 17.

36. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 36.

37. John Webster traces this evolution in Bonhoeffer's thought in *Word and Church: Essays in Church Dogmatics* (New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 87–112.

in theology. One of the primary ways pastor-theologians fulfill this dual role is by prioritizing preaching as the foundation of their pastoral ministries and the goal of their theological ministries. The church, the academy, and the culture at large all need pastors who can explain truth in a way that is biblical, confession, practical and relevant, bringing their unique identity and context to bear on the pressing issues of our day. As pastor-theologians ground their vocations in preaching the Word, this will take place.

Preaching Psalm 46 to the People of God Today

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Abstract: The preached word is the means that God has ordained for both the evangelization of the nations and for the building up of the church. As evangelicals, we are committed to the fact that all of scripture is inspired and profitable for the people of God: therefore, all scripture must be preached—including the Psalms.¹ In Part I, I present four recommendations for preaching Psalm 46 today. Each of these recommendations supplement the preacher’s regular homiletic preparation. These recommendations are intended to remind preachers of certain features of the Psalms in general and of this psalm in particular. In Part II, I present an example sermon, considering each of these guidelines.

Key Words: Psalms, preaching the Psalms, Martin Luther, Reformation preaching

PART I: PREACHING PSALM 46

Recommendation 1: Capitalize on the Interpretive History

A recurring challenge preachers face in today’s context concerns the relevance of the Bible’s message which can no longer be assumed; the perceived disjunction between the message of the Old Testament and the needs of the Christian today is even more pronounced. It does not take too long to realize that for many churches and many Christians, the Old Testament is foreign soil, difficult to navigate and often considered fruitless.

There are many ways to address this problem, but one solution focuses on the ways God has used these texts in the past. In the case of Psalm 46, one need look no further than Martin Luther’s reliance upon it in writing, “A Mighty Fortress.” Sadly, perhaps more people today in evangelical churches have been encouraged and strengthened through indirect contact with Psalm 46 by singing “A Mighty Fortress” than through careful and direct contact with the psalm through its being read and preached.

This familiarity with the hymn is something that should not be ignored in the preaching of the psalm. Instead it should be leveraged in the service of drawing listeners’ attention to the importance of the psalm’s message. The wise preacher

1. 2 Timothy 3:16.

ought to make the case for studying the psalm closely by noting how much positive influence it has had and continues to have in the lives of faithful Christians through the hymn, even upon those who do not know its origin, or the details of the text upon which it is based. Preaching this psalm needs to begin with showing the importance of it to the Church today, and Luther's hymn—and perhaps other important matters in its interpretive history—should be used to this end.

Building upon this, the beginning of the sermon might be the most effective place to cite the ways in which Luther's life was filled with immense troubles and challenges. Luther certainly understood the pressures of life and ministry. He knew what it was to have a family, manage difficult financial burdens, suffer physically, and lose friends to desertion and death. Just as a personal testimony about the importance of a text of scripture often awakens in us the desire to study it for ourselves, so the wide influence of this psalm—mediated through Luther's employment of it in his famous hymn—can serve to awaken listeners to their own need to hear this psalm preached.

The encouragement Luther received from the Psalms in general is also worth noting when proclaiming this text. In 1513–1515, Luther began his lectures on the Psalms. This task changed not only his view of God and His Messiah, but it also altered his view of the Christian life. Later, Luther pointed people to the example of David, who cries out for understanding, meditates on the Word, and then sings and says and prays it himself.² Luther's devotional life is shaped by the Psalms. In a letter to his friend, Peter the Barber, Luther says this about his prayer life:

First, when I feel I have become cool and joyless in prayer because of other tasks or thoughts...*I take my little psalter*, hurry to my room, or, if it be the day or hour for it, to the church where a congregation is assembled, and, as time permits, I say quietly to myself and word-for-word the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and, if I have time, some words of Christ or of Paul or some psalms, just as a child might do.³

Preachers ought not to shy away from appeals to the effects beauty created by the familiar hymn, which, depending on the congregation, may have had a powerful influence on the lives of hearers; and they ought to utilize and not ignore the great testimony of Christians in the past for whom this psalm has provided special encouragement.

2. Carl R. Trueman, *Luther and the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), 118–19.

3. *Luther's Works*, American Edition, vols 1–55, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg and Fortress; St Louis: Concordia, 1955), 43:193; (italics mine).

Recommendation #2: Highlight the Context (Both Canonical and Historical)

Canonical Context

One of the significant developments of the past few decades in the study of the Psalms is the attention being paid to the canonical context of individual psalms within the psalter. Since at least 1985, with the publication of Gerald H. Wilson's *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, scholars and some pastors have begun to consider the structure and message of the psalter holistically.⁴ The placement of each individual psalm is set within the matrix of the psalter's progression of thought and theology.

Along these lines, it is worth noting that Psalm 46, as part of Book II of the psalter, falls into a sub-section of Davidic psalms. McCann identifies the presence of the "Korah Psalms" (42–49) as a "seeming interruption of a sequence of Davidic Psalms . . ."⁵ He notes that both Book II and Book III begin with "songs," and that both Psalm 42 (at the beginning of Book II) and Psalm 73 (which begins Book III) offer complaints about the absence of the Temple (Book II) and of God's favor (Book III).⁶ This theme of loss or absence—perhaps of exile—seems to permeate Books II-III. The division between Book II and Book III in the psalter, despite the overall similarity of their orientation, may be explained by the Davidic seams between the books. McCann, drawing on Wilson, writes:

The division of Psalms 42–89 into Books II and III would also have enhanced a Davidic orientation, because it created the situation in which both books end with a royal psalm. As Wilson points out, this means that royal psalms appear at noticeable seams of Books I-III. Plus, Psalms 2 and 89 form an envelope-structure for Books I-III, *calling particular attention to the sharp contrast between the Davidic king in Psalm 2, who is promised world-encompassing authority (vv. 9–11), and the king in Psalm 89, who has been rejected and poignantly laments, questions, and pleads for divine help (vv. 39–54[38–53]). It is precisely this contrast which begs for a response, which comes in Books IV-V.*⁷

Since much of this is subject to debate, and in any case, requires a level of intra-psalter detail to which sermons are not well-suited, I am *not* advising that this appear as such in preaching Psalm 46. But the canonical context of Psalm 46 *should*

4. See Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985). See also: Daniel Owens, "The Concept of Canon in Psalms Interpretation." *Trinity Journal* 34 NS (2013): 155–169; J. Clinton McCann Jr., ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement* 159 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

5. J. Clinton McCann, Jr., "The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter: Psalms in Their Literary Context." *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed., William P. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University, 2014, 350–362), 355.

6. *Ibid.*, 355.

7. *Ibid.*, 356 (italics mine).

remind the preacher to emphasize the pleading notion of the psalm. It is a psalm about trouble, and it is set within the context of other psalms that accentuate loss, absence, and difficulty. The congregation needs to see Psalm 46 as a psalm that both sets their expectations for life (trouble and a sense of absence) and speaks to them with genuine and substantive words of comfort. Congregations also need to be reminded that this psalm of trouble is not an outlier, an interruption in the otherwise smooth experience of the people of God; it is part of a larger pattern within the psalter.

Historical Context

Individual psalms often contain superscriptions connecting them to specific people or events. There is considerable debate about the exact meaning of each superscription. For instance, questions have been raised about whether לְדָוִד demands that we understand the Psalm to have been written by David's own hand, or whether perhaps this psalm is merely about David. Similarly, the question of the individual psalm's relationship to events described in the superscription has been debated.⁸

In the case of Psalm 46, the superscription is significant for the preacher, not because it identifies the psalm with a particular historical figure or event, but precisely because it does not. This feature of psalm's context will be especially relevant when we begin to examine its setting as a song.

Recommendation #3: Underscore the Musical Nature of the Psalm

The difficulties of analyzing music along with a text have been recognized and accounted for in sophisticated ways outside of the discipline of biblical studies and homiletics. For musicologists, the seminal article describing the challenge was published in 1992 by V. Kofi Agawu.⁹ Agawu takes his fellow musicologists to task for ignoring the actual elements of the song in their analysis of 19th century German music. His initial observation about musical analysis has implications for our understanding and preaching of the psalter: "The marginalization of song *as song* in the literature speaks to a very real problem, namely, how to account for the syntax of a genre that includes two nominal semiotic systems, music and language."¹⁰ In other words, those who are analyzing something that was originally sung or played cannot ignore the musical meaning and give their attention only to the text.

8. For the wide range of views on this matter, see, for instance, S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Cleveland: The Word Publishing [reprint] 1956), 378; Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 2 vols (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 1:740; Leopold Sabourin, *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning* (NY: Alba House, 1974), 16–17; George R. Berry, "The Titles of the Psalms," *JBL* 33 (1914): 199; Brevard Childs, "Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis," *JSS* 16 (Autumn, 1971): 143; Elieser Somovic, "Toward and Understanding of the Formation of Historical Titles in the Book of Psalms," *ZAW* 91 (1979): 380.

9. Kofi Agawu, "Theory and Practice in the Analysis of the Nineteenth-Century 'Lied.'" *Music Analysis*, Vol 11, No. 1 (March, 1992): 3–36.

10. *Ibid.*, 2 (emphasis original).

Yet, for a variety of reasons (not least that the music is lost to us today), this is precisely what contemporary preachers are forced to do when it comes to the Psalms. Psalm 46 is a perfect example of this reality. Its superscription includes at least four distinct statements which designate it as a musical work: לְמַנְצֵחַ (To the choirmaster); לְבָנֵי־קֹהַל (of the Sons of Korah); עַל־עֲלָמוֹת (According to Alamoth); and שִׁיר (A Song). Further, while the precise musical meaning of the term, “Selah” is far from certain, it does appear to have some kind of musical or performative meaning. Some have suggested that it represents a pause in the song; others have suggested a kind of crescendo effect.¹¹ In any case, it reinforces the fact established by the superscription: Psalm 46 is a different kind of text. It is poetic, as are all the psalms and most of the other biblical wisdom texts. But it is also meant to be sung.

Which leads us to Agawu’s central concern. How can we understand and communicate both the music and the language of the psalm effectively? Should that even be our objective? Even if we conclude that we *should* somehow communicate the message and impact of the musical elements of Psalm 46 and other psalms like it, the fact remains that, unlike the 19th century German “*lied*” tradition which concerns Agawu, we do not actually have traditions, recordings, or even reliably firm understandings of the notations related to the music of the psalms.¹² As preachers today, we cannot work with information we are not given. While we should remind our hearers that these were originally sung (especially when the superscription points us so clearly in that direction), we cannot speak to the meaning or force that would be conveyed by the music. This is not available to us.

As evangelical interpreters, we might also raise the question of whether or not this “semiotic system” contained in the music is significant anyway. Our formulations for the inspiration and inerrancy of scripture extend to the words of scripture, but not to any performative elements associated with those words. To think of it another way, we can have little doubt that the effect of certain biblical sermons or prayers would have been dramatic and striking, but the drama and effect associated with hearing those sermons or prayers is not what the Bible communicates to us; rather we are given the words. We must conclude that the *words* of scripture are the essential, God-breathed element, sufficient for our life and growth in godliness.

Notwithstanding all this, the musical nature of many of the psalms in general and of Psalm 46 in particular does remind us of several key elements we must bear in mind when preaching. Three particular points stand out. First, we ought to draw our listeners’ attention to these genre questions, if for no other reason than that they are emphasized for us in the (inspired and authoritative) superscription. If the words are what the Lord has given to us, then even the words regarding genre and original reception are highly significant and ought not be ignored. As evangelical expositors,

11. Norman H. Snaith. “Selah.” *Vetus Testamentum* 2 (1952): 43–56. See also, C. Hassell Bullock, *Psalms, Volume 1: Psalms 1–72*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 26.

12. C. Hassell Bullock, *Psalms, Volume 1: Psalms 1–72* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 246.

our commitment to the verbal and plenary inspiration of the text needs to be shown even in our handling of the seemingly mundane or even inscrutable details of the superscriptions.

Second, it is also worth reinforcing that, to the extent we not only preach but also give some leadership and oversight to the public worship of a congregation, the singing of these psalms is an important way to press the words themselves home. Our protestant heritage placed a great deal of emphasis on this important fact. The work of many pastors in the past in setting the psalms in metric form and with accompanying tunes can and should play a greater role in the lives of God's people today. Their re-introduction into the mainstream of evangelical public worship would go a long way to re-establishing the Psalms in the hearts and minds of today's Christians.

But lastly, the musical nature needs to be highlighted precisely because it reminds us of the essentially universal nature of the subject of this psalm among God's people. If this is a song to be sung by all of God's people, then it must apply to all God's people. This can be a reminder to the congregation that God does not promise his people an easy life, nor does he encourage them to gloss over or turn aside from the significant difficulties of following him as covenant people. Instead, the LORD places the theme of suffering at the center of the songs of his people.

Also, as noted in the previous section, Psalm 46, while identified as a song of the Sons of Korah, is *not* connected to a particular event. In that sense, this Psalm stands apart from any one particular circumstance, and is, in a way, given immediate universal application to *all* of God's people corporately as a song. The lack of historical referents in the superscription should actually be driven home. This psalm and its setting in times of trouble is assumed to be a universally applicable theme—a song for everyone to sing. Since this psalm, dealing as it does with trouble, is given to everyone to sing, it reminds us that the trouble and suffering which it assumes is also a reality for everyone. This can be a great comfort, since all Christians do experience suffering.

It may be that our lack of attention to this feature of the Psalms in their performative state is symptomatic of our general failure to adequately address the difficulties of life. Trueman writes:

In the psalms, God has given the church a language which allows it to express even the deepest agonies of the human soul in the context of worship. Does our contemporary language of worship reflect the horizon of expectation regarding the believer's experience which the psalter proposes as normative? If not, why not? Is it because the comfortable values of Western middle-class consumerism have silently infiltrated the church and made us consider such cries irrelevant, embarrassing, and signs of abject failure?¹³

13. Carl R. Trueman, "What Can Miserable Christians Sing?" from *The Wages of Spin: Critical Writings on Historical and Contemporary Evangelicalism* (Edinburgh: Christian Focus, 2004) 159.

It is certainly the case that Psalm 46, by expressing a range of problems and struggles, prepares the people of God for the actual realities of life. The fact that Psalm 46, a psalm set in the context of trouble, is explicitly a song to be sung by all, and is placed among many other songs which highlight the suffering of God's people, underscores the extent to which the cry of trouble should be the expected norm, and not the embarrassing exception.

Recommendation #4: Attend to the Poetry of the Psalm (Especially Its Imagery)

Interpreting poetry in any language can be a challenge. The relationship between the form of the poetry and the basic meaning created by the words is what makes poetry so special; but it also makes it hard to pin down. Since poetry expresses things beyond that which concrete language conveys, it often defies easy interpretation, relying as it does on the impressions its artistry creates and the array of images it generally employs.¹⁴

Ancient Hebrew poetry differs from modern English poetry in substantial ways. Many have noted that the presence of parallelism and imagery seems to have a significant formal role in the makeup of Hebrew poetry.¹⁵ But this alone does not capture its essence. There is a terseness to the language of Hebrew poetry, and there seem to be other distinguishing features in its use of matching line-lengths and in its elevated use of imagery, though even these are highly disputed.¹⁶

Notwithstanding how one navigates these scholarly debates, there still remains the very difficult question of how all of this affects preaching poetry.¹⁷ Are these features (however many or few they may be) of poetry simply obstacles to be overcome in the search for the real meaning? Are they an integral part of the meaning itself? How are they to be implemented as part of the preacher's presentation?

If poetic form itself conveys deep meaning, or if it at least amplifies the surface level meaning of a given text, how should the preacher present this? One possibility is that preachers themselves should attempt to present the material in some kind of poetic form or use the psalm itself in some kind of congregational prayer as a supplement to the sermon in order to drive home the cumulative meaning of the

14. For an interesting summary of the peculiarities of interpreting poetry in English, see Edward Hirsch, "How to Read a Poem." Available online at <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/how-read-poem-0>.

15. See for instance Mark D. Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 24–25.

16. The most articulate and important work questioning the idea of Hebrew poetry is James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale, 1981), 59.

17. Preachers ought to familiarize themselves with these conventions, but this is where listening to modern preachers preach poetic—or even apocalyptic—sections of scripture will be particularly useful.

poem.¹⁸ While incorporating the psalm into some kind of responsive congregational prayer has considerable merit, and has been used to great effect in churches of the past, it is not the same thing as preaching.¹⁹ Further, the notion that preaching would itself incorporate poetic forms is problematic: both the forms employed and the skill with which the preacher could employ them would detract and distance the hearer from the original Hebrew poetry.

This can be a great loss. John Calvin quite famously called the Psalms, “an Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul.”²⁰ Surely this refers not only to the material covered by the psalms, but also the way in which the psalms, in their artistry, engage the whole person. They do this through use of artistic forms, but also through imagery.

The imagery of Psalm 46 cannot be overlooked, though this too presents challenges. Futato points out some of these. As an example of a way in which biblical imagery may work differently in a contemporary western context, Futato cites the reference in Psalm 23:5 to oil:

For most of us “oil” brings to mind either cooking oil or motor oil. Few of us will immediately smell the fragrance of a perfumed body lotion. And how many of us feel the refreshment that the ancients would have felt, knowing that anointing with oil in this context is analogous to “washing up” after a long trip to partake of a holiday meal?²¹

Again, Futato comments on the degree of imagery used in the Psalms and in the difficulties of interpreting it well:

Thus, we see with varying amounts of clarity the images presented in different psalms. In some psalms, we clearly see images. In others we see, but without the clarity of the ancients. In still others we see images as if looking through a window of opaque glass blocks.²²

When preaching the Psalms, certain features of the poetry will inevitably be lost to our hearers and probably to us as well, but the imagery must be attended to in preaching Psalm 46. The most obvious place where this attention to imagery pays off in Psalm 46 is in the transition from stanza 1 (vv. 1–3) to stanza 2 (vv. 4–7). Here we are confronted by contrasting but related images. In verse 3, we have the image of waves crashing over us and mountains trembling, but in verse 4, there is a radical shift. In the second section, verses 4–7, the Psalmist turns our attention away from

18. James. L. Mays, *Preaching and Teaching the Psalms* (Louisville: WJK, 2006), 4.

19. For a wonderful historical example of the use of the Psalms for congregational prayer, see Hughes Oliphant Old, “Daily Prayer in the Reformed Church of Strasbourg, 1525–1530,” *Worship*, vol 52, no. 2 (March, 1978): 121–138.

20. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979 reprint), xxxvii.

21. Mark D. Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 43.

22. *Ibid.*, 43–44.

the crashing waves of our circumstances. He takes us on a little journey; he gives us a little glimpse of heaven, of God's holy city. And the image at the beginning is the key to seeing this. Verse 4 begins with a kind of exclamation: "A river!" It is the first word in Hebrew. Our translations turn it to a bare informational statement, "There is a river..." But the Hebrew text begins by saying: "A river!" For the readers and hearers of this text, though the world is falling apart, though the unthinkable may happen, though the waves are crashing in, just then the writer points to—"a river!" And the river makes God's city glad.

There are obvious references to Genesis 1–2. When the Garden of Eden is described, it is a well-watered place, with rivers coming into and out of it.²³ When the temple is described in Ezekiel 40–48, there is a river coming out of it.²⁴ In Revelation 22, the angel of God shows John the new heavens and new earth and it starts with a river.²⁵ This image, especially if it is presented with all its biblical resonances, carries with it a great deal of meaning and significance. It points us toward a shift in the author's thinking, away from trouble and to the realities of heaven.

The first stanza (vv. 1–3) also employs vivid imagery to explain the depth of the trouble. We can see this especially in the language of verses 2–3. "We will not fear though the *earth gives way*..." Today, we say that events are "ground-breaking," or "earth-shattering." That means they are life-altering. Nothing will ever be the same again. Driving home these images and identifying them with images in use today can serve to reinforce the gravity of the psalmist's expression.

These first stanza images take on special significance when we consider how they or similar images are used elsewhere in the Bible. In Psalm 104, the psalmist uses a very similar phrase and yet declares it will *not* happen to the earth: "[God] set the earth on its foundations, *so that it should never be moved* [*italics mine*]."²⁶ The similarity of the image of solidity in Psalm 104 ("the earth is set in its foundations") and the cataclysmic reality of the trouble in Psalm 46 ("the earth gives way") reminds us of how serious the trouble is that the psalmist considers, and, by extension, how serious the trouble is that the people of God are supposed to expect and to sing about.

And the reason he can acknowledge all of this may be accentuated by the use of the imagery of verse 3 in Isaiah 54:9–11, which reads:

9 "This is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, and will not rebuke you. 10 For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

23. Genesis 2:10–14.

24. Ezekiel 47:1–12.

25. Revelation 22:1

26. Psalm 104:5 (emphasis added).

11 “O afflicted one, storm-tossed and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires.

God’s compassion, his steadfast love, his help in trouble is more solid than the mountains. Even if the unthinkable is happening, God is a refuge.

Similarly, in vv. 8b-9, the writer employs a succession of images and phrases designed to remind us of key events in biblical history. Drawing attention to these images, as well as unfolding them to our listeners will greatly enhance our efforts at preaching this text effectively.²⁷

Conclusion

Preaching the psalms is vital for the church in every age. Psalm 46, with its rich history of usage within the church and its important message to people in the midst of suffering, needs to be proclaimed. When preaching the psalm, we dare not ignore its history of interpretation, all the while bearing in mind its canonical and historical context; we must remember that it was originally sung congregationally by all the people of God; and, perhaps most importantly, we must analyze and proclaim it as poetry, even if the force of this cannot be brought home in exactly the same way the text itself does. It is a song of trouble for our troubled times.

PART II: PSALM 46 PREACHED

This Psalm is the source of one of the most famous hymns in Christian history. We know the hymn was written by Martin Luther in the 1520’s. There are a number of stories related to its first singing; some are dramatic but probably false. Similarly, the original context of the actual hymn of Psalm 46 is slightly unclear. But it is a hymn. The superscription makes this very clear. It is for the choirmaster. And it says, “A Song.” It also contains what are probably musical breaks of some kind which say, “Selah,” after verse 3, 7, and 11. We do not know if those were a signal to replay the chorus or the bridge; some have suggested that they are meant to tell us to pause and reflect on what we have just read, heard or sung. But they are breaks and they help us navigate the overall movement of the Psalm. We need to pay careful attention to these breaks, even if we do not know exactly what they meant musically. They signal a new section of the Psalm. This Psalm has three parts to it, each one adding its own distinctive emphasis.

But just like Luther’s first singing of “A Mighty Fortress,” with its many verses, so this three-verse song has a mysterious origin. We do not know exactly when it was composed or what the context was for its writing.

27. Compare, for instance, Psalm 46:10 and Exodus 14:13.

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In a sense, that is not a bad thing. There is something timeless about this Psalm, something that makes it appropriate to any number of situations that God's people have faced and do face on a regular basis. It was not written for just one person's circumstance, but it was something worshippers in Israel were *all* to sing together. It is a universal message, and it reflects realities that every believer, in every age, must face head-on. And perhaps surprisingly, this universal message—sung by God's people throughout history—is a message about trouble.

I wonder what you are facing today. Does it feel like your life is falling apart? Can you identify with the idea of “trouble” in the first verse? We may not know the exact circumstances of this Psalmist when he was writing or of Luther when he was paraphrasing—just as I do not know your exact circumstances today; but the Psalm begins by reminding us that God is a help in trouble. But the Psalm is not just about trouble; it's about trouble that is literally earth-shattering.

You probably have people in your life who share their burdens with you from time to time. And some people have an amazing ability to make their burdens seem like huge burdens. “My life is full of difficulties. Can you believe that last night, I was out at a restaurant and I ordered the steak and I had to send it back twice because it was too rare!” And the friend goes on and on and on and you are sitting there thinking, “I do not know how I am going to pay the rent this month! I just got a huge car bill! My son is struggling with an addiction! And I have to listen to you make yourself out to be a martyr because your dinner at the steakhouse was not cooked properly!” Or maybe you have even found yourself on the other end of that conversation. Someone asks you about your day and you go on and on about something trivial. Then when you finally come up for air and ask them about their life, you find out they have cancer, or their daughter was in a car accident.

I remember one incident like this. When I was in seminary, one of my classmates was older than the rest of us. He was in the midst of a successful and lucrative career, and to his credit, he took time out to study God's Word. I was with him in a Greek class that met for four hours in the evening. Because it was such a long class, there was a twenty-minute break in the middle, during which he would take a few of us out for coffee. We always drove in his car, since he had a brand-new BMW 700 series sedan. One day, he came into class looking absolutely dejected. Something was wrong, so I asked him what the trouble was. “Oh,” he said, “it is really awful. My 7 series is in the shop and the dealer only had a new 5 series for me to borrow.” That was the trouble! We were trying to pay the bills and find gas money and he was troubled about having to drive a smaller BMW for a day! You see, there is trouble, and then there is TROUBLE. And the Psalmist wants us to know that when he speaks about God's help in trouble, he is not just talking about small or minor trouble. God is a help in TROUBLE.

We can see this by looking at the language of verses 2–3. “We will not fear though the earth gives way...” This is big language. In fact, we use it as a kind of metaphor

even today. We say that events are “ground-breaking,” or “earth-shattering.” That means huge. Nothing will ever be the same again. Can you imagine an event like that in your life? Maybe you do not have to imagine.

- You have buried a family member, and nothing will ever be the same.
- You have gotten the diagnosis, and you know you will never be able to do the things you used to do.
- You have had someone break your trust, and you forgive them, but it will never be like it was.

God is a help—even, and perhaps especially—in trouble like that.

You know, the amazing thing about this language in verse 2 is that if you turn to Psalm 104, the Psalmist there uses the same type phrase and says it will *not* happen to the earth: “[God] set the earth on its foundations, *so that it should never be moved*.”²⁸ And of course that is true. It is one of the glorious promises God made to Noah—the earth would endure until the final judgment. But it is as if the writer of Psalm 46 is saying, “Even if the unthinkable happens. Even if the earth gives way. We will not fear.”

And the reason he can say this is because our lives are resting on something more solid than the earth and the mountains. You know, in Isaiah 54, God talks about the mountains moving for his people. Here is what he says:

For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,” says the LORD, your Redeemer. “This is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, and will not rebuke you. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you. “O afflicted one, storm-tossed and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires.

God’s compassion, his steadfast love, is a very present help to us. It keeps us from fearing. It is more solid than the mountains. It is safer than the safest investment. It is more reliable than your closest friend. When all of life is falling apart, when the unthinkable is happening, God is our refuge.

In the second section, verses 4–7, the Psalmist turns our attention away from the crashing waves of our circumstances. He takes us on a little journey; he gives us a little glimpse of heaven, of God’s holy city. Remember what Paul says to the Philippians: “Your citizenship is in heaven.” Well, the Old Testament way for the Psalmist to say that is to say, “You belong in God’s holy city.” It is amazing how

28. Psalm 104:2 (emphasis added).

even imaginative glimpses of heaven are intriguing to us. If you want to write a best-seller after an accident or a surgery, just tell people you caught a glimpse of heaven! There needs to be a white light, and some warm feeling of peace. Maybe mention how you ran into your dearly departed grandfather or something like that. But this is not imagination. Verse 4 actually begins with a kind of exclamation: “A river!” It is the first word in Hebrew. Our translations turn it a kind of informational statement, “There is a river...” But the Hebrew text begins by saying: “A river!” The world is falling apart, the unthinkable may happen, waves are crashing in on me, but wait, look—“a river!” And the river makes God’s city glad.

Now if you know you are Bible, you know there are references to Genesis 1–2 here. When the Garden of Eden is described, it is a well-watered place, with rivers coming into and out of it. When the temple is described in Ezekiel 40–48, there’s a river coming out of it. In Revelation 22, the angel of God shows John the new heavens and new earth and it starts with a river.

My wife and I have been vacationing with our kids to the same place since they were born—Lake Placid, NY. And we all get excited as we get nearer and there are these landmarks: My kids are usually the most vocal: “Look—the entrance to Adirondack Park!” “The pine trees!” “The little corner grocery store in Keene Valley!” “The Olympic ski jumps!” “The bookstore!” “The boat launch!” “Whiteface Mountain!” Each of these conveys something about the place. They are markers that tell us where we are. And in Psalm 46, amid the storm, amid the chaos, when you have the unthinkable news, when things are getting worse and worse, when there is no way out—a River!

But the river is not actually the important thing. It is just the signpost. See the big thing is that God is in her midst. And look at the contrast between verse 5 and verse 2. The earth may move, but God’s city will not move. In fact, according to verse 6, nations, kingdoms, and even the earth may melt away, but it is because of God’s word from God’s city.

Do you think about this? Do you remember Jesus’ words in the great commission at the end of Matthew 28? “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...” So what should that mean? Well, first, if you have not bowed the knee to Jesus in your life, if you have not come to him and confessed your sin, asked him to cleanse you by his blood, sincerely given yourself to him, then you are simply living in rebellion against the one who alone can save you. Your strength will fail; your friends cannot help you after death; your bank account, even if it lasts, can’t go with you after death. Your legacy, your name, will die out. You have no hope for the storms of this life, or for the coming judgment, apart from Christ. He is God most high, enthroned with all power in heaven and on earth. He is the judge of the living and the dead, and he offers forgiveness for those who believe in his name.

If you are trusting in Christ, if verse 7 is true of you: “The LORD of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our fortress,” then I want to plead with you to turn your

eyes off the waves and up to the city with the river. Remember Peter walking out to Jesus, looking to him. When did he begin to sink? When his eyes moved from the King and Lord and to the waves. Do you pray more than you worry? Do you cast your cares upon the Lord because he cares for you? Do you boldly approach the throne of grace to find grace to help in your time of need? Approach the city of God. You may be sad and lonely and despairing, but look: “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God...”

And, in a sense, I think that is what the third section of the Psalm is helping us do. Verse 8 begins with a command to look. It is a command. “Come!” “See!” “Look closely!” And what are we supposed to look at? Quite simply, look at God’s victories in the past. It is a set of interwoven allusions and echoes from throughout the Bible, a collage of scenes from God’s mighty work in the past.

Look! God flooded the earth, destroyed the wicked and saved Noah! Look! God judged Sodom and Gomorrah! Look! God rescued the people from the most powerful ancient empire, the Egyptians, by plagues and a wall of water! Look! God led his people to conquer the land! Look! God struck down Goliath! Look! God destroyed the Philistines! Look! God conquering sin and death on the cross and by the empty tomb! Look! God has worked in your life in the past!

And do you see how the Psalm ends? Verses 7 and 11 are identical. The river that leads to the city of peace and joy—well, verse 7 tells us that that God sitting on the throne of heaven is with us today. What a friend we have in Jesus! And that powerful, strong, mighty God who has won victory after victory and left enemy after enemy—including the last enemy of death—dead on the field, verse 11 tells us that that God is with us.

Do you know this God? Is this God, who revealed himself in Jesus Christ, your king, your comfort, your deliverer? He will surely win.

And did you know that is what Luther wrote when he reflected on this Psalm? He knew about the one who was comforting him at his side and fighting the battle on his behalf.

Did we in our own strength confide, Our striving would be losing; Were not
the right Man on our side, The Man of God’s own choosing: Dost ask who
that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He; Lord Sabaoth His Name, From age to age
the same, And He must win the battle.

Hallelujah, what a Savior!

This is the message of Psalm 46. It was its message when it was first sung by God’s people long ago. It was Luther’s understanding during the tumultuous days of the German Reformation. And it is the message God’s people need as much as ever, in our own day

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What Worship Leaders Need Their Pastors to Know: A Call to Theological Leadership in Worship

MATTHEW WARD

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Abstract: Many pastors today do not understand their role in their church's worship—they have not received training in the principles of corporate worship and someone else on staff has the title of “worship leader.” That elusive role is to provide theological leadership to the worship ministries of the local church. Theological leadership assumes that pastors have done the work of developing a theology of worship. It then involves two steps: contextualizing that theology to their unique local church and communicating it effectively with that local church. While there are many examples of a theology of worship available to consider, there are few examples of a contextualized theology; this article offers two that are still general enough to glean benefits and pitfalls. Communication is a two-way process. If pastors are to be effective theological leaders, they must cultivate meaningful relationships—particularly with their worship leaders, listen and learn, and not act out of fear.

Key Words: worship, worship leadership, theology of worship, theological leadership, Jeremiah Burroughs, John Tombes

Introduction: Admitting a Need

Worship leaders (of whatever title) might prefer this article to be titled, “What Worship Leaders Wish Their Pastors Knew.” That article gets to dance through all kinds of subjects from the perspective of a worship leader. It already exists, by the way, as a series of excellent and highly recommended blog posts by Bob Kauflin on his website, worshipmatters.com.¹ This article approaches that general idea from the perspective of the needs of the local church. Churches need more from their pastors in worship than a decent working relationship with the so-named worship leaders. Churches need their pastors to understand the nature of their relationship with all the

1. Bob Kauflin, “What Worship Leaders Wished Their Pastor Knew,” *Worship Matters*, October 5, 2015, accessed September 8, 2017, <http://worshipmatters.com/2015/10/05/what-worship-leaders-wished-their-pastor-knew/>. The series includes the equally helpful post, “What Pastors Wished Their Worship Leaders Knew.”

worship ministries—and the worship leaders need that as well. This relationship is vital to a healthy church but misunderstood by many and flatly abused by some.

In their defense, many pastors have not been given a proper model for their role in worship, so they do what pastors always do in such situations—make it up as they go. Unfortunately, pastoral training often does not provide the tools necessary for pastors to evaluate their intuitive approach to their worship ministries. They develop an approach to their worship ministries from any number of sources, having a hard enough time deciding if it works to worry if it is right. Consider these analogies:

1. **The Black Box:** Having little to no experience in music, audio/video tech, or stage production, some pastors see the worship ministries of their church as a rather mysterious process for which they only offer vague suggestions and try not to get drawn into a discussion they do not understand over why something will or will not “work.” Leadership in this analogy essentially means staying out of the way.
2. **The Toy Box:** Some pastors grossly overestimate their knowledge of music and presentation, offering their personal preferences and opinions on every aspect of the music and worship ministries, as if they were important insights and valuable contributions. Leadership in this analogy often means treating the worship ministries as a personal plaything, managing or micromanaging from personal preference.
3. **The Display Box:** Some pastors see church’s worship ministries primarily as the public face of the church and thus care mostly about “first impressions” or how people in attendance think the service looks and sounds. Vision is crowdsourced, and leadership in this analogy is thus reactionary, passing along what people do and do not like.
4. **The Soap Box:** Some pastors believe their primary role in worship is the sermon, and they put their efforts into that element, but their sermon centrism gets extrapolated to the rest of the worship ministries. Leadership in this analogy focuses on expressing whether or not they feel that the rest of the worship service properly highlighted the sermon.
5. **The Gift Box:** Some pastors believe their primary role in every ministry is to be the pastor to all the leaders of that ministry (note: this should include paid staff members if the church has them). They offer pastoral support and encouragement and focus mainly on positive working relationships. Leadership in this analogy emphasizes the person rather than their “job performance.”

This article contends that pastors need to take a different approach to their worship ministries altogether—one that does not think of them as a box at all but an integral part of their church’s identity. This approach requires a specific kind of leadership: theological leadership. Such leadership can and should be employed by any pastor in

any church, regardless of circumstance. In short, theological leadership is more than being able to describe “what” with respect to worship; it is also more than being able to explain “why.”

Worship Ministries Are Too Important for Pastoral Neglect

As the theological leader of a local church’s worship, the pastor works with and through the worship ministries to develop and communicate a vision for worship utterly consistent with that church’s biblical and cultural identity that the church can understand, embrace, and engage. Acknowledging accountability both to God and the local church, the pastor as theological leader empowers the worship leaders of the church to enact that vision, evaluating and encouraging their growth and exercise of leadership. This requires a great deal of involvement and responsibility on the part of pastors, perhaps more than they are used to or comfortable offering, but worship is too important to be mishandled.

The previous paragraph assumes that pastors are aware of how integral the worship ministries of churches are to their purpose and existence. Books by Robert Webber, Marva Dawn, and Jamie Smith offer excellent starting points for pastors unfamiliar with the vital importance of worship.² Worship is not a job function or a weekly checkbox but the very heart of what it means to be a Christian church, of which pastors are leaders and shepherds. The actions of corporate worship contribute as much if not more toward spiritual formation and discipleship than the sermon (Christianity is not what a person knows but who a person is; people are more than brains on a stick but a mystery of body and spirit).

Worship is the whole-personed expression of a vibrant relationship with God. The experience of corporate worship connects people with God and one another in ways that defy categorization. Worship services, those appointed times the congregation gathers to worship their Lord and Savior (and by this not just the sermon), must be a priority of preparation, execution, and participation for the leadership of every Christian church.

2. The late Robert Webber casts a significant shadow over the “worship renewal” movement. His first and last books on the subject are an excellent introduction to his perspective: *Worship Is a Verb: Eight Principles for Transforming Worship* (Star Song Publishers, 1992), and *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God’s Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008). Marva Dawn’s excellent pair of books, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), and *A Royal “Waste” of Time: The Splendor of Worshipping God and Being Church for the World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), provoke all the right questions with respect to worship. James K. A. Smith’s Cultural Liturgies series develops those ideas even further, as in *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009). One does not have to agree with all their conclusions to find great value in these books.

Pastors Are Still Worship Leaders, Regardless of Titles

The importance of corporate worship has certainly received greater attention in recent years—worship in local churches no longer suffers from wanton neglect. But movements intended to raise the profile of worship in the local church have created their own set of challenges and problems for church leaders, particularly when adopted and applied prematurely and indiscriminately, or as worship services have become an end unto themselves. For example, for a long time American churches had “music ministries.” Those ministries existed for teaching music: singing, instrument playing, and reading—songs for the adult choir to present in service and hymnal appreciation for younger generations. Larger churches even hired musicians with church music degrees designed to develop musical skill. Pastors focused on the sermon and let the music ministers handle the “music part” of the service. Though some pastors may not have particularly worried about their music ministries, they at least understood their purpose. Then, new and exciting worship-centric churches appeared, employing “worship pastors” whose primary function was leading the weekly worship service (everything but the sermon). Elements such as readings and prayers (and even the Lord’s Supper) were associated with liturgical traditions, and worship services became dominated by music. Fulfilling an already-existing notion, music became conflated with worship, and the sermon remained just that—the sermon.

As established churches observed the explosive growth of these new churches and looked for attributes they could emulate, they focused on the most obvious, particularly those in music and worship (and some decided to rename Sunday School as “Lifegroups”). But in churches in which leaders had not been thoroughly trained in the principles of corporate worship (for example, Southern Baptists), that emulation was haphazard and indiscriminate, leaving churches in a very confusing place in their worship ministries.³

A recent survey of the Southern Baptist Job Board, sbc.net/jobs, found postings for “Worship Leader,” “Worship Pastor,” “Worship Minister,” “Minister of Music,” “Praise and Worship Director,” “Minister of Worship,” and “Pastor of Worship Ministries.”⁴ What is confusing is that each position entailed nearly identical duties. The confusion does not end there. Schools of music have added new “worship” degrees that are nominally distinct from preexisting church music degrees, leaving churches to wonder which degree they should require.

Consider then the present situation: churches have “worship leaders” (often well-paid) with “worship degrees.” Where does that leave the pastor? Add to this the complications already mentioned—pastors with admittedly little training in the principles of corporate worship and the tendency to treat worship ministries as one

3. Even though the term is a part of the confusion at work in churches today, for consistency’s sake this article will use “worship ministries” to refer to those aspects of a church that prepare members for participation in any part of a weekly worship service, including music, drama, tech, etc.

4. “SBC Job Search,” accessed July 15, 2017, <http://www.sbc.net/jobs/>.

of the boxes described above—as well as the difficult nature of staff relationships (including the pastor’s dual role as “pastor” and “boss”), and pastors can find themselves functionally isolated from the worship ministries of their churches. These trends have tended to undermine the pastor’s role as the worship leader in the local church. Regardless of the degree to which this may have occurred, the response is for pastors and their churches to understand the proper role of the pastor in the worship ministry: that of the *theological leader*.

What Is Theological Leadership?

The box analogy can help with parameters for what I mean by “theological leadership.”

1. The Black Box: It should go without saying that ignoring the workings of a ministry is not providing theological leadership (or any leadership). Pastors do not have to have musical experience to make theological observations because the question is not “what will work” but “what should be.”
2. The Toy Box: Pastors have every right to express their opinions, but they should not make the mistake of believing that their opinions are any more important than anyone else’s in the church. And they certainly should not believe that expressing personal preference is offering theological leadership.
3. The Display Box: Pastors should certainly care about the look and feel of a worship service, but making suggestions based on group sentiment is not theological leadership (*unless* that group is clearly and intentionally guided by the mind of Christ—not often the case).
4. The Soap Box: Pastors should pour their heart and soul into every sermon, but a well-crafted sermon does not provide theological leadership to the worship ministries; at best, a sermon on corporate worship can only identify the lines along which that leadership may proceed.
5. The Gift Box: If pastors desire to have any kind of meaningful working relationship with the members of the worship ministries, they must offer genuine pastoral leadership and concern. But whereas pastoral leadership focuses on individual members, theological leadership equally applies to the ministry itself.

Each of those approaches can (and even should) play a role in a pastor’s leadership strategy, but none is of itself theological leadership.

Consider a church nursery as a parallel example. Only very shortsighted pastors would ignore the nursery completely, although some foolish pastors have deemed it inconsequential if no bad news comes out of it. Pastors may make observations about the condition of the physical space (more likely if they have a child in it) but will probably leave the décor to people with experience in childcare. At most, they may

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look for pictures of Jesus on the wall and the presence of a storybook Bible. They almost certainly will not offer training on how to change a diaper properly. That level of interaction between the pastor and nursery probably seems reasonable, but it does not involve any sort of coherent plan for how the nursery fits into the church at large or how it contributes to spiritual formation and identity. Pastors tacitly leave those determinations in the hands of those who serving in the nursery.

This example does not convey a relationship of theological leadership. Caring about the nursery is a good start. Believing that important spiritual transactions take place in the nursery (not only in teaching infants the truths of the Bible, but also in the spiritual growth of the caregivers) is a necessary next step. Leaving certain decisions in the hands of experienced church members or paid experts is wise, and letting someone else teach the mechanics of diaper changing is prudent. Taking the time to notice the condition of the room or make cursory observations about spiritual formation, even if just from personal opinion, is better than nothing. But none of that is offering theological leadership. Theological leadership comes out of understanding who that local church is and what the church believes.

Theological leadership means setting the values of the church at work in the church nursery and communicating that intersection with the nursery leaders in such a way that they can and will apply the church's identity to the inner workings of the nursery. Ultimately, it will affect the appearance of the nursery, the actions of the workers, the curriculum followed therein, the policies of security and care, and even the budget allocation thereto. None of those decisions can be made haphazardly; each must be a part of a larger strategy tied to the clear theological leadership provided by the pastor. Having set the church's values and priorities clearly in the minds and hearts of the nursery leaders, pastors do not have to be a part of every decision; they can observe the function of the nursery to know if their leadership has been followed and applied reasonably. *That* is the beginning of theological leadership.

Step 1: Know Your Theology of Worship, and also Know Your Church

The mechanics of providing theological leadership to any ministry of the church, including the worship ministry, is very similar. Theological leadership in a church in general begins with knowing who the church is and what the church believes. Because every congregation is unique, every local church identity is unique, even with all it shares with the church universal. Diversity among churches engages a wider population and keeps those churches always reforming in the best sense of that idea. All pastors must understand fully their church's congregational makeup and belief system. In many churches, that system includes a formal but limited doctrinal statement, but pastors must identify the informal values and standards that the church holds alongside those doctrines. Pastors also have the Bible and

denominational standards against which to evaluate these beliefs. Effective leadership of any kind always begins with what *is* before moving on to what *should* be. If there are inconsistencies or heterodoxies of belief, pastors must help their churches resolve them. If pastors do not start with this step, any action taken in ministry is reactionary at best and destabilizing at worst. If pastors do not appreciate this step, they risk being constantly disappointed by their misplaced expectations, which will likely be at odds with the intentions God has for bringing together that unique congregation. In other words, pastors should believe that God is sovereign over congregational identity and has provided the gifts and callings necessary for that church to accomplish every purpose God has for that church, and it is the pastor's responsibility to oversee that journey.

Once the church's theological and cultural identity has been established, the process is repeated at the individual ministry level. Every ministry in a local church has a set of beliefs and values (formal or informal) out of which it operates; the pastor must bring those beliefs in line with those of the church at large, offering a vision of what that ministry looks like in the context of that unique local church. In this article, the focus is the worship ministry. Theological leadership in worship ministry in particular begins with developing a robust, contextualized theology of worship. Such a theology of worship answers the questions, "What is worship?" and, "What does worship look like in 'my' church?" Many excellent books, including those mentioned above, have answered the questions "what is worship?" and "what does the Bible say about worship?" many times over (though without consensus),⁵ and they should be taken into consideration. But rarely do those books attempt to help a pastor develop a truly contextualized (designed to fit the unique context of a local church) theology of worship.

Indeed, finding any example of such a contextualized theology of worship, particularly one unbiased by the modern culture-driven "worship wars," is difficult. This article dives into history to find a pair of obscure but delightfully meaningful examples. Coming from a time when pastors were the "worship leaders," two pastors sought specifically to influence Anglican, Presbyterian, and Baptist leaders in the principles and practices of local church worship—if not to change their minds than at least to have them take seriously the implications of their stated beliefs. One, the well-respected Independent Jeremiah Burroughs, used his London pulpit to influence the sub-committee that drew up Westminster's *Directory for*

5. For additional introductory reading to this subject, consider Franklin Segler and Randall Bradley, *Understanding, Preparing for, and Practicing Christian Worship*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), Ron Owens, *Return to Worship: A God-Centered Approach* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), *Worship by the Book*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), Christopher Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2004), and Constance Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

Matthew Ward: *What Worship Leaders Need Their Pastors to Know* *Public Worship*⁶ and influenced many other pastors along the way. The other, the controversial outsider John Tombes, was so challenged by his own sermons on worship that he abandoned his original belief system, choosing instead to influence fellow baptizers from any pulpit he could obtain. Both men tied principle to action, a key element of theological leadership.⁷

Illustration: A Theology of Worship Focused on Specific Actions

Of the two, Burroughs offered the clearest example of a practical theology of worship—so practical that his famous sermon series, “Gospel Worship,”⁸ echoed in the work of London pastors for decades. His theology of worship can be summarized in one statement: “We must all be willing worshipers, but not will-worshippers” (i.e., “We must come freely to worship God, but we must not worship God according to our own wills”).⁹ In many ways, this is a version of what is often called the regulative principle of worship, that only the Bible can regulate what humans should offer in God’s worship (Burroughs referred to God’s “direct” and “inferred” commands). But Burroughs’s theology is much more than that; it is as much a statement about the worshiper as it is about the Bible. Indeed, half of the sermons in this series dealt solely with the worshiper: worshipers must know God and His Word exceedingly well (Lev. 10:3); worshipers must exercise their faith throughout the week and bring that active faith to bear in worship on Sundays (Heb. 10:12); worshipers must come prepared to worship not only in mind but in soul (Isa. 1:13): “If ever we were seriously intente or attentive about anything, it must be when we are worshiping of the name of God.”¹⁰ In Burroughs’s theology of worship, it is not merely a matter of the actions taken in worship; it is equally a matter of who takes those actions.

The second half of Burroughs’s sermons focused on the right actions of worship: hearing the Word preached, partaking of the sacrament (Lord’s Supper), and prayer. He contextualized his approach in terms of the dominant pattern of worship in his day, the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, and also looked ahead to the directory for worship the Presbyterians were at that time debating. Using his underlying thesis, “We must all be willing worshipers, but not will-worshippers,” Burroughs combined

6. The *Directory*, a careful product of Puritan Presbyterianism, is also an excellent case study for theological leadership in worship. It is not used here because it determined the principles of worship for churches rather than help them determine for themselves. The *Directory* can be found at http://reformed.org/documents/wcf_standards/index.html.

7. This author discovered these two men while researching influences on the early English Baptists. For more about Burroughs, see Matthew Ward, *Pure Worship: The Early English Baptist Distinctive* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), 9, 119–120, 151, 161; for more about Tombes, see Ward, *Pure Worship*, 15, 21–23, 61, 120, 124, 146, 157.

8. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel-Worship, or, The Right Manner of Sanctifying the Name of God in General* (London: Cole, 1658). These fourteen sermons were published posthumously.

9. Burroughs, *Gospel-Worship*, 10. The grammar has been updated to improve clarity.

10. Burroughs, *Gospel-Worship*, 81.

the actions he found in the Bible with the attitudes he believed must correspond therewith. Preaching is a combination of preparing the soul to hear God's truth and then making that soul answerable thereunto. The preacher's role is to learn that truth, present it clearly, and offer uniquely measurable application; the worshiper's role is to listen attentively, submit willingly, and apply diligently. Nationalized forms of worship violate this basic principle by removing personal preparation and application on the part of the worshiper and the preacher. The Lord's Supper, being so central in Anglican worship, received an extremely concrete treatment. Burroughs believed the Bible to be clear in its description of the observance: the church must gather around the same table (near as possible); the pastor must take, bless, break, and then give the bread and cup (in that order); and the celebrants must focus on the death of Christ while partaking of the elements. The Lord's Supper is the prime example of a *form* of worship; it must be approached properly and performed properly. Finally, with respect to prayer, Burroughs summarized that the matter of prayer must be God's will and glory and all people's good, and the manner of prayer must be with understanding and from the soul.

Burroughs's sermons drip with a balanced treatment of Scripture, but that treatment does not overcome the limitation of Burroughs's theology of worship: what is an "inferred" command in worship? Consider debates over the Lord's Supper from that era. Could women be allowed to partake of the elements? Must everyone recline around the table? Should the Lord's Supper be conjoined with footwashing? Burroughs's emphasis on the worshiper's heart compounded some problems, preaching that "the Lord doth look more to the principle from whence a thing comes, than at the thing itself."¹¹ Some hearers took this to mean that sincerity was more important than accuracy. Consequently, Burroughs's followers stumbled through continuous debates over worship and had difficulty agreeing on clear parameters within which those debates should occur. In other words, Burroughs failed to develop a fully consistent theology of worship or communicate it thoroughly. But even then, Burroughs's churches were well-regarded for their example, owing to his strong and consistent personal leadership.

Illustration: A Theology of Worship Focused on General Principles

John Tombes was one of Burroughs's contemporaries. During his theological training, political authorities determined religious realities, so when he desired to influence worship, he submitted his sermon transcripts to city councils (the second sermon mentioned below was published at the request of Parliament). But his reforming impulses went beyond their tolerances, so he spent his primary years of ministry as an

11. Burroughs, *Gospel-Worship*, 67. Realize that to Burroughs, a truly sincere Christian worship sincerely desires to worship God according to the rule God has given for His worship. This statement should not be interpreted to say that being a right worshiper is more important than offering right worship; the two cannot be separated.

exile. Whereas Burroughs preached in concrete terms about the actions of worship, Tombes preached more about principles. But the message was similar: “they that are right worshipers worship the true God by the true Mediator according to the true rule, that is, they worship the true God according to His own prescription and appointment, not according to men’s devices and inventions.”¹² Right worshipers can be identified by the right end of exalting God, the right principle of both the Spirit of God and faith in Jesus Christ, and the right affection—the desire to worship in spirit and in truth. Tombes focused on exactly why God rejects will-worship: “what is devised by man [to worship God] comes from a corrupt and foolish heart, and such a corrupt fountain must needs send forth but puddle water;” God sees even the finest human innovation in worship as “childish, apish, theatrical and ridiculous.”¹³ As with Burroughs, Tombes’s approach echoed the regulative principle of worship, but Tombes used a very different guiding principle for his theology of worship.

Tombes’s explanations of and arguments against will-worship reveal a simple, but powerful, theological impulse: “it [will-worship] opposes the manifestation of the clear light of the gospel.”¹⁴ To Tombes, salvation meant a humble submission to God in Christ and a lifelong connection to God in Spirit. But forms of worship invented by men, no matter how pleasant or emotionally compelling, put sights and sounds into worshipers’ minds that do not come from God, and such human compositions cannot create spiritual transformation. At best, such worship makes people idolaters by coming before God with human achievement; at worst, such worship estranges people from God by reifying in them what Tombes calls “the Popish conceit of *opus operatum*, that the work done pleases God...though they are in no way changed, enlightened, awakened in their consciences, or altered and quickened in their conversation.”¹⁵ Such worship is the very opposite of humble submission to God. And the fruit of such will-worship is division among churches, bitter argument within churches, and even the loss of Christian liberty as people begin to impose their preferred forms of worship on others. None of those elements proceed from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Tombes explained, “And although I know Ceremonies invented by men are pretended to serve for edification, yet I must profess that I never found in my reading, or experience, that ever any person by such rites, or observances was won to the profession of Christ, or brought to any spiritual knowledge of Christ, any true faith or sincere obedience to him.”¹⁶ This statement could easily be a central theological

12. John Tombes, *Jehovah Jireh: Or, God’s Providence in Delivering the Godly* (London: Richard Cotes, 1643), 4.

13. John Tombes, *Fermentum Pharisaeorum: Or, the Leaven of Pharisaicall Wil-Worship* (London: Richard Cotes, 1643), 4. Burroughs was beloved and respected for his generous and benevolent demeanor; Tombes was held at arm’s length for his incessant polemic.

14. *Ibid.*, 6.

15. *Ibid.*, 10.

16. *Ibid.*, 7.

axiom for worship out of which a fuller theology could be constructed: Christian worship must embody the gospel of Jesus Christ. To Tombes, this meant more than worship leaders should proclaim the tenets of the gospel or even that worship should be patterned after a gospel presentation—valuable ideas which are finding traction today—this meant that every decision made preparing for and leading corporate worship must come from a gospel source and toward a gospel end. This idea influenced early London Baptists before they got caught up in a number of political and theological controversies that shifted their focus. However, because Tombes the churchman never found a home in a church tradition, and Tombes the leader did not have the skills to inspire followership, his influence was limited.

Those two men demonstrate the power of a theological principle of worship *and* the importance of leadership. Burroughs's puritan context led him to employ a version of the regulative principle of worship that he thought best for his independent church. Tombes's acquired belief in regenerate church membership aligned him with the Baptists and led him to draw out principles of worship rooted in the gospel of salvation. Burroughs's benevolence and confidence inspired a generation of admirers (though he was too independent-minded for a truly wide impact). Tombes's prickly personality and caustic approach isolated him from lasting influence. Pastors today might see one of those two principles as a foundation for their own theology of worship, or they might be inspired to search for another. They would then combine that principle with what they believe the Bible to say (should the Bible be a core value to them), set it in the context of their local church's beliefs, values, and culture, and spin a theological web focused on coherence and cohesion. That web eventually becomes a theology of worship.

When It Comes to Worship, One Size Does Not Fit All Churches

There are two great errors to avoid in developing this theology of worship: believing it to be a comprehensive, step-by-step action plan for a worship service, and adopting a plan wholesale from a popular church or book. A theology of worship is the web of doctrines, principles, and values out of which an action plan emerges. While the Object of worship and even most elements of worship might be seen as completely transportable between local churches within one's church tradition, worship services are enacted by unique congregations; the people of those churches have unique skills of musicianship, recitation, and technology, as well as unique resources (or lack thereof) to bring to bear on their worship services. When theological leadership in worship is tied to specific actions or actors—such as an organ player who can rile up a congregation just so, or a guitar player who can drop a killer lead, or a top-of-the-line environmental projection system—and those actors are not present, the entire vision falls apart. A theology of worship is not applied in a vacuum; it must be appropriately

Matthew Ward: *What Worship Leaders Need Their Pastors to Know* versatile for any local church setting (appreciating how much congregations change over time).

Similarly, a theology of worship is not developed in a vacuum, and this is the great trap of the popular church or book. The promoted one-size-fits-all worship service, even from the author with no claimed theological bias or the “non-denominational” church, was developed out of a specific theological context—one that the reader may not share, and one that the author may not even consciously identify. Pastors must understand the theologies out of which models for worship have emerged so that they can understand how such models might reasonably intersect their local church context. (And to echo the previous point, those books were written without any knowledge of the unique local congregation or the skills and resources contained therein. References to technology, musicianship, liturgics, or even basic song leadership might not apply to a church until certain skills are cultivated.) Popular books about corporate worship are not necessarily helpful to a local church.

But church members and worship leaders may not know that, and they may propose to adopt a wide range of suggestions and examples from those popular books or popular church’s services. That is fine and healthy; it means they are paying attention to the wide world and willing to bring ideas to church leadership. It also provides priceless opportunities for leadership—beginning with understanding what kind of suggestion is being made. Pastors must learn to distinguish a principle from an application. Most input from church members will likely involve a specific song, a specific musical instrument, a specific vocal technique, or a specific piece of technology; those are *applications* of a theology of worship—the “what” (and will be addressed below). Theological leadership listens for the “why.” When church or staff members begin explaining *why* a song or instrument should be introduced, that discussion can be more easily processed through a theology of worship. Pastors must process it first themselves and then use the opportunity to help the member “think theologically,” meaning understand the theology out of which the suggestion springs and how that theology meshes with that of their church. This is not done condescendingly, like a guru to a seeker, but together, like fellow travelers. Pastors do not have to have every answer to provide strong leadership, but they must be able to guide the church and church leaders to that answer.

Step 2: Facilitate Effective Dialog about Worship within Your Local Church

This guidance is the next part of theological leadership, not only having something to say but also the ability to communicate it effectively. Theological leadership in worship requires that pastors communicate a theology of worship to the church and church leadership such that they can understand and apply it. This step demands that pastors be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their worship leaders. The

previous observation about the irrelevance of titles and degrees and even experience applies here. What does the worship leader actually know and understand of theology and denominational identity? An effective pastor engages church leaders based on who they are while maintaining a vision of who they could (should) be. An effective pastor also recognizes the relationship between skill sets. The ability to direct a choir does not necessarily include the ability to select octavos best suited to that choir's skill, let alone ones appropriate musically and theologically for that church. Likewise, the ability to play an instrument and sing has nothing inherent to do with worship leadership. Pastors must understand—with the helpful observations of trusted church members—the strengths of their worship leaders. Then, with the help of church leadership in the context of their theology of worship, pastors must also understand what skills the church needs those leaders to have. As the theological leader, pastors must find ways to build up their worship leaders in those necessary skills (not the least of which would be theological acumen) and then help them apply those skills within their working theology of worship.

Yes, that is easier said than done. Some pastors will find that their worship leaders do not have the gifts or callings appropriate to the needs and realities of their church and must ask whether they can realistically develop them. Some pastors will find that they themselves do not have the communication skills necessary to work effectively with the existing church staff and must ask if *they* can realistically develop them. Many pastors will discover that personality conflicts (and character flaws/sin) get in the way. Staff members, particularly those being stretched in areas not part of their training, want to justify expectations and prove their competence, and the process of learning and applying a theology of worship requires humility, self-reflection, patience, and hard work on the part of both the worship leaders and pastors. Furthermore, musicians can have unique personalities that pastors may not understand.¹⁷ The starting point to overcoming these obstacles is a strong pastoral relationship, one in which the worship leaders see “the” pastor as “their” pastor. Such a relationship will not fix communication problems, but it will give all parties the desire to pursue a resolution.

The obstacles will go beyond the communication process. Pastors must understand that their ideas may be challenged. Disagreements may be voiced unpleasantly. If there are any inconsistencies in their theology, those will be revealed. Conclusions may run counter to original intentions. Pastors must be humble and patient enough to hear and engage input, disagreement, and debate. Pastors must maintain constructive boundaries of that debate. If the pastor resorts to a “my way or the highway” tactic, this process will fail, and the pastor will be revealed not to be a

17. This observation comes from two decades of being a musician. For further reading on this subject, consider Rory Noland, *The Heart of the Artist* (Zondervan, 1999). Noland is a former worship leader at Willow Creek Community Church and founder of another valuable resource, Heart of the Artist Ministries.

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theological leader. (Note: that pastor may be able to operate the church like a theater for a time, but it will eventually collapse under the weight of a cult of personality.) If church leadership proves intractable, then the pastor should be concerned. And the pastor should decide whether to be more concerned with the thoughts of people or of God.

But when this process unfolds under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit, a proper theology of worship will steer pastors and church leaders *away* from such land mines. Arguments will not be made based on opinion and preference, but on a shared sense of what is right in the sight of God and the identity of the church. The church will know that the pastor intends to guide the church a certain direction with reason, and they will know the safe limits within which they can constructively criticize that direction, knowing that the pastor will not only speak in love, but also listen in love. Worship leaders who understand and are a part of a church's theology of worship will be the pastor's greatest allies, putting their creativity and ingenuity to work in harmony of this theology. Worship leaders who trust and have a meaningful relationship with the pastor will warn of undercurrents of discontent or identify a crisis before it comes to pass. Worship leaders will not have to cope with vague statements such as "I want us to be more contemporary." Likewise, pastors can help worship leaders fill their roles with greater confidence and the freedom of understanding the boundaries and the support they have from the church.

Effective Leadership Results in Effective Application

Constructed properly, a contextualized theology of worship will help pastors and worship leaders be intentional about every possible decision related to their worship services. This spans from the obvious, such as whether the theology of a song is appropriate for corporate use, to the less obvious, such as whether an arrangement of a song is appropriate for their team and congregation, to the otherwise daunting, such as whether the church should sit on chairs or pews.

A church's theology of worship must ultimately be able to be applied to the "what" of the worship service. Consider the decisions just mentioned, such as a song's arrangement. If a key value in the church (reflected in the theology of worship) is members in ministry, then that arrangement should be playable by a potentially wide range of musical skill. If a key value is the gospel, then it should not highlight major instrumental sections or solos that actually distract from Christ by focusing on the instrumentalist. If the theology of worship emphasizes congregational involvement, then it must use rhythms and ranges that are accessible to the people of the church. There may be multiple arrangements equally appropriate, in which case the choice might be made based on the aesthetic of the church. Consider also the choice of chairs versus pews. If a key value is efficient use of resources, then the more versatile chairs would probably be the right choice. If the theology of worship

emphasizes sacred space, then the pew, being more associated with the traditional church building, might be the better choice. If a key value is respect for elders, then it could be a question of comfort (padded chair) or tradition (pew). None of those emphases are mutually exclusive, which means that the theology of worship helps pastors and worship leaders make intentional decisions based on a consistent balance or priority of theological principles and values.

Some applications are more complex than they might first appear. Jeremiah Burroughs placed a high value on scripture, but he was not satisfied with a weekly reading of scripture. Rather, his entire worship service was drawn from the pages of the Bible. Similarly, John Tombes placed a high value on the gospel, but he was not satisfied with a basic post-sermon invitation. Rather, he sought to craft a worship service in which every element reinforced the story of Jesus Christ. The words of the sermon are not enough to evaluate; neither are the words of the songs. Every rubric (transitional statements and interjections) and gesture and pause and sequence equally tells the story of worship. And pastors can lead their churches and worship leaders to take them seriously.

Effective Leadership Comes from Love, Not Fear

There are several fears that can interfere with theological leadership. First, pastors can fear the repercussions of a mistake. Worship services are unique in that they garner an opinion from everyone connected with the church (member, visitor, or family member), and many pastors have been fired due to a poor decision related to the worship service. The process outlined in this article is designed to prevent (a) just such a mistake and (b) just such a response. Through strong pastoral relationships, a strong and shared vision, and extensive discussion about the identity and direction of the church, pastors will be warned away from major mistakes, and they will have consensus support of the congregation when the inevitable disagreement arises. If a church is catastrophically divided over an element of corporate worship, there are more fundamental matters the pastor needs to worry about.

Pastors can fear losing a worship leader who is a talented musician if they push this process too hard. That is unfortunate. Music and music leadership (in worship) has been placed into a niche in which skill outweighs calling. Churches and pastors need to ask an important question: have they intended to hire a musician or a minister? If a musician (in other words, a hire based on skill and not calling), then how much authority do they want to invest over a primary spiritual transaction (the worship service) in a person without a spiritual investment in the congregation? If a minister, then how effective do they think a staff can possibly be that cannot work together in matters of critical importance to the church? And are their answers consistent with the theology of worship that they have identified? The Bible notes that while people look on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart. Fear of losing a talent

because that person may not be interested in the challenge of theological application is the musical equivalent of caring more about the outward appearance than the heart. The prospect of losing a talented musician can be discouraging—every church fears a poorly-led service—but fear cannot outweigh hope. It is amazing what careful (and caring) theological leadership can accomplish.

Pastors might also fear the potential power struggle that this process might instigate, either between the pastor and a well-paid and well-liked worship leader, or the pastor and a powerful faction in the congregation. For example, older deacons who happen to be important financial contributors of a church may resist cultural changes in a worship service designed to reflect a younger or multiracial element of the congregation. That response is simple. Fear of anything except the Lord Himself cannot be a factor in the exercise of theological leadership. Prudence, however, can be. Prudence asks the question behind the question. If a potential change in worship practices will almost certainly cause a split in the church, is that change truly best for that church? Does that change have to be implemented immediately? If a pastor and church leadership truly believe that such a change is necessary and best for a church, should there not be a way that church can embrace it?

The attitude toward any fear must always be the same. If fear can dictate theology in a local church, then that church is in serious trouble, and that pastor has utterly failed in providing theological leadership. Of course, the same can be said for any decision motivated by something outside of that church's theology of worship. If a pastor wants to make a change out of envy, or out of vanity, or based on an experience at another church, or any number of other inappropriate motivations, that church is in trouble. And sometimes change born out of a good motivation can still be wrong for that church. The beauty of a theology of worship is its ability to snuff out such failures. Decisions made for an inappropriate reason can be quickly identified, as can decisions made toward an inappropriate end. Those paths can be cut off before they are even brought before church members, let alone implemented.

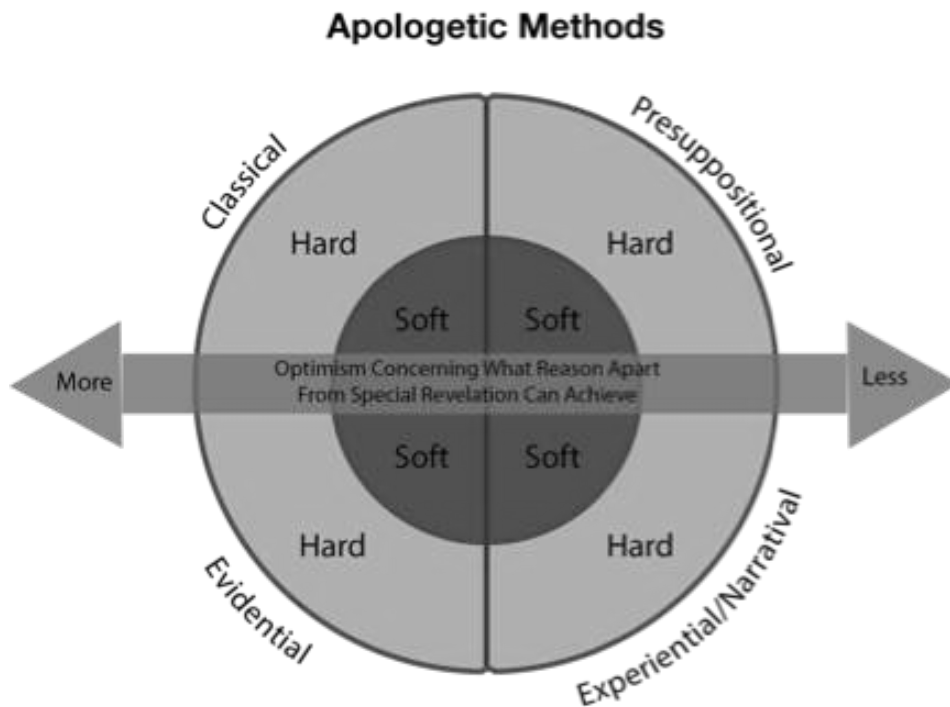
Pastors are the worship leaders of every local church. They help guide the church in identifying a theology of worship. They work with worship leaders in refining that theology and applying it to the worship services. They do not have to be experts in music, technology, or anything else if they have a humble commitment to learning from the Bible, listening to the congregation, and being a pastor to the worship leaders. But that process of constructing and applying a theology of worship is not an end unto itself. Pastors should never lose sight of their ultimate purpose as the church's worship leader: to lead their churches in the worship of Almighty God for the gift of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. If the process ever becomes discouraging, or the people get sidetracked by questions of lesser importance, pastors can always take refuge in their truest role as worship leader, that of the lead worshiper. Time spent with God in corporate worship is the great rejuvenator of every process. That time will remind every pastor why this process is worth every investment.

A Way Forward for Pastor-Apologetists: Navigating the Apologetic Method Debate

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Introduction

When discussing apologetics with pastors, I routinely hear two types of responses concerning method: frustration and confusion.¹ While often having been taught a particular approach that seems logical and fits within their theological tradition, they nevertheless find the approach is too confining. “Real life discussions do not work like that,” they tell me. The systems they learned in seminary classes made sense but in the messiness of ministry they often fall short. Dealing with people who don’t

1. Adapted from *Apologetics at the Cross* by Josh D. Chatraw and Mark D. Allen. Copyright © 2018 by Josh D. Chatraw and Mark D. Allen. Used by permission of Zondervan. www.zondervan.com.

primarily theorize their way through life or who seem to have completely different operational frameworks, they become either frustrated with their neighbors or dissatisfied with apologetics as they understand it (and often both). Others are simply confused by the various methods, and when they try to delve into the methodological discussions they find some of the disputes akin to theological hair splitting and the polarizing tone uninviting.²

In hopes of alleviating some of this confusion and frustration, this article will summarize four apologetic approaches and discuss their potential strengths and weaknesses. As you consider the opening chart, keep in mind that the views of some apologists will not fit neatly in the center of one of the four major quadrants.³ For example, some views might sit in one quadrant while gravitating towards another, and one might even lie on the line between two quadrants. The *soft* versions of each approach are a reminder that these four methods are not necessarily sealed off from each other. The vertical axis divides the chart along a spectrum according to how optimistic each approach is towards the usefulness of natural revelation apart from special revelation.

Two Evidence-Based Approaches

The category of *evidence-based apologetics* encompasses both approaches represented on the left side of the graphic: classical and evidential apologetics. Due to their similarities, I will consider the two side-by-side.

Classical Apologetics (or The Two-Step Approach)

Classical apologetics uses what is often referred to as a “two-step approach,” which argues first for theism in general and then for Christianity as the most reasonable form of theism. The logic behind this approach is that a person must initially take the first step and accept the likelihood of a deity before they can accept that a specific God—the Christian God—exists. If a person has an assumed framework of naturalism and does not allow for the possibility of the supernatural, then they will often quickly dismiss core Christian claims. The first step (arguing for *a god*), therefore, makes room for the second step (arguing for *the Christian God*).

2. In recent years, more apologists have been charitably listening to alternative strategies, finding strengths in other approaches, and even acknowledging possible weaknesses in their own apologetic traditions. See for instance, David K. Clark, *Dialogical Apologetics: A Person-Centered Approach to Christian Defense* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 103, who points out how the various methods each have both valid points and blind spots that should be observed.

3. The apologetic taxonomy in this short article, like other attempts to summarize apologetic camps, cannot be exhaustive. For examples of other ways to divide up the apologetic approaches, see Brian K. Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015) and Steven B. Cowan ed., *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

Classical apologists, compared to the approaches that are represented on the right side of the graphic, tend to display a higher degree of confidence in what human reason can accomplish apart from special revelation. They assert that reason and evidence can be used to establish theism and the historical claims of Christianity. Natural revelation apart from special revelation can demonstrate the high probability of realities such as God's existence, Jesus' crucifixion, and even Jesus' resurrection from the dead. However, most would still assert that special revelation is necessary for conversion.

Potential Strengths of Classical Apologetics

First, classical apologetics emphasizes the Bible's endorsement of using evidence and logic to persuade. Classical apologists do not shy away from the Bible's command that Christians be prepared to give reasons for the hope that they have, nor do they avoid the various instances in Scripture where logic and evidence are used to persuade.⁴

Second, classical apologetics has promoted the development of serious scientific, philosophical, and historical evidence for Christianity. In other words, classical apologists, rather than simply saying that Christians *can* use these types of arguments, emphatically assert that Christians *should* use and develop them. For this reason, classical apologetics has produced some of the most rigorous arguments for Christianity. Also, in the two-step approach they use to develop these arguments, classical apologists have rightly emphasized and shown the importance of integrating multiple disciplines in apologetics—specifically science, philosophy, and history.

Evidentialist Apologetics (or The One-Step Approach)

Evidentialism, also known as the “single-step approach,” is similar to the classical approach in that it has a higher degree of confidence in human reason unaided by special revelation than the views on the left side of our graphic. However, unlike the classical apologist, the evidentialist does not believe that the first step in the two-step method—arguing for a general theism—is *necessary* in making a case for Christianity. Instead, evidentialists will start their apologetic by focusing on a historical case for either one of or a combination of the following: the general reliability of the Bible, the identity of Jesus, and the resurrection of Jesus. Evidentialists argue that this approach is simpler in that it takes others straight to the central components of Christianity: the life of Jesus, the crucifixion, and the resurrection. In short, the evidentialist apologist believes that appeals to the traditional proofs for theism are unnecessary because historical evidence alone is strong enough to convince even those who deny theism.

4. E.g., Ps. 19:1; Lk 1:1–4; John 20:30–31; Acts 1:1–3, 26:26; Rom. 1:19–20; 1 Cor. 15:6.

Potential Strengths of Evidential Apologetics

First, evidential apologetics quickly takes others to the evidence for the historical elements of the gospel: Jesus, his death, and his resurrection. This fits well with the Bible's willingness to point to evidence and the way it emphasizes the centrality of the gospel (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:1–8). As some evidentialists point out, the first step in the classical model can often lead to entanglement in long debates over complicated issues of science and philosophy, whereas the evidentialist model gets straight to the point: Jesus.

Second, evidential apologetics has promoted rigorous historical argumentation for Christianity. Christianity has a unique historic flavor to it. Unlike the gods of other religions, the Christian God did not just send a messenger to speak his revelation into human history; he himself entered into human history as the revelation. Thus, the heart of the Christian claim is, among other religions, uniquely historical. The best of evidential apologetics has stayed attuned to the latest historical scholarship and archeology in order to not only answer the questions of skeptics but also to make a case for the historical reliability of the Bible and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Potential Weaknesses of Evidence-Based Approaches

In pointing out the weaknesses of each apologetic tradition, I am not suggesting that everyone necessarily falls prey to these critiques—note the word *potential* in the heading above. There are, however, some concerns commonly expressed that appear to be a danger for each apologetic tradition. Usually such concerns are most applicable to those who have isolated themselves from the critiques and insights of other apologetic approaches. Keep in mind that in this particular section I will, because of their similarities, consider the dangers of classical and evidentialist apologetics together under the heading of *evidence-based approaches*.

The first danger of evidence-based approaches is that they can view humans as primarily thinking beings and singularly focus on persuasion that appeals cerebrally. This can happen either in the formal articulation of their methodology or, more likely, in its practical application. The danger is that the evidence-based apologist may treat people like “cognitive machines, defined above all, by thought and rational operations”⁵ and therefore see his job primarily as pouring the right information “into” a non-Christian and getting the wrong information “out” so that they will assent to the propositions of Christianity. While most would not present this so crudely in theory, it is nevertheless a real danger in practice. Those within evidence-based traditions are vulnerable to falling into the trap of just “reasoning

5. James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 42.

logically from the facts” without mastering the ability to appeal to people as believing and desiring beings.

Moreover, the Christian faith is much more than just an acceptance of facts about God. The call of Christ is not to develop enough mental ability or academic rigor to figure out the pathway to truth. Rather, Christianity involves many different dimensions existing beyond a mere mental assent to facts, such as stepping out in faith, receiving grace, submitting to Jesus, accepting mystery, and partaking in the love of God. However, we must not construct straw men: many evidence-based apologists would agree with the statements the previous paragraph makes about Christianity. Still, because of their emphasis on reason, the danger remains that in practice, evidence-based apologists may unintentionally make Christianity sound more like the answer to a math problem than a passionate call of a loving husband to his lost bride.

Second, evidence-based approaches can lack an appreciation for human situatedness. Sometimes evidence-based apologists will make it sound as if they are simply using common sense and reason recognized by all: “The truth is really obvious, so why can’t everyone see it?” The problem is that with the advent of modern pluralism and the sociology of knowledge, it becomes clear that there are plenty of very intelligent people who do not see the truth Christians do as “really obvious.” In his important work on the development of doctrine, Alister McGrath makes this point when he writes that if apologetics is understood “as an attempt to justify the ‘rationality’ or ‘reasonableness’ of Christian beliefs *on the basis of the notion of universally valid patterns* of reason and thought,” then the apologetic enterprise is in trouble.⁶

McGrath is not arguing for relativism, which can be dismissed as self-refuting. Nor is McGrath saying that there are no points of contact between believers and those outside of the Christian community. At play here is an important distinction between, on the one hand, what we might call *basic logic*—which in some sense is universal and is used, for example, in mathematics and entailed in the law of non-contradiction—and, on the other hand, the *larger frameworks of rationality and self-evident truths* held to by certain cultures and groups in history.⁷ For instance, it seems self-evident to many westerners that all humans are worthy of respect and dignity. Certainly, Christianity has taught this and has left its mark on western culture to such an extent that it might seem like common sense. However, belief in the dignity and worth of all human beings is far from a universal norm embraced by all cultures in

6. Alister McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundations of Doctrinal Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), 199 (emphasis mine).

7. *Ibid.*, 90.

history.⁸ Thus, as the Scottish philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre has stressed, when we are speaking about these broader claims of justice or practical rationality—even those seemingly “obvious” to us—we must ask, “Whose justice and which rationality are we talking about?”⁹ As Christians we affirm there is a true rationality rooted in God and his gospel, but we should recognize that others assume different competing frameworks for rationality.

If you find yourself preferring the evidence-based apologetic approaches or are already working within classical or evidential apologetics, you ought to be aware of and avoid the “it’s just obvious” mentality. For while your interpretation of the evidence might seem obvious to you, those who have not assumed a Christian framework—or at least a framework that has significant overlap to it—will often not see it as “common sense.”

Third, ultimately Scripture should assess what makes for a “good” argument.

In determining the rules for a sound apologetic argument, some are pushing Scripture aside in favor of autonomous human reason. This critique pointedly asks: “Who determines what the ultimate standard is for what is true and false? How do we judge between competing systems of rationality? Can we line up more proofs and evidence to support our proofs and evidence?”

In addition to using reason as evidence-based methods stress, *Christian* apologists should acknowledge that God’s Word has the final say in what makes for a “good” argument. This does not mean that Christians have no connecting points with the unbeliever or that the logic and morality of Scripture will *always* seem strange to outsiders. However, at times the Bible’s logic and ethic will seem at odds with the world around us. A divine being suffering as a human will seem foolish to many, and in fact, some critics, horrified, have remarked, “[that] sounds like divine child abuse.”

8. See Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 311–61; Charles Taylor, *Sources of Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 515–18. John Gray, from a secular perspective argues that “cast off Christian hopes” ground much of western morality: “We inherit our belief—or pretence that moral values take precedence over all other valuable things from a variety of sources, but chiefly from Christianity.” *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* (London: Granta, 2002), 88.

9. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 399. MacIntyre is not denying there are some basic laws of logic (such as the law of non-contradiction) that are universal. Also, see McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine*, 90. Lest they be misunderstood, neither McIntyre or McGrath are arguing for forms of fideism or blind faith against logic. For MacIntyre, the way forward is asking which truth claims within a particular tradition offers the most “explanatory power” as the last line in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* points out, “The rival claims to truth of contending traditions of enquiry depend for their vindication upon the adequacy and the explanatory power of the histories which the resources of each of those traditions in conflict enable their adherents to write” (403). See Alister McGrath, *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers and Skeptics Find Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), for his take on how this should be developed in the field of apologetics. Also see Lesslie Newbigin’s, chapter entitled, “Reason, Revelation, and Experience” in *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 52–65 and Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), xii–xiv.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that responses like this should not surprise us: “Christ crucified [is] a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles” (1 Cor. 1:23). As Christians, we must be careful to allow God’s word set the parameters for defining a “good” argument, rather than allowing shifting cultural frameworks to decide (1 Cor. 1:25).

Consider another example: an evidence-based apologist might appeal to the “current historical methods” as a supposed neutral arbiter of questions such as “Who was Jesus really?” and “Did Jesus really rise again?” However, such an apologist would be missing an important question: what are these “current historical methods” and who has defined them? Historical methods can assume norms that work against the framework of Christianity. Furthermore, no method works independently of the persons applying it. That is why, for instance, twenty-first century western historians have produced such different portraits of Jesus.¹⁰ Therefore, when referring to the “rules of history” it is important not to imply that either “the current historical methodology” or the historians themselves can operate as a neutral determiner of truth. Nor do historical events interpret themselves. Special revelation is needed to tell us what historical events ultimately mean. However, we need to be balanced.

Christian apologetics will at times rightly and productively employ what can be called *thin reasoning*, playing by some of the rules of the current historical methodology. One can appeal to human intuitions or a shared understanding of the “good” or “rational” without supplanting the Word of God as the final authority. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that it is not as though the methodology of any discipline, including history, has dropped down from the sky in perfect form so that it can be appealed to uncritically as a neutral arbiter of truth. At times, we should use *thick reasoning* and be willing to pull the rug out from underneath the very assumptions made by any given secular methodology.

10. The result of the various Quests for the historical Jesus has not been a single historical Jesus but instead a variety of competing portraits of the historical Jesus, which are too many to list here. Dale Allison, who has made a career in writing extensively in the field of Jesus research, is an example of a growing trend among scholars to question historical Jesus research as it has traditionally been conducted. After noting some of the variety of the portraits of Jesus that are clearly “not complementary but contradictory,” he points out that the Quests have only achieved agreement on minimal and basic information about Jesus. He goes on to provide examples of how past scholarly opinions, which were at one time accepted basically as facts among critical scholars, are now out of favor and are viewed as misguided relics of the past.” He then adds, “This is one reason why I am allergic to the phrase ‘assured critical result.’” *The Historical Christ and the Theological Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 10–11. For similar sentiments see Scot McKnight, “The Jesus We’ll Never Know,” *Christianity Today* 54, no. 4 (April 2010): 26; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996); Jonathan T. Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), also names Richard Bauckham, Markus Bockmuehl, Richard Hays, and Francis Watson as internationally respected scholars who “question historical Jesus studies as they have been practiced” (93). My point here is not that historical research is unimportant. Rather, the point is that scholars themselves disagree on historical methodology, so appealing to this methodology uncritically as a kind of neutral arbitrator for determining the “facts” fails to do justice to the scholarly conversations that are actually occurring.

Soft versus Hard Classical Apologetics

Some apologists, which I refer to as **hard classical apologists**, insist that a logical argument for theism *must* precede a historical argument for the reliability of the Bible or the resurrection. In their view, a non-Christian person will not even consider evidence for the supernatural events of Scripture unless they first adopt theism.

However, some well-known classical apologists, such as William Lane Craig, seem open to other approaches and could therefore be called **soft classical apologists**. Craig is well known for using the kalam cosmological argument in support of God's existence and then preceding by arguing that Jesus' bodily resurrection offers the best account of the historical evidence. In this way, Craig clearly fits into the standard classical model. However, he also emphasizes the need for various other types of arguments:

Of course, showing Christianity to be true will involve much more than the two arguments above: they are but two links in the coat of mail, and the positive case will need to be accompanied by a defensive case against objections. *The apologetic task, then, is perhaps best seen as a collective project taken on by the believing community.*¹¹

Craig also has expressed the merit of using historical evidence prior to moving on to the second step of the classical apologetics approach. For example, he writes, "I certainly agree that an argument from miracles can be part of a cumulative case for theism."¹² At another point, considering the evidence for the resurrection, Craig writes that the historian "may indeed rightly infer from the evidence that God has acted here in history."¹³ So it seems that for Craig, the first step in the two-step classical argument is ideal, but it might not be absolutely necessary.¹⁴

Craig serves as an example of a leading apologist who prefers the two-step classical method, yet also shows openness by not strictly drawing a line between which types of arguments are allowed in each stage of the two-step approach.

Soft versus Hard Evidential Apologetics

In its ideal form, **hard evidentialist apologetics** would only need to include historical evidences for Jesus, the resurrection, and the Bible, and it would never appeal to philosophy or science to make a case for a theistic worldview in preparation for its historical case for Christianity. While there are some New Testament scholars

11. William Lane Craig, "Classical Apologetics," in Cowan, 53. (Emphasis mine).

12. William Lane Craig, "A Classical Apologist's Response" in Cowan, 122–23.

13. William Lane Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1989), 419.

14. This is what the evidentialist apologist Gary Habermas has argued, who writes that since Craig allows historical evidence as one of the indications for theism, "while the initial step [in the two-step approach] may be helpful, it is not mandatory." "An Evidentialist's Response," in Cowan, 60.

who seem unconcerned with other types of arguments, the hard version of evidential apologetics is rarely adopted formally. Instead, most evidential apologists tend to be **soft evidentialists**, and only say that while the classical arguments for theism can be helpful, they are not *necessary*. In other words, most evidentialists believe that the historical arguments contain enough firepower to make the case for theism and Christianity without having to turn to the first step in classical apologetics. Gary Habermas explains, “Typical arguments for God’s existence are frequently utilized [by evidentialists], but unlike classical apologists, not because they are necessary. Further, evidentialists often begin their discussions of evidence with these theistic arguments.”¹⁵ Thus, the soft form of evidentialism is not so much a “distinct apologetic methodology” which is never willing to use the classical two-step method than it is “a personally preferred style of argumentation.”¹⁶

Presuppositional Apologetics

Found on the right side of the opening summarizing chart, presuppositionalists are less optimistic, if not altogether negative, about what reason apart from special revelation can achieve. Presuppositionalism, as its name suggests, asserts that reasoning does not take place in a vacuum; rather, a person’s reasoning is colored by their presuppositions or assumptions—the lenses through which they see the world. And because non-Christians deny the true God that they know exists, they reason with unbelieving and sinful presuppositions.

Cornelius Van Til, the father of presuppositionalism, argued that we can know with certainty that the Christian God exists because we must presuppose him to be rational. Thus, for many presuppositionalists, probabilistic or “best explanation” arguments are off-limits because such arguments do not do justice to the power of the Christian case and would give unbelievers an excuse for their unbelief. According to Van Til, apologists who appeal to human reason actually inflame human sinfulness. He argued that traditional apologetics reinforces human autonomy and makes unbelievers the judge of God, when instead, as presuppositionalists assert, unbelievers should submit to God as judge. The unbeliever’s problem is not knowledge; it is submission.¹⁷

This raises an obvious question: Should Christians just proclaim the gospel and forego apologetics? What is an apologist to do? The presuppositionalist, taking seriously both the corruption of human reasoning and the inability of the unregenerate to comprehend spiritual realities, sets out to undermine the very framework of non-Christian thinking. The presuppositionalist asserts that the authority of the Bible should

15. Ibid., 60–61.

16. These are William Lane Craig’s words. “A Classical Apologist’s Response,” in Cowan, 122.

17. Brian Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 72.

be the assumed starting point in apologetic discourse. As Van Til himself said, “The only ‘proof’ of the Christian position is that unless its truth is presupposed there is no possibility of ‘proving’ anything.”¹⁸ Thus, the goal of this apologetic approach is to undermine a non-Christian’s worldview by demonstrating that without the Christian God they cannot consistently claim meaning, truth, or logic—and that to the extent that they *do* use such things, they are only “borrowing capital” from Christianity. This method is referred to as the *transcendental argument*. By questioning an unbeliever’s presuppositions and requiring them to justify their rationality, the apologist reduces their position to absurdity. Once the unbeliever realizes that their current worldview cannot provide sufficient justification, Christianity is then articulated as the only option that makes rational sense of the world.

Potential Strengths of Presuppositional Apologetics

Presuppositional apologetics helpfully emphasizes...

- *the importance of Scripture*
- *that non-Christians assume presuppositions which negatively impact their reasoning ability*
- *that sin damages the whole person*

Presuppositionalism offers an important reminder that the Word of God, rather than particular and local cultural frameworks of the day, should be the undergirding framework through which Christians view reality—charting a vision for what is good, rational, and meaningful. Scripture should be the “norming norm.” Moreover, moral issues cannot be neatly separated from rational issues. Humans are not neutral agents out to discover God unimpeded; rather, they are sinful beings who are limited because they suppress the knowledge of God (Rom. 1:18–32).

Potential Weaknesses of Presuppositional Approaches

First, most apologists do not find that the transcendental argument alone has the ability to demonstrate the truthfulness of Christianity. It seems too much to ask one argument to prove the existence of all the attributes of the Christian God. While Christianity provides a lens that makes sense of the world and our cognitive abilities, other worldviews are able to offer intelligible accounts, even though they explain less. Moreover, according to their own contrasting framework of rationality, many will find certain Christian doctrines themselves irrational (e.g., the full deity and full humanity of Christ existing as one person or the doctrine of the Trinity), so the claim that their non-Christian view is irrational could easily be turned back

18. Cornelius Van Til, “My Credo,” in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, ed. E. R. Geehan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1971), 21.

on the apologist. Thus, a variety of different kinds of arguments would be needed in support.

Second, presuppositionalists have lacked the ability to effectively transfer their methodology and arguments to a broad audience. Often their arguments have not been articulated in user-friendly ways, and they have lacked needed specifics.¹⁹ It is one thing for philosophers to argue about how to ground rationality, but it is another thing when faced with a skeptic who is raising issues about the Bible's reliability, someone who is struggling to believe in Jesus' bodily resurrection, or a Muslim asserting the self-attesting nature of the Quran. This is why almost all biblical scholars and practitioners, no matter their apologetic tradition, end up using a variety of kinds of both positive and negative arguments.

The way some proponents articulate this apologetics system can make it sound like a narrow, circular argument. The presuppositionalist will rightly assert that in some sense all reasoning assumes an authority, whether it be the authority of a certain kind of rationality, a methodology that bases its standards on empiricism, or, in their case, Scripture itself. And yet, if presuppositionalists do not modify their approach to emphasize the importance of giving positive evidence for belief like softer versions have done, it will continue to lack a broader appeal as a methodology.²⁰ Moreover, various presuppositionalists themselves have admitted that a weakness in the presuppositional literature is that its authors have not paid sufficient attention to developing various types of specific arguments for Christianity.²¹

Soft versus Hard Presuppositional Apologetics

Hard presuppositionalists maintain that a transcendental argument should be rigidly distinguished from evidence-based arguments.²² However, **soft presuppositionalists**, such as John Frame, argue that the transcendental argument, rather than simply being seen as one argument among many, should be seen as the *goal* of all apologetic

19. John M. Frame, *Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015), xxxii–xxxiii.

20. While hardened forms of presuppositionalism claim an “absolute certain argument” for the biblical God, they lack the specifics of showing how this is done. For this critique, see John M. Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1998), 400.

21. Frame writes, “As he [Habermas] points out, I too have acknowledged that weakness in the presuppositional literature.... I am happy to recommend writings of Habermas, Craig, and others in these areas [for Christian evidences].” “A Presuppositional Apologist’s Closing Remarks,” in Cowan, 358.

22. Greg Bahnsen, *Van Til’s Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1998), 496–529.

arguments.²³ In contrast to proponents of hard versions of presuppositionalism, Frame does not expect, “that all the elements of biblical theism are presupposed in intelligible communication.”²⁴ Furthermore, while affirming that Christianity is “absolutely compelling,” soft versions of presuppositionalism allow that individual arguments can be helpful without being certain (i.e., probabilistic arguments) and that Scripture calls for evidence and arguments to be given in support of Christianity.²⁵ Finally, soft presuppositionalists like Frame do not see much difference between direct and indirect arguments. While Frame sees promoting autonomous reasoning as a problem, he does not think that simply arguing in a more direct way necessarily means an apologist is doing so, for the apologist could well be correctly appealing to an unbeliever’s repressed knowledge of God.

The result is that in this soft version of presuppositionalism, the presuppositional apologist is free to employ many, if not all, of the more traditional arguments of classical and evidentialist apologists.²⁶ So what, then, distinguishes Frame’s softer form of presuppositionalism from the other forms of apologetics? Frame acknowledges that on the surface there might not be much difference at all: “It may no longer be possible to distinguish presuppositional apologetics from traditional apologetics merely by externals—by the form of argument, the explicit claim of certainty or probability, etc. Perhaps presuppositionalism is more an attitude of the heart, a spiritual condition, than an easily describable, empirical phenomenon.”²⁷

Experiential/Narrative Apologetics

For reasons that need not concern us in this essay, what I call the experiential narrative approach has not been frequently discussed in conversations about method. Similar to presuppositionalists, experiential/narrative (E/N) apologists stress that all evidence and reasoning depends on a person’s particular framework, and they tend toward pessimism regarding human reason apart from special revelation.²⁸ But whereas presuppositionalists seek to undermine an unbeliever’s rationality in order to show them that they must assume Christian propositions to be rational, E/N apologists

23. Frame writes, “[W]e should be concerned to show that God is the condition of all meaning, and our epistemology should be consistent with that conclusion.” At the same time, Frame affirms that the transcendental argument is not a magic bullet, since its conclusion “cannot be reached in a single, simple syllogism.” He concludes, therefore, that a transcendental argument “normally, perhaps always, requires many sub-arguments...some of [which] may be traditional theistic proofs or Christian evidences. Frame, “Closing Remarks,” in Cowan, 360.

24. Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought*, 316.

25. Ibid.

26. John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1994), 85.

27. Ibid., 87.

28. Myron Bradley Penner, *The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 53.

interact with unbelievers by inviting them to participate in an experience and embrace a story that fits better with the actualities of life.²⁹

Many E/N apologists tend to deemphasize the usefulness of the traditional proofs, and some even go so far as to question their propriety. E/N apologetics stresses that “proofs” for Christianity rest not in logical deductions or hard evidence, but in the lives of the community of faith and the power of the apostolic message. Traditional “proofs” for God are problematic because they can deny the essence of Christianity, which is a life and story to be lived out, not a series of propositional statements that can be proven. E/N apologetics, while maintaining the importance of orthodox beliefs such as the incarnation, suffering, and resurrection of Christ, asserts that these truths come to us in story form and must be embraced and lived out in order to be truly understood. Human reason and logic can be helpful in understanding the proclamation of the gospel, but they do not ground the gospel.³⁰ As Myron Penner explains, “One of the serious problems for modern apologetics is that it treats Christianity as if it were an objective ‘something’ (e.g., a set of propositions or doctrines) that can be explained, proven, and cognitively mastered,” when instead, “Christianity...is much more a way or an invitation to live (walk, grow) in the truth than it is a doctrine or set of beliefs (a position) whose truth we can grasp and cognitively master, as the modern apologetic paradigm seems to imply.”³¹

At this point you might be asking, “How does this practically play out in the apologetic task?”

Christians are to “prove” the truth of Christianity not by offering people rational arguments, but by ordering our lives around the gospel in ways that display the reality of Jesus. A faithful Christian life is the proof for the truth of the gospel because it “creates the conditions for the intelligibility of the truths of the Christian gospel by publically displaying...a way of being in which its claims make sense—a life that can only be made sense of in terms of those claims.”³²

This does not mean that offering reasons for belief in Christianity is off the table for the E/N apologist. However, their apologetic focuses primarily, and often exclusively, on internal, intuitive reasons. In other words, the gospel story is told and the unbeliever is asked to try it on for size. Rather than offering proofs, the E/N apologist offers invitations for the unbeliever to see how Christianity harmonizes with their deepest human intuitions and life experiences.

29. See Francis Spufford, *Unapologetic: Why, Despite Everything, Christianity Can Still Make Surprising Emotional Sense* (New York: HarperOne, 2013), 67.

30. *Ibid.*, 52, 132.

31. *Ibid.*, 66

32. *Ibid.*, 128

Potential Strengths of Experiential/Narrative Apologetics

First, E/N apologetics rightly emphasizes the importance of human desire and imagination. The E/N approach warns against a dry rationalism, rightly recognizing that Scripture does much more than simply appeal to our brains. E/N apologists also point out that the vast majority of people in today's culture do not arrive at their deepest commitments through "proofs based on simple logic."³³

Adhering to all or a combination of 1) an anthropology that emphasizes love as the primary human motivator, 2) their own observations about the current cultural moment, and 3) the example that Scripture sets, E/N apologists insist that story, images, and creativity are important elements in Christian persuasion. Through these insights, E/N apologetics makes a valuable contribution to apologetics.

Second, by stressing the importance of the corporate church as a living apologetic, E/N apologetics is recovering an ancient, scriptural argument. One of the core arguments in the early church was that Christians lived and died better than anyone else and this type of argument finds a wealth of support in the pages of the New Testament.³⁴

Third, E/N apologetics is concerned with understanding how living in different cultures shapes people's experiences in life. By understanding the framework of a particular culture, the E/N apologist can potentially be in a better position to explain the Christian faith and show how the gospel story both subverts and appeals to the deepest aspirations of that culture.

Potential Weaknesses of Experiential/Narrative Apologetics

First, E/N apologetics can minimize propositional truths and cognitive appeals. Some apologists, perceiving what they see as overly rationalistic approaches dominating contemporary apologetics, perhaps swing the pendulum too far in the opposite direction. While humans are not merely thinking things, thinking is a part of their being. Similarly, while Christianity is not merely made up of propositional statements, propositional statements make up much of the Bible. As Christians we must confess propositional statements—"Jesus is Lord" (Rom. 10:9)—and call on others to do the same. In short, effective E/N apologists will be careful to avoid responding to an apparent reductionism with a reductionism of their own in the opposite direction.

Second, E/N can underutilize historical evidence and linear thinking. Historical evidence is not so conclusive that it can absolutely prove Christianity or coerce someone into acceptance. At the same time, part of Christianity's central

33. David Skeel, while being careful to point out that analytical arguments have their place, emphasizes this point. See his book, *True Paradox: How Christianity Makes Sense of Our Complex World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 23.

34. Recall, for example, the opening explanation of 1 Peter 3:15 in chapter one.

message is the reality that God has acted in human history, entering into space and time in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The New Testament itself clearly assumes that historical data is important.

It is one thing to prefer the E/N approach; it is another thing to completely avoid interacting with the historical and logical arguments for and against Christianity. Just as the effective evidence-based apologist will seek to understand the broader frameworks and cultures that form different backgrounds for reasoning and interpretation, so too will the effective E/N apologist acknowledge that competing frameworks can overlap and that historical and logical arguments can be offered—not to coerce anyone into faith, but to persuade them by supporting and confirming Christianity.

The works of agnostic New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman illustrates the problem of ignoring the historical arguments for Christianity. Ehrman has written multiple best sellers that have been absorbed by anxious Christians, former churchgoers, and hardened unbelievers. One of Ehrman's strengths is his ability to take readers on a tour of what he sees as all the Bible's problems while offering a story, a coming of age tale: *He used to be a conservative evangelical Christian, but then he really started studying the Bible with an open mind, and he grew up. He admitted that the Bible was filled with errors and contradictions. It was a struggle, but he cast off the childish myths he had believed his whole life and faced up to the hard facts: the Bible doesn't really have the answers. Christianity isn't true.*

Ehrman's appeal fits in what the E/N apologist's own narrative says about how persuasion works. In response, an E/N apologist might say, "See, a grand story is what is really appealing. We have to tell another story—a better story!" and indeed, they would have a point. But, Ehrman is not *just* telling a story. Ehrman's anti-Christian apologetic is persuasive because it also includes an examination of the biblical and historical evidence.

Effective apologists will not simply reply to someone who has absorbed Ehrman's argument with existential appeals and a proclamation of the gospel. Ehrman and his followers pose skeptical questions that require interaction with historical details: "Doesn't the Gospel of John's high view of Jesus' identity contradict the Synoptic Gospels' low view of Jesus' identity? Didn't Jesus' body just get left on the cross and eaten by animals? Wasn't the 27-book New Testament canon created because of a power play in the early Church? Wasn't the New Testament forged?" Adequately answering questions such as these requires that an apologist be aware not just of the

frameworks and existential appeals being used, but also of the evidence associated with these issues.³⁵

Soft versus Hard Experiential/Narrative Apologetics

N. T. Wright's book *Simply Christian* serves as an example of what could be called **soft experiential/narrative apologetics**.³⁶ Four basic human experiences, namely the quest for spirituality, a longing for justice, a hunger for relationships, and a delight in beauty (which Wright describes as the "echoes of a voice"), function as the threads that run through this apologetic.³⁷ Wright takes up each of these signposts one at a time, connecting Christian belief with common human experience.

For instance, in reference to the "echo" of a longing for justice, Wright asserts that "simply being human and living in the world" means we have an intuitive desire for justice.³⁸ The Christian story offers an explanation, suggesting that obtaining justice "remains one of the great human goals and dreams" because we have all "heard, deep within [our]selves, the echo of a voice which calls us to live like that." Moreover, the Christian story explains that the source of this voice, God himself, became human in the person of Jesus Christ and did what was necessary in order that justice could ultimately be done for all.³⁹

Essentially, what Wright is saying is, "Just about everyone has this sense that things are just not right with the world? So, what story best explains this intuition and provides the resources for us to respond appropriately? In addition to a longing for justice, Wright does this with each of the four human experiences—commending the Christian story as the best account of the human experience."⁴⁰

35. In responding to Bart Ehrman, my co-authors and I sought to both help readers see the problem with his narrative, offer a story that is more in line with reality, and interact with the historical evidence. See Darrell Bock, Josh Chatraw, and Andreas Kostenberger, *Truth in a Culture of Doubt: Engaging Skeptical Challenges to the Bible* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2014) and the more popular version, Darrell Bock, Josh Chatraw, and Andreas Kostenberger, *Truth Matters: Confident Faith in a Confusing World* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2014).

36. I am specifically using Wright's book *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (San Francisco: Harper, 2006) as an example of an E/N apologetic approach rather than including Wright as a figure that necessarily represents this camp in all of his writings. Wright himself does not normally identify himself as an apologist, though he can easily be considered one of Christianity's leading apologists. However, unlike the other *softer* representatives in this chapter, he has not directly entered the apologetic methodology debate. In fact, the E/N approach is a general description for what I have observed a variety of different Christian authors doing, who have either not articulated their methodology in detail or, for various reasons, remain at the periphery of many of these methodological discussions.

37. Wright adds that these echoes "are among the things which the postmodern, post-Christian, and now increasingly post-secular world cannot escape as questions—strange signposts pointing beyond the landscape of our contemporary culture and out into the unknown" (*Simply Christian*, xi).

38. *Ibid.*, 10.

39. *Ibid.*, 15.

40. *Ibid.*, 55.

What you don't find in *Simply Christian* are the syllogisms or step-by-step arguments that you encounter in traditional classical or evidential approaches.⁴¹ Wright believes that the world we live in is complex, made up of such realities as stories, rituals, beauty, work, and belief which intertwine, to give life a rich texture. Because it is to this complex, richly-textured world that Christianity speaks, becoming a believer in Christ and learning the deeper kind of truth—the source of what makes life mysterious and beautiful and profound—is more like getting to know a person and less like memorizing a series of propositions. The fundamental problem people have is not that they are “ignorant and need better information,” but rather that they are “lost and need someone to come and find [them], stuck in the quicksand waiting to be rescued, dying and in need of a new life...” It is for this reason that Wright's apologetic approach in *Simply Christian* is not to introduce people to logical propositions, but rather to the Christian story and the person of Jesus.

Simply Christian's softened approach is different than idealized versions, which could be called **hard E/N apologetics**, in that Wright sees the importance of making historical and evidentially-based arguments, leading him to offer short arguments for both the reliability of New Testament gospel accounts and the historicity of Jesus' bodily resurrection.⁴² But even here, Wright acknowledges that one can logically adopt other positions. He also goes on to note the importance of how the assumptions that make up people's interpretive frameworks influence how they interpret evidence.⁴³ *Simply Christian* serves as an example of *soft E/N apologetics* because it focuses—albeit not exclusively—on human experience and the explanatory power of the Christian story.

A Way Forward

Imagine that a friend asks you to draw a map that would direct her to your hometown. You enthusiastically draw her a map from your extensive knowledge only to watch her respond with confusion. Despite your emphatic assertions that “this is definitely the best way”, she seems unconvinced. What you may find out, however, is that you have drawn the map coming from the opposite direction she is coming from, and she is riding a bike rather than a car. In other words, a different route was needed. This scenario depicts what often occurs in debates on apologetic method, when some apologists (who advocate the hard version of the apologetic method they adhere to) essentially say that there is only *one* route—theirs—that really works when taking someone on the apologetic journey to Christianity.

However, apologists who adhere to the soft versions of their respective apologetic method recognize there are other ways to draw the map. The interaction between

41. Ibid., 48–50, 55, 57.

42. Ibid., 113.

43. Ibid., 114.

advocates of the soft versions suggests that they still think their apologetic map offers the best explanation for Christianity, but they are (rightly) open to other ways to get there. Their debates are not about whether other maps can be drawn, but rather about *which is the best map*. Finding the best map, however, is not contingent on copying some sort of eternal, universal apologetic map. No such map exists. What these discussions among the advocates of soft versions have not emphasized enough is that different types of apologetic maps not only *can* be drawn, but *should* be drawn. The best apologetic map for any given situation depends on who will be using the map. The demands of pastoral ministry underscore this point.

Pastor-Apologetists, which I would suggest is an identity that all pastors should embrace, find themselves needing to ask: Am I drawing an apologetic map for a scientist who has a rigid methodology for determining truth? An academic philosopher from the West? A father whose son died of cancer at the age of seven? A devout Muslim who moved to America from the Middle East? A mother whose son came out of the closet? A Western businessman who has it all and adheres to a different vision of the good life than the one on offered by Christianity? A first-generation Asian American who thinks about life in eastern categories?

As Edward Carnell wrote concerning apologetics over half a century ago, the *best* apologetic maps are person-specific:

Philosophers err when they confine their attention to “universal man.” There is only one real man: the suffering, fearing individual on the street; he who is here today and gone tomorrow; he whose heart is the scene of a relentless conflict between the self as it is and the self as it ought to be. Whenever a philosopher speaks of mankind in the abstract, rather than concrete individuals at home and in the market, he deceives both himself and all who have faith in his teaching.⁴⁴

Thus, the best maps are not drawn for “mankind in the abstract” but for “concrete individuals.” Nor are we drawing apologetic maps for ourselves. We are drawing maps for others, which means our apologetic should be others-centered.⁴⁵ It also means that while all of the maps should have the same final destination, the person and work of Jesus Christ, there are various types of maps that can and should be drawn.⁴⁶

44. Edward J. Carnell, *Christian Commitment: An Apologetic* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1957), 2.

45. Of course, for Christians everything we do, including apologetics, should first be “God-centered.”

46. Of course, more needs to be said concerning apologetic method. With my co-author, Mark Allen, I have tried to set out a framework for apologetic conversations that incorporates the strengths of each the methods surveyed in this article while placing the gospel at the center. See Joshua D. Chatraw and Mark D. Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross: An Introduction for Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).

Pastor Theologians, The Gospel, and the Ministry of Racial Conciliation

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Abstract: Evangelicalism has a historically tenuous relationship with racial conciliation. As our nation becomes increasingly diverse, we must rethink our approaches to racial conciliation. The purpose of this article is to give pastor theologians a vision and plan for developing a rich ministry of racial conciliation. The paper will situate racial conciliation as a gospel issue that demands a response. Next, the article will explore how scholars have reflected on the source, nature, and solutions to racism. Finally, I develop key practices and implications that will assist pastor theologians in being agents of racial conciliation in both ecclesial and academic spaces.

Key Words: Race, evangelicalism, pastor theologian, racial conciliation, social justice, gospel

Introduction

The evangelical church has a mixed record on racial conciliation. While many evangelicals in the 1800's fought alongside William Wilberforce and John Wesley in the abolition of slavery, others such as George Whitefield embraced the practice.¹ Whitefield nuanced his perspective by treating his slaves with dignity and respect, but still accepted slavery as common practice. But ultimately, those who fought to protect the institution of slavery were defeated, and evangelicalism has since looked upon its history with shame. Fast forward to the civil rights movement of the 1960's, many evangelicals partnered with Martin Luther King, Jr. and others to protest the unjust treatment of African-Americans in the United States. For instance, Rev. Ashton Jones, a White pastor, was incarcerated for six months for leading an

1. Jessica M. Parr, *Inventing George Whitefield: Race, Revivalism, and the Making of a Religious Icon* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2015); Edward J. Cashin, *Beloved Bethesda: A History of George Whitefield's Home for Boys, 1740–2000* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001).

interracial group of protestors to the First Baptist Church of Atlanta. In Jones' words, "You're going into a segregated church; you must be worshipping a segregated God."² But other evangelicals, such as W.A. Criswell and Jerry Falwell considered racial integration to do more harm than good.³ As the struggle for civil rights pressed on, many evangelicals slowly accepted the new order.

In examining the situation today, we find that evangelicals tend to hold racial and ethnic views that fail to understand the complexity of racial oppression. In their landmark study recounted in the book *Divided by Faith*, Emerson and Smith interviewed over 2,000 white evangelicals on how they perceive racial issues in the United States.⁴ The study revealed that white evangelicals often do not acknowledge systemic racism or white privilege. "Most white evangelicals, directed by their cultural tools, fail to recognize the institutionalization of racism - in economic, political, educational, social, and religious systems. They therefore often think and act as if these problems do not exist."⁵ In other words, White evangelicals tend to assume that ethnic communities fail to "succeed" due to some deficiency in their motivation or within their culture. White evangelicals would rather society was color-blind. As Emerson and Smith note, "From the isolated, individualistic perspective of most white evangelicals and many other Americans, there really is no race problem other than bad interpersonal relationships."⁶ The failure of White evangelicals to recognize the plight of racially minoritized groups has continued to perpetuate the assertion of MLK: Sunday morning at 11am is the most segregated hour in the nation.

As an evangelical *Chicano* (Mexican-American) and pastor theologian, I grew concerned with how evangelicalism was handling race relations. In Summer 2017, I conducted a study into the experiences of racially minoritized doctoral students in evangelical seminaries across the United States. My motivation behind this project was to explore how racially minoritized students were doing in predominantly White theological institutions. My own experience in seminary was fruitful and I learned plenty from my professors. But I saw that many of my fellow brothers and sisters of color were struggling during their time there. I wanted to understand their experiences so I could speak truth to the institutions whose goal is to train men and women for ministry in our world today. While I primarily asked my participants questions about their experiences in seminary, I ended with a question about how pastors and ministry leaders could better engage in the ministry of racial conciliation. I will include some of their answers in this paper.

2. Robert P. Jones, *The End of White Christian America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), 165.

3. Ibid., 170.

4. Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

5. Ibid., 170.

6. Ibid., 89.

The purpose of my paper is to help pastor theologians develop a better grasp on the ministry of racial conciliation. I want to highlight the work of evangelical theologians who have grappled with racial conciliation, and how we better seek conciliation through the power of the gospel. I then move to engage with the work of George Yancey, whose thoughts on racism and racial conciliation serve as a guide for moving toward a stronger ministry of racial conciliation. Finally, I develop some implications to assist pastor theologians to build a stronger ministry of racial conciliation in their local contexts.

Definitions

Before I begin, I would like to offer several working definitions of terms I will use throughout this paper. I understand the ministry of the pastor theologian to be different than that of a pastor. The pastor theologian has:

A shepherd's heart and a pastor's primary vocational identity, yet who functions as an intellectual peer of the academic theologian and, as such, produces theological scholarship for the broader ecclesial community that helps shape and inform academic, cultural, and ecclesial discussions with a view to deepening the faith of the people of God.⁷

The pastor theologian thus functions in the third space between being a steward of Christ's church, but engaging theological discussion in the local church, the universal church, and the academy.

The terms "race" and "ethnicity"⁸ are well-defined in the literature, but in sum, I resonate with Syed and Mitchell's definitions of these terms. "Race is considered a socially constructed system of power that confers dominance on the majority and marginalization on the minority. In contrast, ethnicity corresponds to the cultural history, beliefs, and practices of a relatively well-defined group."⁹ Race and ethnicity are often linked though they are not exactly the same, as Syed and Mitchell point out.

Racial Conciliation and the Gospel

Is racial conciliation a "gospel issue?" This is question is crucial for pastor theologians seeking to bring theology to bear on pastoral ministry. Some have made

7. Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian, Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 16.

8. For further discussion on race and ethnicity, see Janell Williams Paris, "Race: Critical Thinking and Transformative Possibilities," 9–32; and Eloise Hiebert Meneses, "Science and the Myth of Biological Race," 33–46. in Robert J. Priest and Alvaro L. Nieves, *This Side of Heaven Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

9. Moin Syed and Laura L. Mitchell, "How Race and Ethnicity Shape Emerging Adulthood," in *The Oxford Handbook of Emerging Adulthood*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

the distinction between “gospel issues” and “social justice issues,”¹⁰ while many evangelical theologians have made the case that the gospel and racial conciliation go hand in hand.

Gombis writes that traditional evangelicalism has removed the gospel from its corporate and cosmic dimensions.¹¹ As we read in Genesis, sin has broken all relationships: our relationship with God, our relationship with each other, and our relationship with creation. “Whereas all aspects of creation and God’s relationship to creation were fully integrated and characterized by trust and openness and full sharing and fellowship, things are now utterly broken, and sin is carried out within broken relationships...So even before we’re out of Genesis, we have murder, incest, rape, racial strife, the enslavement of nations, and on and on.”¹² The gospel is thus a project of conciliation, restoring and redeeming broken relationships into wholly new ones.

Gombis’ understanding of the gospel applies to racial conciliation. He argues that the thrust of the gospel is both individual and social, as Jesus “came proclaiming the arrival of the kingdom of God—the arrival of that new reality in which the brokenness of creation is being restored,” a byproduct being racial conciliation.¹³ This ministry of racial conciliation is central to the ministry of Jesus:

He is constantly going to the outsider and to the ones who are broken, always challenging the social, ethnic, and racial assumptions of Israel—the Syrophoenician woman, the Samaritan, the centurion, the tax-collector, the prostitute, his invitation of women into his inner circle. Jesus’ disciples, because they are sinful humans, are always wanting to draw lines around their privilege with Jesus, just as the Jews wanted to view themselves as having the inside track with God, excluding others, especially those despicable Gentiles. But Jesus announces the arrival of the kingdom to all people, and calls everyone to receive salvation, and calls his disciples to be servants of all—especially outsiders. And this should not be a threat to us, since before the grace of God invaded our lives, we too were outsiders!¹⁴

The ministry of Jesus becomes more complex when we consider the social location of the Nazarene. Otis Moss III writes that in order to understand the ministry of Jesus, we need to understand His place in the first-century world—as a racial,

10. Randy White, “I Don’t Understand the Evangelical Response to Ferguson,” Retrieved October 15, 2017, from <http://www.randywhiteministries.org/2014/11/26/dont-understand-evangelical-response-ferguson/>. White goes as far as to say, “If there is something Biblical that expresses racial reconciliation as a gospel demand, I’ve missed it.”

11. Timothy Gombis, “Racial Conciliation and the Gospel,” *ACT Review* (2006), 117–128.

12. *Ibid.*, 119.

13. *Ibid.*, 120.

14. *Ibid.*, 120.

ethnic, and religious minority.¹⁵ Thus, while it is our tendency in the United States to suggest that Jesus “reached out” to those on the social and religious margins, we fail to realize that Christ Himself was on the margins. This re-centering of Jesus’ ministry on the margins based on historical context radically shapes the way we read Scripture and our approach to ministry; reading Scripture on the margins enables us to challenge our assumptions, better understand the perspectives of others, and expand our theological imaginations.

Like Gombis, D.A. Carson suggests that the gospel is intricately tied to the project of racial conciliation. To seek racial conciliation is not simply a “nice thing to do,” but is rooted rather in Christ’s redemptive work on the cross and in Paul’s effort to build multiethnic, multicultural churches:

Certainly the majority of Christians in America today would happily aver that good race relations are a gospel issue. They might point out that God’s saving purpose is to draw to himself, through the cross, men and women from every tongue and tribe and people and nation; that the church is one new humanity, made up of Jew and Gentile; that Paul tells Philemon to treat his slave Onesimus as his brother, as the apostle himself; that this trajectory starts at creation, with all men and women being made in the image of God, and finds its anticipation in the promise to Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Moreover, the salvation secured by Christ in the gospel is more comprehensive than justification alone: it brings repentance, wholeness, love for brothers and sisters in the Christian community. But the sad fact remains that not all Christians have always viewed race relations within the church as a gospel issue.¹⁶

Carson goes on to say that White evangelicals and evangelicals of color continue to see both sides of the question differently. Whereas Christians of colors would contend that racial conciliation is a crucial gospel issue, White Christians are “more likely to imagine that racial issues have so largely been resolved that it is a distraction to keep bringing them up.”¹⁷

Timothy Cho eloquently ties the gospel to racial conciliation, articulating a vision of the gospel that actively confronts the sin of racism:

Racism, ethnocentricity, and racial superiority are clearly not simply “social issues” that Christians can ignore. They are ideologies that seek to attack the gospel at its core. It is in the best interest of Christians to respond to these anti-gospel ideas with a robust picture of the gospel—a gospel that claims that

15. Otis Moss III, *Blue-Note Preaching in a Post-Soul World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014).

16. D.A. Carson, “What are Gospel Issues?” *Themelios* 39 (2): 217–218

17. *Ibid.*, 218.

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all people are equally guilty before a holy God but who can be recipients of grace if they trust in Christ.¹⁸

Racism is thus an affront to the grace of God and a confirmation of our inherent sin nature. While it is within our DNA to assume a posture of superiority to others, society has actively perpetuated systemic racism.¹⁹ As Christians, we must name and confront individual and systemic racism by critical examination of our own hearts and advocacy for a more equitable society.

Furthermore, we can ground the project of racial conciliation in the Triune nature of God. Catherine LaCugna describes how inclusiveness, community, and freedom come together to form a powerful rationale for racial conciliation:

Inclusiveness entails accepting a person in light of our own common humanity. Community points to interrelatedness at every level of reality, and contradicts those forces destructive to genuine community, especially sexism and racism. Freedom and its corollary, responsibility, belong to the exercise of personhood under conditions of genuine community. Perichoresis ... is thus the 'form of life' for God and the ideal of human beings whose communion with each other reflects the life of the Trinity.²⁰

Our common life in the Triune God and our God-bearing image instills within us a desire to seek conciliation with others. The project of racial conciliation thus flows out of our union with God in Christ, transforming our souls and the communities we inhabit. Ultimately, the gospel is the means by which God has chosen to reconcile Himself to us and others; the gospel is what brings true inclusiveness, community, and freedom.

The gospel is a call to conciliation with both God, fellow humans, and creation. One aspect of the gospel project is racial conciliation. The church thus carries the responsibility to actively seek racial conciliation, and pastor theologians bear "the primary responsibility of overseeing local performances" of the gospel.²¹

18. Timothy Isaiah Cho, "Is Racism a Social Issue or a Gospel Issue?" Retrieved October 20, 2017 from

https://cccdiscover.com/is-racism-a-social-issue-or-a-gospel-issue/?utm_content=bufferd4411&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer

19. George Yancey, *Beyond Racial Gridlock: Embracing Mutual Responsibility* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006); Emerson & Smith, *Divided by Faith*.

20. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), 272–273.

21. Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 448.

Racial Conciliation in Thought and Practice

If racial conciliation is a gospel issue, how do we confront the sin of racism? Many thoughtful Christians continue to wrestle with the issue and those of differing opinions and viewpoints continue to talk past one another. This is because several perspectives on racial issues and conciliation exist within Christendom. Guided by the work of George Yancey, I will outline several responses and approaches to racial conciliation in the church. Yancey's approaches help us understand the pervasiveness of racism, as well as the tremendous responsibility the church bears in promoting a ministry of racial conciliation.

Individualist Definition of Racism

According to Yancey, an individualist definition of racism asserts that racism is "something overt that can be done only by one individual to another."²² This definition assumes that individuals have complete autonomy over their actions, and possess the capacity to choose between right and wrong. The problems that ail society stem from the sins of the individual. This perspective extends to our understanding of specific instances of racism in our society. If a White police officer kills an unarmed Black man, or a White apartment manager denies housing to a Latina, then those people are racists. However, to say that these individual episodes are representative of an entire system is a stretch, according to the individualist definition. Yancey, citing the work of Emerson and Smith, writes that White evangelicals are more likely to accept the individualist definition because their concept of personal sin is so strong.²³ The perspective also leads some to suggest that since families in the Black community are less likely to remain together than White families, then the onus of blame lies on the sins of Black families.²⁴ The solution to racism in this definition is to help individuals examine the racist tendencies of their own heart and seek forgiveness from Jesus Christ.

Systemic Definition of Racism

In contrast to the individualist definition, the structuralist definition asserts that society as a whole can perpetuate racism, even when individuals choose not to be racist.²⁵ "People do not merely make personal choices; they make choices influenced by the structures of their society."²⁶ As Yancey points out, Black and Latino youth tend to fall behind their White counterparts academically. For structuralists, the

22. George Yancey, *Beyond Racial Gridlock*, 20.

23. *Ibid.*, 21.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, 22.

26. *Ibid.*

problem is not that Black and Latino youth are incapable of flourishing academically; the problem is that their schools are not as well-funded as the schools of their White counterparts. Whereas those who embrace an individualist definition of racism may attribute the issue to individual ability, work ethic, or cultural differences.

Four Secular Responses to Racial Conciliation

Yancey describes four secular responses to racial conciliation while promoting a model he calls Christian mutual responsibility.²⁷ The first response to racial conciliation is *colorblindness*. This model asserts that in order for society to progress in race relations, all of us must move beyond seeing the color of one another's skin and view one another as equals. While this response is laudable, its ignorance of "racial issues can spread to ignorance of the pain of minority group members and the need for race-specific solutions."²⁸ The second response is *Anglo-conformity*. This response argues that in order to see peace and success in one's life, minorities should adopt the cultural values and rhythms of White people. The problem with this perspective is that it "projects an image of Eurocentrist arrogance, as it offers only European American methods of economic empowerment."²⁹ Moreover, the model assumes that because White Christians are in the majority, their success and adherence to biblical values must be linked. The third response is *multiculturalism*. This perspective recognizes the value that other cultures bring, and our need to ensure that all perspectives are heard. The trouble with this model is two-fold, 1) like the colorblindness model, this perspective tends to ignore the histories of minoritized populations, and 2) devolves into cultural relativism, asserting that all cultures possess truth, and to critique other cultures amounts to cultural superiority. The final response is *majority blaming*. This perspective, prominent in mainline denominations, asserts that the White population is to blame for the problems of minoritized groups. Of course, predominantly White Christians were to blame for slavery and segregation; there is little grappling with this fact.

However, this perspective acquits minoritized groups of critically examining the problems of their own communities, and does not necessarily propose helpful solutions.

Christian Mutual Responsibility

In contrast to the secular responses to racial conciliation, Yancey proposes a model of mutual responsibility, where we acknowledge individual and systemic forms racism and work together to seek solutions to race-based problems. This position

27. Ibid., 39.

28. Ibid., 40.

29. Ibid., 52.

recognizes that racism is an issue of the heart and of the system. The pervasiveness of racism requires the church to attack this sin on all fronts. Moreover, instead of adopting hostile approaches to engaging the ministry of racial conciliation, this model prescribes conversation between Whites and racially and ethnically minoritized groups. In essence, all parties must come together to envision a future for the church that no longer tolerates racism in any form.

The Pastor Theologian and Racial Conciliation

Thus far, we have thought together about how the gospel demands the ministry of racial conciliation, how we conceptualize racism, and how we combat racism. If we believe that racial conciliation and multiethnic ministry are gospel-laden concerns, how do we operationalize these truths into our minds, hearts, and ministries? Now we turn to the pastor theologian's role in developing a ministry of racial conciliation. As mentioned previously, the pastor theologian's role is two-fold, 1) to shepherd the people of God, and 2) to contribute to broader theological discourse. The pastor theologian's role in the ministry of racial conciliation goes beyond simply diversifying church bodies and leadership teams. The pastor theologian, who lives in the liminal space between ecclesial and academic culture, can contribute to broader theological discourse that addresses racial conciliation. In this section, I imagine ways in which pastor theologians can succeed in developing a race-conscious approach to ministry and theological conversations while serving in a leadership role in the church.

As I mentioned previously, I conducted a study on several students of color at a number of evangelical seminaries in the United States. While I was specifically focused on their experiences as students of color in predominantly White spaces, I asked them 2–3 questions regarding how the church can better handle racial issues in a gospel-centered way. Several of the proposals I have listed here stem from my conversations with these individuals.

Reading Theology from People of Color

In many of our colleges and seminaries in the United States, many of our textbooks are written by white males. Case in point, a recent article in the *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society*, the academic resource in the theory and practice of evangelical preaching, found that out of the top twenty preaching books used in evangelical, mainline, Catholic, and Orthodox seminaries in the United States, two were written by women, and one written by a non-American (John Stott). The rest were written by white American males.³⁰ In another case, the “recommended reading” list of a well-known seminary includes many of the Christian classics with very few contemporary

30. Troy Borst, “Homiletical Textbook Study: What Are Seminaries Across Traditions Using to Teach the Next Generation of Preachers?” *Evangelical Homiletics Society* 15.2. (2015): 38–49.

works written from non-persons of color. While this may not inherently be wrong, it does assume that exegesis and theology from the perspective of a White person is “neutral” or “objective” or even “normal.” Such an assumption fails to account for the fact the perspective of white men is simply that—a *perspective*. Several of my participants noted that most of the textbooks they had read in seminary were written by white men, and some asked their professors if they could read a book written by a person of color instead (the professors were always happy to oblige).

As the United States continues to grow more and more diverse, and evangelicalism continues the same trend,³¹ it is imperative that pastor theologians engage and embrace the theological perspectives of persons of color. The work of James Cone in *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* provides a useful starting point in engaging with, and understanding the perspective of Christians of color.³² For Cone, matters of racial conciliation are inherently gospel issues and thus impact our broader witness to the world. “What is at stake is the credibility and promise of the Christian gospel and the hope that we may heal the wounds of racial violence that continue to divide our churches and our society.”³³ For Cone, the cross of Christ and the lynching trees adorned with Black bodies have vivid connections. Jesus was a racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious minority in the Roman empire, much like Black slaves were during the time of slavery, and people of color continue to be in society. The comparison of the cross to the lynching tree is a stark reminder of the ways in which people of power in society have always sought to oppress those with less power. For early Christians (who were generally poor and Jewish), the Romans and the Jewish religious elite were the oppressors. White Christians used their social and economic power to oppress black Christians. Conceptualizing race relations as being rooted in the cross of Christ enables us to center the experiences of marginalized peoples and seek racial conciliation rooted in the gospel of Christ.

Reading theology from non-white perspectives will no doubt challenge the thought of pastor theologians, especially as they confront systemic injustices, privilege, and a different perspective on the gospel. But in order to fully embrace the riches of the Christian tradition, we must not only explore the historic works of the faith, but also the work of those whose perspective is deeply rooted in a history of oppression. Engaging the work of theologians of color will enable us to bring a more conscious perspective to our theological work, and broaden the ways in which we speak into current events from a theological perspective.

31. Mark T. Mulder, Aida I. Ramos, and Gerardo Marti, *Latino Protestantism: Growing and Diverse* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017).

32. James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013).

33. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*.

Including Leaders of Color

Many churches across the United States seek to embody the rich, multiethnic, diverse Kingdom of God. However, church leaders often fall short of their mission because they fail to place minoritized individuals in places of authority in the church. One former student who is now working as a denominational associate in the Southeast told me that in his perspective, many churches often tokenize their members of color while failing to include them in leadership positions:

But I think that churches have to intentionally go after minorities. I think the perspective is they will come to us. We have enough minorities in the church with diversify, bring leadership and position to minister to reach out. What I suggest to pastors is you need to start establishing relationship with minorities and understand, walk in their shoes, so to speak, understand where they are coming from. And you don't want a minority as a token. You know, we have an African American family or Hispanic family but bring those guys, put them in the front and in position of leadership that a community can see that you value, you know, what they can contribute, what they do and that will draw other minorities in.³⁴

For some churches, “diversity” simply means welcoming people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds into fellowship. However, diversity is not the same as inclusion. To include racial and ethnic minorities in leadership positions, including as pastors, committee members, worship leaders, and teachers, is the expression of true diversity in the body of Christ. This inclusion cannot mean assimilation into dominant ecclesial cultural values, however.

One of the participants in my study, Christi, a Black woman, said that while we all belong to the body of Christ, it is important that we acknowledge our histories and experiences:

I think the biggest thing that the church can do is appreciating each person's background, appreciating their ethnicity and everything that their ethnicity brings to the table. I know that there is a big push in Christendom for racial conciliation. And I very much support that but in a lot of cases, it's racial conciliation from the point of, well, we see no color. You know, love sees no color. We're all a part of God's family. And yes, we are. We're all part of God's family but I think it's important to see color because when someone looks at me, I think the fact that they see, if they see that I am an African American or Black woman, there are certain things that come with that, certain experiences that I think people need to have an appreciation and an understanding for.³⁵

34. Joaquin, interview by author, Zoom video software, June 15, 2017.

35. Christi, interview by author, Zoom Video Software June 20, 2017.

Pastor theologians must remain sensitive to the ways in which the ecclesial culture they have perpetuated has become normalized and neutral, privileging dominant cultural values over those of racial and ethnic minorities. For instance, styles of music, attire, preaching and teaching styles, service activities, and even theological viewpoints may be the dominant preferences of those in the church. But we must remain self-reflective, and ask if these preferences are marginalizing people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Listening and Responding Well

During instances of racial tensions in our society, it becomes easy for Christians to listen to those who confirm their own viewpoint on the issue. In an article from the *Washington Post*, Michael Frost described how Christians were divided into two camps, represented by quarterbacks Colin Kaepernick and Tim Tebow. While Tim Tebow represented White Christians and their pro-life stance, commitment to sexual ethics, prayer in public schools, and evangelism, Kaepernick represented Christians of color focused on the plight of the oppressed, social justice, police violence, and giving to the poor.³⁶ Tensions between these two camps reached a fever pitch when several NFL teams bent the knee during the singing of the national anthem. Some Christians argued that NFL players were protesting the mistreatment and murder of young Black men by police, while others argued that to take the knee is disrespectful to the flag and those veterans who died preserving our freedoms. In a sense, both sides were talking past each other, and unwilling to hear the perspectives of the other. “The bifurcation of contemporary Christianity into two distinct branches is leaving the church all the poorer, with each side needing to be enriched by the biblical vision of the other.”³⁷ However, it was primarily White Christians who protested the NFL players’ protests, while Christians of color voiced their support for the kneeling NFL players. One of the participants I interviewed, a Black woman, described the need for listening to communities of color during times of racial tension in our society. “Listen. Just listen. Just shut up. Show up. Listen.”

Pastor theologians bear the responsibility of leading congregations into the practice of listening. Listening to others forces us to take off our cultural blinders for a second, acknowledge the humanity of others, and for a moment, enter into their experiences with them. Proverbs speaks multitudes of this practice of listening. Proverbs 1:5 implores the wise to “hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance.” Proverbs 19:20 implores the wise to “listen to advice and accept instruction” in order to “gain wisdom in the future.” Moreover, when Job’s friends came to him during his time of immense loss and spiritual struggle,

36. Michael Frost, “Colin Kaepernick vs. Tim Tebow: A Tale of Two Christians on Their Knees,” Retrieved October 25, 2017 from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/09/24/colin-kaepernick-vs-tim-tebow-a-tale-of-two-christianities-on-its-knees/?utm_term=.4543895677a4

37. Ibid.

they sat with him for a week in silence (Job 2:3). It is imperative that as our brothers and sisters of color struggle and experience the pain of deep historical wounds, we as pastor theologians must grieve with them, be with them in their hurt, and listening to their concerns.

When we as pastor theologians write a theological piece for the benefit of the church, we must make sure that we are conscious of the diverse histories that our audiences share. While some pastor theologians may never have experienced racism or systemic oppression, it is our responsibility to be quick to listen and slow to speak. In our society, however, Christians expect their pastors to express a particular viewpoint regarding current events, but pastor theologians must empower their parishioners to listen better and understand the viewpoints of others.

Conclusion

Racial conciliation is challenging but worth the effort. To become the multicultural, multiethnic body of Christ, we must be intentional with our words and with our actions. To be effective pastor theologians who lead churches that become centers of racial conciliation and theologically advocate for the perspective of the marginalized, we must be quick to listen, slow to respond, eager to include, and hopeful for change. Ultimately, the project of racial conciliation is a gospel matter of which the church and her pastor theologians must continually engage. The world is watching us as we respond to race-based atrocities in our nation, awaiting our response, and looking to us for a word of encouragement. As Gombis writes, “conciliation is the gospel, and racial, or ethnic conciliation—in a divided America, and in a divided world—provides a perfect arena to manifest and to live out the reconciling grace of God.”³⁸

38. Gombis, “Racial Conciliation and the Gospel,” 117.

Light from the Third Great Awakening: Harold Ockenga and the Call to Future Pastor-Theologians

OWEN STRACHAN

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Abstract: Something remarkable transpired in the mid-twentieth century. Just as the First Great Awakening reset the ecclesiastical paradigm along gospel-demarcated lines in the 1700s, and just as the Second Great Awakening redrew the Protestant map through the explosion of upstart groups like the Baptists and Methodists, so the Third Great Awakening of the neo-evangelical years fundamentally recalibrated and repositioned evangelicalism for unprecedented expansion and activity.

Many individuals contributed to this galaxy-formation. Upon close reflection, however, Harold Ockenga—with Billy Graham and Carl Henry—formed the three horsemen of the Neo-Evangelical Resurgence. It is the purpose of this article to first explore Ockenga’s significance for the current day, as the twenty-first century church’s experience mirrors that of the neo-evangelicals some 60–70 years ago. Ockenga offers us an example of a richly theological pastorate, and a pulpit that majored in doctrine over storytelling and sentimentality.

In what follows, we shall see that, in a doctrinally-deficient era like ours, Ockenga offers the rising generations of pastors a faithful model to which to aspire and, God allowing, assume. This model we call the *pastor-theologian*. After showing what the pastor-theologian is and is to be, we offer five considerations for the rising generation of shepherds of God’s flock, considerations that together urge the church to invest in the doctrinal formation, personal courage, and theistic confidence of its pastors.

Key Words: Harold Ockenga, pastor theologian, shepherding, pastoral theology, doctrinal formation

Introduction

Nobody really knows it, but the neo-evangelical movement that sparked in the 1940s was a revival. It was so much so, in fact, that you could argue it was akin to a Third Great Awakening. This statement might make historians shift in their seats. Really?

Was the effort helmed by evangelist Billy Graham, pastor Harold John Ockenga of Boston's Park Street Church and theologian Carl Henry of Fuller Theological Seminary (and later *Christianity Today*) that consequential?¹ Surely the neo-evangelicals made some noise and founded some institutions, but does the fruit of their labors constitute something so spiritually resplendent as an "awakening"? Evangelicals, after all, judiciously conserve their usage of this term; they can be miserly with their historical assessments, and might balk at rendering the postwar evangelical renaissance a third epoch of Christian growth and health.

But though counter-arguments do come to mind, one can make a reasonable case that something truly unique took place in this era.² The preaching of Billy Graham led to many conversions, and Bible-loving congregations grew precipitously³; the founding of the National Association of Evangelicals, CT, and Fuller Seminary established a new institutional identity for biblically-conservative Protestants⁴; a sprawling, thriving network of parachurch ministries, colleges and universities, and new media sprung up *ex nihilo*, many of which still exist and even grow in the current day.⁵ All of America experienced a postwar religious boom, as is well-chronicled,⁶ but this does not obscure the reality that evangelicals made massive gains in this

1. For the definitive take on Ockenga, see Garth M. Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God: Harold John Ockenga, Billy Graham, and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); also Owen Strachan, *Awakening the Evangelical Mind: An Intellectual History of the Neo-Evangelical Movement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2015); for more on Henry, see Bob E. Patterson, *Carl F. H. Henry, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind* (Dallas: Word, 1984); Matthew J. Hall and Owen Strachan, *Essential Evangelicalism: The Enduring Influence of Carl F. H. Henry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

2. The definitive survey of the movement is Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997). For more on the evangelical left as it developed out of neo-evangelicalism, consult David Swartz, *Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

3. Grant Wacker, dean of Graham historians, offers one statistical overview of the effect of Graham's globe-spanning preaching. According to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, beginning with 1937 and continuing to the end of the evangelist's public ministry, attendance at crusades totaled 82,774,083, with inquirers coming in at 4,563,436. Though Graham's theology and evangelistic practices are widely-debated, no man in history has preached to more people; no man in history has seen more people respond with interest to his message. See Grant Wacker, *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2014), 260.

4. See Arthur Matthews, *Standing Up, Standing Together: The Emergence of the National Association of Evangelicals* (Carol Stream, Ill.: National Association of Evangelicals, 1992); Stephen Board, "Moving the World with Magazines: A Survey of Evangelical Periodicals," in *American Evangelicals and the Mass Media*, ed. Quentin J. Schultze (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 171–95; George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

5. Collin Hansen and John Woodbridge devote a chapter in their helpful book on revivals to the neo-evangelical boom, and conclude as follows about it: "the revivals of the late 1940s and early 1950s carved out space for a vibrant, diverse evangelical movement that survives today." See Collin Hansen and John Woodbridge, *A God-Sized Vision: Revival Stories That Strengthen and Stir* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 175.

6. See Robert Ellwood, *The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace: American Religion in a Decade of Conflict* (Rutgers University Press, 1997).

period, gains that swell in importance when compared to the challenging first four decades of the twentieth-century.⁷ It was almost as if the Lord let the light dim in the prewar years in order to prepare his church for something remarkable in the postwar years.

Something remarkable did indeed this way come in the mid-twentieth century. Just as the First Great Awakening reset the ecclesiastical paradigm along gospel-demarcated lines in the 1700s, and just as the Second Great Awakening redrew the Protestant map through the explosion of upstart groups like the Baptists and Methodists, so the Third Great Awakening of the neo-evangelical years fundamentally recalibrated and repositioned evangelicalism for unprecedented expansion and activity.⁸ Neo-evangelicalism would not make good on all its aims, of course; the movement ultimately faltered. But this should not—must not—obscure the truth that evangelical prospects looked quite different after the 1970s, to cite one chronological benchmark, than they did before them.⁹

Many individuals contributed to this galaxy-formation. Upon close reflection, however, three rise to the fore. With Billy Graham, Ockenga and Henry formed the three horsemen of the Neo-Evangelical Resurgence. Unlike Graham, Ockenga and Henry have received relatively little academic and ecclesial treatment. It is the purpose of this article to explore Ockenga's significance for the current day, as the twenty-first century church's experience mirrors that of the neo-evangelicals some 60–70 years ago.¹⁰

In the pixels that follow, we shall see that, in a doctrinally-deficient era like ours, Ockenga offers the rising generations of pastors a faithful model to which to aspire and, God allowing, assume. This matters, for it appears we are in the midst of our own awakening or revival—though how this whole work of God wears, and what trajectory it ultimately takes, we cannot know.

The Pastor as Theologian: Harold Ockenga's Model

Harold John Ockenga did everything full-tilt. He could not merely study at Taylor University; he had to preach and sing as part of a men's group. He could not only

7. Garth Rosell terms the neo-evangelical enterprise a “surprising work of God,” using the familiar phrase of awakener Jonathan Edwards, and considers the movement an “evangelical awakening.” See Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God*, 14–16.

8. For an authoritative overview of the First Great Awakening, see Thomas Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 2007); for the same on the Second Great Awakening, see Nathan O. Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*. (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1989).

9. *Newsweek* famously declared 1976 the “Year of the Evangelicals,” as one benchmark. Kenneth L. Woodward, “Born Again! The Year of the Evangelicals,” *Newsweek*, October 25, 1976.

10. Compare the remarks by Ockenga in his inaugural message at Fuller Seminary, entitled “The Challenge to the Christian Culture of the West.” See Strachan, *Awakening the Evangelical Mind*, 115–19.

complete a PhD at Pittsburgh; he had to preach up a storm in a growing church (one whose sagging membership rolls he purposefully pruned).¹¹ He could not simply lead famous Park Street Church; he had to begin an in-house Bible school, a new evangelical clearinghouse, and a network of rising academic stars.¹²

But what most stood out about Ockenga was this: he was a pastor who preached the Word. He loved the Bible, and he loved to preach the Bible. He memorized his sermons, and then went into the pulpit and delivered them flawlessly.¹³ He prayed for hours for spiritual power to flood his ministry, and then declaimed his messages as if the Holy Spirit genuinely backed him. Ockenga did not hold back theologically; reading his sermons today, one senses they could double as a classroom lecture in an ambitious MDiv elective. Ockenga was a homiletical force of nature.

Ockenga did not grow up in the Reformed tradition. He did not have deep spiritual roots in Dutch Calvinism or Princetonian theology. But he gravitated to the stout stuff from a young age. J. Gresham Machen's culture-defying stand caught his eye in the 1920s, and Ockenga yearned to study under Machen and men like him.¹⁴ So he did, matriculating first at Princeton and later at Westminster Theological Seminary. Ockenga had caught a hunger for rock-ribbed doctrine, as extant sermons from this period and later ones show. But Ockenga did not merely want to treasure up sound doctrine in his heart. He realized that the truth would burn a hole in your pocket if you stowed it away. He yearned to preach it, and so he did, first in Pittsburgh, later in Boston, and everywhere he could.

We get a flavor of the Ockengan pulpit in the following, a summary of Christ's role as intercessor for his people:

Christ ascended to the place of intercession, for He ever lives to make intercession for us. There He entered upon His eternal priesthood as advocate and divine helper. That was the beginning of His mediatorial kingdom as priest-king over His people and in that intercession He guarantees the security of His people through His own prayers. What He said to Peter may be said to us, "I have prayed for you that your faith will not fail." Thank God for the

11. The first biography of Ockenga is still an interesting source of material for Ockenga's years in Pittsburgh—Harold Lindsell, *Park Street Prophet: A Life of Harold John Ockenga* (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen, 1951). The time at Point Breeze Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh went swimmingly in more ways than one. The Sunday school grew to more than four hundred people; the church added a sixty-voice choir; it also retired the mortgage even as the greatest economic depression in American history unfolded.

12. For more on Ockenga's ministry at Park Street, consult Garth M. Rosell, *Boston's Historic Park Street Church: The Story of an Evangelical Landmark* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 53–54; Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalists in the City: Conflict and Division in Boston's Churches, 1885–1950* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005).

13. See Randall Frame, "Modern Evangelicalism Mourns the Loss of One of Its Founding Fathers," *Christianity Today*, March 15, 1985, 36.

14. Machen grew so close to Ockenga that he called him "Ocky." The historical record is silent on whether Ockenga called his mentor "Machy." See Strachan, *Awakening the Evangelical Mind*, 47.

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prayers of our great Intercessor. The place of triumph was the place of power. From there He exercises sovereignty. In His resurrection form He said, “All authority in heaven and earth is given to me.” He has been exalted to the right hand of the Father, above all principalities and powers and every name that is named.¹⁵

Ockenga was a skilled diplomat; he took pains not to rule non-Reformed Christians out of the bounds of fellowship, as seen in his construction of the NAE. But neither did he hold back in his sermons from declaring the deep things of God. In the quotation above, he identifies Christ as the divine “priest-king” and vouches for the “security of His people through His own prayers.” Christ “exercises sovereignty” and possesses all authority, according to Ockenga. The pulpiteer’s strong, declarative sentences speak to the authoritative nature of the biblical preacher. The pulpit depends on and exists for the forthright exposition of the truth. The doctrines of the Word of God do not bring chaos into the church; they take the broken, the needy, and the damned, and turn them into living emblems of the glory of God.

At Park Street, Ockenga took on the mantle of no less a theologian than Jonathan Edwards. At one point, he delivered a sermon entitled “Jonathan Edwards and New England or the Apologetic of Protestantism.” His texts for the message were John 3:16 and Romans 9:16. His remarks on the nature of Reformed doctrine left no doubt about where he stood: “Whatever we may think of Calvinism, it has produced more rugged, upright, courageous characters than any other system.”¹⁶ A careful survey of “the history of New England and think of its intellectual lights and its leading characters of which we Americans are justly proud” showed the fruits of “three centuries of Calvinism, of strict adherence to the Bible teaching concerning the nature of man, the sovereignty of God and the need of a true regeneration in life.” While Ockenga never lost his love for Methodism, the denomination in which he was reared, he clearly let his doctrinal flag fly.

How different was this preaching than the style which rose to popularity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ockenga’s sermons share much in common with the old Puritan style of preaching, grounded as they were in searching theological reflection and keen spiritual interest. The Ockengan homily was textual, packed with testable assertions, and polished to a high sheen. Though this form of exposition has found a sizeable (and growing) audience in our day, Ockenga’s peers and forebears did not share his enthusiasm for such a pulpit performance, which would have sounded staid and stuffy and over-intellectual to many churchgoers of this era. Nathan Hatch has nicely characterized the dominant model of the 19th—and by extension the 20th—century:

15. “Our Evangelical Faith,” accessible at <http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=10723>.

16. Strachan, *Awakening*, 67–68.

Passionate about ferreting out converts in every hamlet and crossroads, they sought to bind them together in local and regional communities. They continued to refashion the sermon as a popular medium, inviting even the most unlearned and inexperienced to respond to a call to preach. These initiates were charged to proclaim the gospel anywhere and every day of the week—even to the limit of their physical endurance. The resulting creation, the colloquial sermon, employed daring pulpit storytelling, no-holds-barred appeals, overt humor, strident attack, graphic application, and intimate personal experience.¹⁷

An unlearned ministry—in many cases intentionally—yielded a heartfelt, spiritually effective, but by no means richly theological pulpit. As Hatch argues, the sermon was “refashion[ed]” in the Second Great Awakening. Warm-hearted evangelicals can look back at this historical moment and give thanks to God for the evangelistic impulse of so many preachers back then; clearly, the gospel burst its formal bonds in the wild and woolly years in question, leading to widespread evangelism and an explosion of conversions.

Even as we give thanks for this gospel outbreak, we note the transformation of the sermon, the pastorate, and to some extent, the congregation itself. In many places, the sermon was no longer a textual exposition; the pastorate was no longer a fundamentally theological office, at least not intentionally so; the local congregation was no longer a place geared at the feeding of Christ’s little lambs, but an evangelistic waystation.¹⁸ The historical record bears out this characterization; one need only read the messages of a figure like Billy Sunday, as one prime example, to see that emotional storytelling aimed at on-the-spot decisions had won the day in the evangelical world.¹⁹

Ockenga was not a perfect expositor—he preached topically a good bit, and not so much verse-by-verse—but he represents a return to the old ways. He worked hard to offer his people a rich meal of biblical truth. In this sense, he is a “pastor-theologian.” This term must be read with care. It does not mean a high-flown preacher holding a secular doctorate. Nor does it signify a pastor who closes himself off to the people and avoids counseling and visitation like an outbreak of pinkeye. Further, it cannot and must not refer to a homiletician whose sermons soar over the heads of his people. A pastor-theologian simply stands for this: God’s appointed shepherd who

17. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 57.

18. No one has chronicled these shifts better than E. Brooks Holifield, *God’s Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

19. For more on Sunday and early twentieth-century revivalism, see Lyle Dorsett, *Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991). For an incisive look at the shape of American evangelicalism in this period, see George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (1980; Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006). Sunday’s influence on American preaching and the shape of the local church’s activity deserves more consideration at the scholarly level.

believes that he ascends the sacred desk each week in order to deliver sound biblical doctrine discovered in a particular scriptural passage to God's called-out flock.²⁰

The Sad State of the American Pulpit in Our Time

If someone observes that this last definition sounds much like the biblical conception of a pastor—no hyphen and additional descriptor necessary—this is true. But we use the two-word term for two reasons: to highlight the biblical priority on doctrinal exposition, and to differentiate the model from dominant paradigms of the current day. The American pulpit resembles nothing so much as a war-zone in our time; it is as if the preaching office has been bombed by one hostile critic after another, leaving many shepherds to effectively dig themselves out of the rubble in order to assume a genuinely textual and theological ministry.²¹

Theology is seen today as the high-level privilege of an arrogant few; bring theology into the church, and it divides people. If you preach it, the congregation might actually wake up, and people could even—hold your breath and clutch your pearls—*leave*. Our big-box, numbers-saturated, soft-word-flowing age fears little else more than people leaving, for such an outcome means smaller numbers, and smaller numbers means we frankly do not matter as much.

I do not mean to suggest here that churches should intentionally seek to shrink. That's clearly not what is taking place in the Book of Acts, after all. But let us not miss what is indeed taking place in the Book of Acts. The apostles of the crucified and risen Christ go into one knife-drawn environment after another and declare an exclusive gospel that demands on-the-spot faith and repentance in the name of the Son of God. Two things, to condense affairs that follow, occur. First, the apostles and early disciples experience trials, persecution, and suffering. Second, the gospel advances, unsuspecting sinners—both Jew and Gentile—are miraculously though straightforwardly converted, and the church grows. Suffering and joy, intertwined in the life and ministry of the Christian, and all of it provoked by the plain statement of the gospel, the truth, the Word.²²

Theology—by which I mean biblical teaching, nothing more, nothing fancy—causes a ruckus wherever it goes in the Bible. It makes monotheistic worshippers out of pagan epicureans. It creates glad-hearted Christians out of hate-gripped Jews.

20. See Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015); Douglas A. Sweeney, *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009); Gerald Hiestand and Walter T. Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

21. See David Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); also Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

22. This statement comes very close to Luther's "theology of the cross," and with good cause. See Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough*, Second Edition (Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

It forms a people united by nothing other than the blood of Jesus out of a thousand disparate people-groups, many of whom simmer with disaffection for one another prior to conversion. Theology unites, but theology also presents the hard heart of the unbeliever—or even the immature believer—with a choice. Then and now, many elect to snub the truth, ignore it, turn away from it, and leave those who cling to it as a drowning man clings to the only rock he has.

For the pastor-theologian, numbers are not the goal. A fellowship humming with programmatic activity is not the goal.²³ Community impact is not the goal. God is the goal. God is the focus of the church. God is the only actual good in the universe. God is the ground of being, and the hope of our hearts, and the reason why all things exist and live rather than dying and going dormant. God has made a cosmos that hums with life and cannot help but be purposive and all points back to his radiant excellency, his undeniable glory, his unstoppable authority. God has desired to be known, and so he has spoken his Word, and shepherds have the unspeakable privilege of studying, learning, and teaching it to a gathered, called-out people. This is why there's a church; this is why there's a pastor.

The pastor-theologian knows that his chief duty is not to serve unbelievers. He wishes to evangelize them all he can, but unbelievers are not funding his very existence and paying, by extension, his bills. It is the people of God who are his responsibility. He has a flesh-and-blood charge, a living body, to lead and bless and train to know God. Praise God for developments in political philosophy and the doing of politics; praise God for the eclipse of the state church in so much of the West, with all its attendant confusion over what makes a Christian and what constitutes a church.²⁴ Nowhere in the Bible is a pastor called to be the spiritual leader of the ungodly; the New Testament knows only the elder—part of a team, a team that answers to the whole congregation—who exercises watchcare over the assembly of a localized body of Christians. The pastor-theologian thus labors to strengthen the faith and practice of Christ-loving men and women.

The pastor-theologian accomplishes this weighty—even impossible, in human terms—end by giving the people endless portions of the Word of God. He feeds them, spiritually speaking, God. So it was that Christ put it—his disciples were to *eat his flesh* and *drink his blood* (John 6). God is not the man behind the curtain, as many evangelical congregations have it; he is not hovering in the background, shy and unwilling to be named, like a crowd-shy philanthropist underwriting a meaningful charity. God is the reason the church exists, and the purpose of weekly gathering, and the figure the pastor-theologian lives and breathes to make known.

23. See Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop, *The Compelling Community: Where God's Power Makes a Church Attractive* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

24. An instructive book on this topic is Jonathan Leeman, *Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ's Rule*, Studies in Doctrine and Scripture (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2016).

Led by the preacher, the church thus labors to center the worship-service in God. Musicians care more about the divine than about their own performance; God's Word is read, and not merely for a hurried verse or two, as if the reading of Scripture is a detour from the intended program; prayer to God is serious and consequential, not a tossed-off, formulaic invocation before jump-starting the collection of tithes and offerings; the Bible is expounded, as the pastor-theologian emulates Nehemiah and "gives the sense" of the text, a "sense" that will only make sense with Christ and his hermeneutical fulfillment in view (Nehemiah 8:8). God is the point; God is the focus; God is reason why the church exists.

In too many churches today, the preceding words do not fit the actual behaviors and intentions of the staff and the assembly. In such a context, Ockenga offers the rising generation of ministers a model. He himself had this effect on at least one formative expositor: John Piper. Struck down by illness, Piper heard Ockenga piped-in when the Boston preacher gave chapel messages at Wheaton. He had never heard preaching quite like that which Ockenga offered.²⁵ Piper, the consummate pastor-theologian of our time, has gone on to summon—as if in a personal, by-the-collar calling-out—countless men to the pastorate. There is thus a golden chain running through history, from Machen to Ockenga to Piper to many young men who now work in God's fields. No doubt many of these men have no idea that they are in ministry in human terms because of a forgotten Boston pastor—but they are.

Onward Ockenga: Five Considerations for the Next Generation of Pastor-Theologians

But this little factoid raises a further question: if a young man (or an older one, no matter) aspires to this model of the ministry, what principles should frame his thinking from this point forward? In light of Ockenga's example, and the testimony of theological history, let me suggest five matters for further consideration on the part of future pastor-theologians.

First, we need smart and godly men to aspire to a theological pastorate.

As mentioned above, Ockenga yearned to be a pastor. He undertook high-level training at two seminaries and a university in order to prepare himself theologically and intellectually for the sacred task. One does not need a certain set of degrees to undertake a theological pastorate, but whatever one's course of training, we need young men to hunger to feed the flock of Christ sound doctrine.²⁶

25. See Strachan, *Awakening*, 166.

26. Few texts will do more to ignite a holy interest in preaching than Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010 [1875]) and J. C. Ryle, *Thoughts for Young Men* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015 [1865]).

I say this in contradistinction from an overly academic approach to the ministry. It is not a sign of health for a seminary campus, for example, to be awash in students who have no interest in pastoring an actual church.²⁷ It is great—and thrilling—for some students to prepare for academic ministry, but the healthiest seminaries see their primary role as sending out a veritable flood of ministers. These institutions, after all, came into being because local churches at some point recognized the strategic nature of pooling resources for the nurture and training of pastors. Seminaries continue to serve this necessary function, and do so with special effectiveness when partnered with local churches to not merely produce graduates, but form workers in Christ's vineyards.²⁸

All this means that we want young men of the Ockengan type—bright, godly, ambitious for the kingdom of heaven—to aspire, more often than not, to the pastorate. We find ourselves, as so often happens in church history, in the midst of a theology famine.²⁹ The only sure cure for this awful phenomenon is the preparation of future shepherds who will lead churches and strengthen them through biblical feeding. There is no higher work given to humanity than this; there is no nobler call one can hear, and heed, than God's, summoning the rising generation like Samuel in the night.

Second, we need colleges, universities, and especially seminaries to intentionally form pastor-theologians.

Here I wish to bring in the example of Ockenga's partner-in-crime Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry, undoubtedly the brightest intellectual light of postwar Western Christianity. Henry almost seems a fictional figure, he's so impressive: two PhDs, one best-selling book that continues to influence the church (*The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* of 1947), several dozen more books, thousands of articles and reviews and reports, tireless activism to promote truth and oppose the darkness,

27. Theologian John Frame has offered provocative thoughts in his stimulating book *The Academic Captivity of Theology* (Lakeland, FL: Whitefield Media Productions, 2013).

28. As one example, consider the Academy in Geneva. Consult Scott M. Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

29. This phenomenon is happening in America, strangely enough, for we are awash in good theological resources; it is also surely happening in much greater terms across the world. According to one missions voice, the number one request of non-Western ministry leaders is for pastoral training, a key component of which is doctrinal instruction. See Nick Moore, "Theological Famine in the Majority World," B&H Academic Blog, July 28, 2016, accessible at <http://www.bhacademicblog.com/theological-famine-majority-world>. Surely the two problems are connected—theology famine in the majority world, and theology famine in the areas the church evangelizes. In sum, the rising generation of ministers and scholars should know that any fighting of this tide matters, and matters greatly, wherever one labors.

and much, much more.³⁰ Henry gave a good portion of his time to instruction of seminarians, first at Fuller Theological Seminary, later at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and beyond these schools the theologian lectured at nearly every evangelical institution under the sun.

Henry was peripatetic, but he believed in the formation of pastors. His *magnum opus*, the six-volume *God, Revelation, and Authority*, shot far over the head of the average Christian reader, but works marvelously well as an interaction with the predominant non-evangelical hermeneutics of its time.³¹ I assign whole volumes of GRA to my own seminarians, and part of the benefit of doing so is not merely the fine-tuned content, but the model. Here is a brilliant thinker who loved Christ above all else, paid little attention to cultivating the attention of the theological elites of his day, but who did not shirk from the task of full-bore doctrinal encounter with Neo-Orthodoxy, Protestant Liberalism, Catholic natural law teaching, and Western thought more broadly. It is this kind of scholar one wants to have in classrooms teaching students, and then after class sequestered in his office to write the books that will train pastor-theologians to engage their culture and context.

In other words, we need institutions to partner with the church to form pastor-theologians. This should begin at the undergraduate level, and it should come to flower in the seminary environment. Ideally this takes place through residential education. Though it is difficult to pull up stakes, move away from home and perhaps even a ministry position, and undertake the long work of the MDiv, this investment in one's vocation is worth all the cost.³² Pastor-theologians, after all, are not brains in vats; they are flesh-and-blood people, and they are being trained to spiritually strengthen flesh-and-blood people. If a seminary is not fulfilling this mission, it should go out of business. If, on the other hand, it is calibrated like an arrow to build into future pastors, then it deserves the fullest possible support on the part of God's churches.

You do not *absolutely* need scholars—or even seminaries—to make pastors. But if scholars have a genuine love for the mission of God and the people of God, they are

30. Ben Peays has done valuable work in showing how Henry pulled the “Uneasy Conscience” material together. See Peays, “The Modern Mind and the Uneasy Conscience” in Hall and Strachan, *Essential Evangelicalism*, 149–73.

31. Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority* (6 vols.; Waco, TX: Word, 1976–1983), hereafter *GRA*. The six volumes in order of publication: Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority, Volume One: God Who Speaks and Shows, Preliminary Considerations* (Crossway, 1999 [Word, 1976]); idem, *God, Revelation, and Authority, Volume Two: God Who Speaks and Shows—Fifteen Theses, Part One* (Crossway, 1999 [Word, 1976]); idem, *God, Revelation, and Authority, Volume Three: God Who Speaks and Shows, Fifteen Theses, Part Two* (Crossway, 1999 [Word, 1979]); idem, *God, Revelation, and Authority, Volume Four: God Who Speaks and Shows, Fifteen Theses, Part Three* (Crossway, 1999 [Word, 1979]); idem, *God, Revelation, and Authority, Volume Five: God Who Stands and Stays, Part One* (Crossway, 1999 [Word, 1982]); idem, *God, Revelation, and Authority, Volume Six: God Who Stands and Stays, Part Two* (Crossway, 1999 [Word, 1983]).

32. As Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary president Jason K. Allen has said, “The call to ministry is a call to prepare.” Allen, *Discerning Your Call to Ministry: How to Know For Sure and What to Do About It* (Chicago: Moody, 2016), 134–37.

in a marvelous position to influence future pastors. What a priceless opportunity this is. What a calling. What a job. If anyone doubts the potency of such environments, we should direct them to the Christian tradition. The Genevan academy was no modern academic outfit, but it shaped an entire generation of church planters and ministers. Princeton Seminary in its 19th-century iteration trained hordes of young men in the rugged “Princeton Theology”; men like Charles Hodge truly served as watchmen on the wall.³³ They brought multitudes in to the school, they imparted all they could, and then they stood on the ramparts and watched as God sent his shepherds to battle Satan and feed the sheep.

The same is true with Machen, Cornelius Van Til, John Murray, and others at Westminster; Henry, E. J. Carnell, and Ladd at Fuller; more recently, David Wells, Meredith Kline, and Roger Nicole at Gordon-Conwell; D. A. Carson, Kevin Vanhoozer, John Woodbridge, and Douglas Sweeney at Trinity; Al Mohler, Tom Schreiner, Bruce Ware, Michael Haykin, and Don Whitney at Southern.³⁴ The list could go on. You do not have to build seminaries to launch massive offensive operations against the kingdom of darkness, but in historical retrospective, they have surely played a unique role in doing great damage to Satan’s anti-monarchy.

So, though we need a far smaller group of scholars—we could call them theologian-pastors—we need them nonetheless. They are nothing other than what the Bible calls “teachers,” after all. We especially need the type who work and speak and write and teach and mentor for the church. This in no way means they sidestep, say, writing high-level exegetical commentaries, biblical theologies, systematic texts, historical volumes, or ethical and philosophical treatises. It does mean that they labor from the standpoint that the greatest delight of any on earth is not to earn the praise of the secular academy, but to search out the will and ways of almighty God. Nothing exceeds this. Nothing compares to it.³⁵

Let us produce outstanding thinkers, leaders, and communicators, but let us do so while learning at least one lesson from the neo-evangelicals, and break in our heart with the temptation common to academicians, namely, the desire to put Scripture aside as our ultimate authority and win the praise of the guild. Scripture

33. As substantiated in Paul C. Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011).

34. Truly, fresh attention needs to be given to the late twentieth-century and early twenty-first century theological reloading among evangelicals and, in particular, Baptists. The return of many Baptists to the general doctrinal orientation of the early years of the Southern Baptist Convention is both a theological miracle and a remarkable historical development. For a helpful introduction on this point, Gregory A. Wills, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859–2009* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); also L. Russ Bush and Thomas Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Academic, 1999 [1980]).

35. We think here of David Wells’s compelling argument that historically, pastors were “scholar-saints” who were “as comfortable with books and learning as with the aches of the soul.” Wells, *Courage to Be Protestant*, 40. See also the testimony of John Piper in Piper and D. A. Carson, *The Pastor as Scholar, the Scholar as Pastor: Reflections on Life and Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 21–70.

is not a prison for the mind; Scripture is a springboard for the intellect. You can study the doctrine of creation, the attributes of God, cross-covenantal symbolism and fulfillment, and never exhaust it.³⁶ Let us have done with evangelical academics, evangelical theologians, who chase some effervescent and never-realized dream of elite approval. Let us recover and repristinate *Sola Scriptura*, and think hard about what it truly means for all intellectual inquiry.

Third, we need pastors to declare biblical truth—which is to say sound doctrine—from the pulpit.

Harold Ockenga purposefully rejected a story-driven ministry. Sunday worship was not storytelling hour for evangelicals; it was feeding season for the spiritually hungry. Kenneth Kantzer, a doctoral student in Boston during the 1940s, shared the following about Ockenga's sermonizing: "One of the secrets of Ockenga's success as a pastor and church leader was his thorough preparation for everything he did. He prepared his sermons from the Greek text and has continued to study his Greek Testament throughout his ministry."³⁷ From this foundation, Ockenga preached four times a week for much of his ministerial career.

If a pastor is not committed to sound doctrine, he not only a God problem, for he will answer to the Lord of heaven and earth for his trifling messages. He also has a content problem, for there simply are not enough testimonies, sociological insights, and sports anecdotes by which to sustain a forty-year pastorate (at least not a compelling one). By contrast, the historic model of the pastor-theologian eschews innovation and topical spelunking for the systematic exposition of the Bible. From my own vantage point, it has been fascinating to watch who endures in the ministry and who does not. There are many factors in play, but it is noteworthy to see John MacArthur, for example, last for over fifty years in the pulpit, while so many neophytes have come and gone in that time.³⁸ Indeed, one of the best strategies for countering soft words and false teaching seems to be simply this: waiting the wolves out. Over the years, a heart straying from biblical wisdom—or never truly interested in it—tends to stray not merely from the text, but from the faith itself. By contrast, those who treasure the loving-kindness of the Lord, and count it better than life, have a Spirit-powered habit of endurance.

The pastor-theologian makes a conscious decision to do just this: endure. His ministry is not grounded in coolness; in relevance; in authenticity, as commonly

36. The recent explosion of biblical-theological scholarship bears this out in spades. As just one of many examples, consult the arresting perspective put forth by numerous authors in Steven J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016).

37. Strachan, *Awakening*, 74.

38. Pastors-in-training will benefit from the biography of MacArthur by Iain Murray. See Murray, *John MacArthur: Servant of the Word and Flock* (Edinburgh and Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2011).

defined; in rhetorical firepower; in personal winsomeness; in cultural fluency; in popularity; in normality, even. The pastor-theologian is more like the grasshopper-chewing John the Baptist, in other words, than like a CEO, a cutting-edge activist, a wildly-gifted “maker,” a society-defying musician, a comedian, or any other performer or public figure. The pastor-theologian’s ministry is grounded in God and his Word. He wants above all else to know the Lord, and thus to kill his sin, and grow in maturity by the power of Christ in him. He knows that conversion ushers the redeemed into a lifelong process of sanctification, and that he is responsible for pursuing the fruits of the Spirit. More than anything else, his people need him to be mature, to be holy, to be zealous for the divine, and thus to be a kind of Bible-saturated mystic.³⁹

The pastor-theologian does not believe he deserves extra credit for preaching biblical truth. He humbly confesses, whatever his gifting, whatever his intellectual interests, that he has nothing else to preach.⁴⁰ God has graciously given him the Word, all of it, to be searched out and applied. There is nothing better to preach—not warmed-over psychotherapy, not historical lessons, not activism, not Chicken Soup for the Vaguely Evangelical Soul. This exposition of the text handed down to us by God’s Spirit is no exercise in virtuous but boring spirituality, either. The biblical text is fascinating. Alongside the full inspiration, inerrancy, authority, and sufficiency of Scripture, we should freely and gladly confess the full beauty of the Word of God.⁴¹ Nothing comes close to it in terms of depth and breadth and mystery and power and complexity. Yes, a child can understand the basic message of the Bible—praise God for that. But a skilled scholar can spend a lifetime in the Word and never come close to discovering its fathomless deeps.

Fourth, the pastor-theologian delights to go toe-to-toe with an age that is both reductionist and intellectually arrogant.

As we have been at pains to say: how much do we need strong, intellectually-gripping, soul-shaking preaching in our age. We live in an era that is simultaneously dumbed-down but academically-beholden. In other words, while many of us flirt with laziness due in part to our devices (which do the heavy-lifting for us), our culture puts

39. As Gavin Peacock has said, we need “divines, not dudes.” See Peacock, “What Is Biblical Manhood?” in Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock, *The Grand Design: Male and Female He Made Them* (Christian Focus, 2016), 58; also Aaron Cline Hanbury, “Gavin Peacock’s Moment,” Council on Biblical Manhood & Womanhood, July 21, 2014, accessible at <https://cbmw.org/topics/ministry-men/gavin-peacocks-moment>.

40. I make this argument in Strachan, “The Pastor as Theologian” in *Portraits of a Pastor*, ed. Jason K. Allen (Chicago: Moody, 2017), 71–90.

41. One could argue that this is the entailment of a text that is uniquely divine. To read the Scripture, in fact, is to come into full contact with its heavenly form and identity. The Scripture is so glorious, in fact, that it authenticates itself as the very testimony of God. See J. I. Packer, “Hermeneutics and Biblical Authority,” *Themelios* 1.1 (Autumn 1975): 3–12; also John Piper, *A Peculiar Glory: How the Christian Scriptures Reveal Their Complete Truthfulness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

more stock than ever before in elite education and expert consensus. Such a context leaves sheep who are ripe for plucking, especially if they are interested in debates, discussions, and genuine intellectual inquiry.

I sense this is particularly true for young people, many of whom go to secular schools and find themselves intellectually interested, perhaps, for the first time in their lives.⁴² Their youth group did little to give them a taste for the exhilaration of biblical learning; their church body was geared more to salving feelings than equipping the mind; their parents, members of this kind of ecclesial experiment, did little to train them up in apologetic terms. In fact, despite real evidence of serious study and real learning on the part of children and youth—we think here, and even perhaps shudder as we do, of chemistry, geometry, algebra, complex football playbooks, and so on—the church has often treated its younger constituency as if the mere mention of theology, like a computer virus, shuts the brain down on the spot. With a background like this, is it any shock that our youth would be sorely tempted to walk away from the faith, when the faith when they have witnessed in their background seemed to strain against deep discussion and heartfelt engagement of the deepest realities of the universe?

More than perhaps ever before—save for the era of the Enlightenment—the church not only needs but *must have* pastors who are equipped to handle objections, challenges, and genuine questions from both skeptics and saints. In terms of discipleship, it is not enough to give people John 3:16, a financial planning program, and a watered-down, fill-in-the-blank brand of instruction. The sheep need *doctrine*. The sheep, whatever their age or station in life, need *truth*.⁴³ The people of God require—from their shepherds—a rich meal of biblical food. Too often today, they receive only a thimble-full of theology. We do not mean here that the pastor is required to personally vindicate the faith in the face of every query and overthrow every disputant.⁴⁴ Faith, we remember, is a miracle. No one is saved by reason or mere intellection, but by the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8–9). But with this noted, pastors

42. There is a great hunger among our youth for the truth. As one example, consider the testimony of Jaquelle Crowe, *This Changes Everything: How the Gospel Transforms the Teen Years* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

43. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. speaks well to the truth-driven nature of the pastorate: “There is no more theological calling than this—guard the flock of God for the sake of God’s truth.” Mohler, *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 107.

44. Vanhoozer has very helpfully framed the pastor as an intellectual “generalist.” Discussing ministers, Vanhoozer writes: “Pastors are called not to practice academic theology but to minister theological understanding, helping people to interpret the Scriptures, their cultures, and their own lives in relation to God’s great work of redemption summed up *in Christ*.” Vanhoozer and Strachan, *Pastor as Public Theologian*, 15, 112. In terms of helping, say, college students work through secular presentations in their coursework, the pastor does not need to master quantum physics to aid them, but he should help them understand how to integrate science and faith, and should try to identify what the working metaphysical and philosophical assumptions of a discipline are, and then compare them to biblical commitments in the same areas. Vanhoozer’s contributions in *Pastor as Public Theologian* give further guidance on these important but hard-to-handle matters.

can surely work very hard in our simultaneously anti-intellectual and arrogantly intellectual age to show the beauty and power and cohesion of the Word of God.

This kind of ministry is truly the cure of souls, as the Puritans used to say. The pastor is in the business of presenting people whole in Christ to God. Alongside the theologian, he is the only person on the earth who traffics in eternity for a living. All this ministry, all this activity, all this glory-giving work, depends upon sound doctrine. Biblical truth is the *obsession* of the pastor. He is like a lion deprived of meat when taken out of his pulpit; he is consumed with getting back to divine business, as Edwards called it.⁴⁵ He lives to preach the Word of God, he sees it as a calling he could never deserve and has no right to assume, and he works very, very hard to preach and teach faithfully each week.

He does so while happily, cheerfully, and unstintingly proclaiming the whole counsel of God. This is where the pastor approaches a great line, drawn deep in the sand, and must choose whether he will cross over or hold back. Will he preach, in the context of book-by-book exposition, the truth about homosexuality? Will he tell his people what everlasting torment in hell means? Will he defend substitutionary atonement against the rising chorus of its detractors? Will he build out a meaningful, robust understanding of submission as it relates *both* to the nature of the Christian life *and* to biblical womanhood, or will he dodge the bullet with a few jokes and limp qualifications? Will he show his people that we not only affirm Christ as the judge of all the earth, but *need* him to fill this role in order for evil to be routed and destroyed?

Too often, pastors confront the kind of questions I have just posed only in terms of faithfulness. This is surely a crucial component of the conscious and ministry-shaping decision to declare the whole counsel, no matter the cost. But I would also suggest that pastors should consider these questions in terms of *need*—the need of the people for answers to an unbelieving culture's challenges. The church, for example, largely decided to go light on matters of sexuality and gender so as to not offend or divide, or drive away potential seekers. We cannot miss that this decision left the church's apologetic ministry with a gaping hole in its defenses; the people of God had no theology of sexuality, no deeper understanding of marriage, no comprehensive and beautiful vision of manhood and womanhood.⁴⁶ Is it any wonder that our youth report in polls that they support a non-Christian ethic on homosexuality, then?

Pastor-theologians build their ministry off of sound doctrine, we conclude here, not only because the Bible commands they do so (Titus 2:1), but because this is precisely what the flock of Christ must have to endure, survive, and thrive in our

45. See Jonathan Edwards, "Pastor and People Must Look to God," in *The Salvation of Souls: Nine Previously Unpublished Sermons on the Call of Ministry and the Gospel*, ed. Richard Bailey and Wills (Carol Stream: Crossway, 2002), 142. This entire sermon by Edwards will fan into flame an interest in the model of pastoral ministry covered in this article.

46. This despite the outstanding contribution of John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006 [1991]).

smoldering, faith-targeting world. Failure to preach and teach doctrinally leaves the church a collection of unwitting prey and unready witnesses.

Fifth, we need pastor-theologians because, under Christ, the church depends on them.

Give us men who fit this paradigm, and the church truly has what it needs to survive and even thrive in the wild. Much is being said in our time of the need to equip the whole body for ministry; Baptists like me, as with all true saints, cherish the doctrine of the priesthood of believers. Yet it must also be said that the church has just two offices, elders and deacons, and that God has invested a great deal in the former.

The elders of the church, led in many cases by those who give special attention to preaching and teaching the Word, have the God-given responsibility to protect, nourish, and correct the flock.⁴⁷ They are always accountable to the church body itself; they cannot act as CEOs or spiritual dictators. But they and they alone are called to oversee the body of Christ in its local expression. When Christ launched his ministry and thereby began the formation of his spiritual body, he began by gathering the twelve to himself. He taught them, trained them, admonished them, and readied them for the work he was soon to hand over to them.⁴⁸

So it was that the apostle Paul traveled the Greco-Roman world, appointing elders wherever he went. So much—so very much—rests upon the elders of a local church. This means, correspondingly, that so much depends upon identifying and training the next generation of elders. This means, in turn, that in human terms, the church's health rests with the church's ability to strengthen and summon young men to leadership.

The church is Christ's. It cannot live or move or have its being but through Christ, who at every moment upholds both the created order and the people washed in his blood. But Christ has so ordered his church that it must have men to lead it. Nowhere is male leadership associated with the necessary subjugation of women. Rather, God has structured his church for maximal glory, and his church's pattern of leadership follows the creational design of the man and the woman (see Genesis 2). In this way, men serving as elders is not arbitrary, but grounded in creational norms.

There are many ways for men and women alike to bless and build up the body outside of the position of elder. All this service is valuable; all of it is drenched in meaning. But we cannot miss the missional necessity of raising up pastor-theologians, men who are equipped to be leaders of men, who will be able to guide an elder-board

47. I commend here the work of Jeramie Rinne, *Church Elders: How to Shepherd God's People Like Jesus*, 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches (Wheaton, IL: Crossway: 2014).

48. This raises the matter of discipleship, the lack of which is a formative part of all that ails the modern church. For help here, consult Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus*, 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016). All discipling begins, it must be said, with a healthy and vigorous pulpit ministry. Preaching *is* discipling, and is the cornerstone of all discipleship efforts.

in answering falsehood, standing down wolves who slip into the flock, promoting true doctrine, and caring for the souls of the people. To the extent that we succeed in this great endeavor, our churches will be positioned for health; to the extent that we fail to call out and raise up the next generation of pastors, our churches will wilt and fail to give God the glory he deserves.

In sum, we need more men like Ockenga, men who sought training and preparation for ministry, who worked very hard to preach faithfully and well, and who exuded a spirit of holy ambition and gospel boldness in a world that sought to quiet and snuff out such boisterous faith.⁴⁹ But these kind of men will accrue naturally in churches that love doctrine and love the mission of Christ, for no matter the direness of the cultural situation, true men of God will always thrill to a big challenge and an impossible task.⁵⁰

Conclusion

We began with a big claim: the neo-evangelical heyday deserves consideration—and even scholarly representation—as the Third Great Awakening of American history. That claim is audacious enough in itself, but here’s more for the scholarly scales: we may well find ourselves in a new season of revival. We have not yet seen the conversion growth that would merit this age being labeled a Fourth Great Awakening, but it is clear to many of us that God has done something new in our time.

Looking back at Ockenga’s career, and movement, gives us fresh insight and perspective for our own day. The neo-evangelical enterprise ultimately faltered, as disagreement over doctrines like Scripture, manhood and womanhood, and the nature of the church caused a splintering of the once-unified association. This reality prompts us to wonder afresh today: will we hold fast to the trustworthy word? Will evangelicals pursue unity, but not a unity of warm feelings and shared cultural interests, a unity grounded in love for the truth? Will a still-secularizing environment lead the church to trim its theological wings, and bid its pastors to soften their tone, for fear of being heard as controversial?

We cannot know, but we can pray for this: that God will raise up more with the spirit and pastoral commitment of Ockenga, and more with the willingness to venture all over the world, and like the early church declare the exclusivistic gospel of Christic grace, the gospel that may yield suffering in the present, but bequeaths the eternal weight of glory to all who are faithful in Christ, and to Christ.

49. We would do well to recover such a bold spirit. For a popular take on this issue, consider John Piper, *Risk Is Right: Better to Lose Your Life Than Waste it* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013); David Platt, *Radical: Taking Your Faith Back from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2010); Owen Strachan, *Risky Gospel: Abandon Fear and Build Something Awesome* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013).

50. See Mark Chanski, *Manly Dominion: In a Passive-Purple-Four-Ball World* (Merrick, New York: Calvary Press, 2014).

Pastor-Scholar: The Pastor Theologian and Scholarship

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Abstract: There is a critical need today for pastor-scholars to serve the Church and to advance theological knowledge. The pastor who is a scholar will utilize the format of the written word to dialogue with an important part of modern society—scholars and educated readers—through the form of scholarly discourse. Though the pastor-scholar is not a common calling, once one embraces this calling, there are several essential characteristics that can positively impact the pastor-scholar’s profession and standing.

Key Words: pastor-scholar, pastor theologian, ecclesial theologian, scholarship, academics, writing, Augustine, Jonathan Edwards

In our modern world of peculiar career titles—key grip, chief value officer, penguinologist—the title of “pastor-scholar” may seem equally curious. In fact, to some ears the idea of a pastor-scholar might be a dubious title, along the lines of a plumber-painter or a provocateur-mime. Yet, in this short essay, I argue there is an vital need for pastor-scholars and offer some practical thoughts and suggestions on how to approach scholarship while serving the needs of a local church. By virtue of constraints of space and time, my thoughts are not exhaustive; much more could be said about the work of the pastor-scholar.

When I speak of a “pastor-scholar,” I have in mind a very specific individual: a person whose full-time effort is to serve a local church or ministry, and whose part-time effort is to engage academic scholarship—especially theological research that influences the lives of those engaged in postgraduate theological education (and by that, the larger world, through academia). As is often the case, it is easier to state the negative: by “pastor-scholar,” I do not mean a full-time academic who is also involved in a local church or ministry, nor do I mean a pastor who writes theology for

the sake of layfolks or other pastors. Both of these two roles are also important, but they are not in the scope of which I speak in this essay. For the purpose of placing the pastor-scholar in our greater world, I consider the pastor-scholar to be a subset of the general category of pastor theologian. Recent trends have created a renewed interest in the pastor theologian, and I view my ideas in this essay as a supportive addition to much of what has been said about pastor theologians.¹ In Hiestand and Wilson's taxonomy, I see the pastor-scholar as a special subset of the ecclesial theologian.² The difference between the ecclesial theologian proper and the pastor-scholar is typically one of audience; the pastor-scholar will devote time to writing and research at such a level that the audience will include members of higher academia. Though the pastor-scholar is the primary focus for this essay, I believe much of what I write about engaging scholarship in the context of a local church is applicable to other types of pastor theologians as well.

Hiestand, Wilson, Vanhoozer, Strachan, and others have well-articulated the valuable contribution, if not the critical need, for pastors to do theology for the greater world within their ecclesial context. For me, that argument is a given with the fertile soil for grappling with theology that occurs in local ministries. As a full-time professor now, I am rarely challenged by the rubber-meets-the-road struggles to interpret Scripture that was commonplace when I pastored full-time (unless I try to live vicariously through my students who are pastors). These struggles proved invaluable for thinking through the way the biblical texts work, not just what they mean. This is not to take anything away from the equally-critical role of highly-skilled professor-scholars, but to point out that both pastoral and professorial callings bring a great deal of value to the table.³ We—both church and world—are impoverished without both in our modern theological context. However, the recent emphasis on the pastor theologian reveals that there does exist some degree of impoverishment; specifically, a lack of pastors who work as public theologians today. One primary way we can fill this lack is by encouraging pastors—with scholarly gifting—to contribute to the larger world of theological scholarship as a part of their local pastoral ministry.

1. See for example, Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015); Todd Wilson and Gerald Hiestand, *Becoming a Pastor Theologian: New Possibilities for Church Leadership* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2016); Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015); and Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, *Beauty, Order, and Mystery: A Christian Vision of Human Sexuality* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2017).

2. Instead of trying to nuance Hiestand and Wilson's nomenclature (e.g. "ecclesial academic theologian" or other), I simply use "pastor-scholar" for the sake of clarity. Further, a pastor-scholar may not abide by all eight of Hiestand and Wilson's characteristics for the ecclesial theologian; see Hiestand and Wilson, *Pastor Theologian*, 88–101.

3. Even though I focus on the pastor-scholar in this essay, which implies that some pastors are not involved in scholarship, the same discontinuity exists in the academy, where though it is often assumed that all professors are involved in scholarship, in actual practice, some professors see their roles more as educators than scholars. Thus, we could speak of the professor-scholar in a similar way that we speak of the pastor-scholar.

Formats and Forms

As days advance, and centuries pass, there will always be the need to communicate afresh what we learn about the biblical texts, in different *formats* (e.g., oral pronouncements, written texts, digital media) and in different *forms* (e.g., devotionals, commentaries, critical scholarship). The pastor-scholar does theology in a limited format (mostly the written word) and in a very narrow form (mostly critical scholarship) to advance knowledge of the biblical text for an important audience in the modern world.

The *format* for engagement is today almost entirely by means of the written text. Writing occupies an important place in the Christian tradition; the words of God come through the written text and the (arguably) highest form of recommunication of the gospel occurs within written text. What is more, scholars base their work on the written word; if pastors wish to engage scholarship, it will be primarily through the written text. Whereas many pastors write to advance the gospel, the pastor-scholar writes to advance knowledge—particularly knowledge of the gospel/Christian tradition. At first glance, this statement may seem to imply—from a purely Christian perspective—that the pastor-scholar is inferior to the pastor. This is not the case, because a pastor’s work at writing is not as singular in its purpose as is often stated. However, instead of arguing this point, I merely note Augustine’s confession of the importance of the symbiotic relationship between writing and knowledge: “I admit that I try to be of the number of those who write by advancing in knowledge, and advance by writing.”⁴ The pastor-scholar is also one of that number whose calling is to write to advance knowledge, specifically knowledge of the Christian tradition.

The *form* for engagement is peculiar to the modern context. Scholarship (research for the sake of knowledge, but intended as a benefit to the world at large) is a form of communication that exists today that did not exist at the time of the early church. As a result, there are no exact precedents for the pastor-scholar in early church history; there were no universities in the ancient world to promote the form of literature we today call “scholarship.” A lack of early historical precedent, however, does not change the need for pastors to engage in scholarship. We can demonstrate this quickly through several historical examples, starting with the early church. When a need arose to communicate to early Christians more specific details about the life of Jesus—especially in a *format* that would be more useful as the world became smaller—early Christians used a *form* of communication that we today call a “gospel.”⁵ Similarly, as Paul and John felt the need to write rhetorically-oriented

4. Augustine of Hippo, *Letters (131–164)*, ed. Roy Joseph Deferrari, trans. Wilfrid Parsons, *Fathers of the Church* 20 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 150.

5. Here I do not suggest that the four Gospels of the canon are *sui generis*. All are, in short, adapted from Greco-Roman biographies, though with some creative genre-bending; cf. Harold W. Attridge, “Genre,” in *How John Works: Storytelling in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Douglas Estes and Ruth Sheridan, SBL RBS 86 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 1–22.

correctives and explanations of the gospel to dispersed Christians, they engaged in a creative reworking of the letter *form* to reach their audience.⁶ Justin Martyr surely knew of other dialogues, but he nevertheless adapted the *form* to meet his (and his culture's) needs.⁷ Though Augustine was most focused on weighty topics, he recognized the value of Laurentius' request to write something in a form, a handbook (*enchiridion*) that would be most useful. As knowledge of the biblical texts continued to grow, Christians of all stripes continued to write in many different forms to reach a larger audience—from commentaries, to creeds, to systematic theologies, to allegories, to children's novels, presumably each to fill a need within the larger culture. In this way, scholarship is a small but valuable form of discourse in the modern world, one in which some pastors are surely called to participate.

Characteristics of the Pastor-Scholar

How do pastors become pastor-scholars? There is not a simple answer to this question, as it is akin to asking how someone becomes a penguinologist. At the base, a person must have the general prerequisites of both a pastor and scholar—calling, experience, education, and more. The minimum requirements for both of these vocations are well-known. Beyond these minimums, however, there are other characteristics I find that a pastor-scholar requires. In the rest of this essay, I name several of the most important of these characteristics.

Pastor-scholars must be called to scholarship.

Often, the first question that arises is whether or not a pastor-scholar is even a viable enterprise. Modern churches today do not seem very fertile ground for a pastor who spends a great deal of time thinking, studying, and writing. However, it is viable, and may become slightly more viable in the future, but there are only a small percentage of pastors who are called to this type of ministry. It seems this is the case throughout church history; only a small percentage of pastors seemed to have theological influence outside their immediate context. The road of the pastor-scholar is not an easy one, and it should not be undertaken lightly. Thus, the pastor-scholar must be called; this calling solidifies the ground under their life and work even when people inside and outside of their local ministry context do not understand—or are opposed to—this calling.

6. For example, Douglas Estes, "John as Pastor Theologian: 2 John as Creative Theological Écriture," in *Becoming a Pastor Theologian: New Possibilities for Church Leadership*, ed. Todd Wilson and Gerald Hiestand (Downers Grove: IVP, 2016), 197–99.

7. Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 234; and cf. Averil Cameron and Niels Gaul, eds., *Dialogues and Debates from Late Antiquity to Late Byzantium* (London: Routledge, 2017), 1–6.

Writing scholarship requires regular vision-casting.

Most pastors in local church ministries are familiar with the idea of vision-casting. In order to participate in scholarship, a pastor must also regularly cast the vision for their calling as pastor theologian. What this may look like is regularly teaching the people in the local church context why scholarship is important—how ideas flow from scholars into common culture. Just as the vision of a church needs regular, consistent casting—lest people forget—so too does the pastor-scholar’s personal engagement with scholarship need regular, consistent vision-casting. A pastor-scholar should never assume church members will understand or approve of the calling to scholarship.⁸ Even those members who have in the past seemed to understand may quickly lose the vision if it is not regularly cast.

Pick an area of scholarship based on passion and for effect.

While the form may be narrow, scholarship does include a rather wide range of possible work. Pastors who wish to be scholars should pick an area based on their passion as well as the power of contributive effect of their work. If a pastor-scholar is not passionate about scholarship, with the challenges of writing in the midst of local church ministry, then writing will probably not happen. Moreover, scholarship does not necessarily mean simply writing biblical commentaries. Some pastor-scholars will have the opportunities to write commentaries, but many will not, at least early on in their careers. This does *not* mean that a pastor-scholar cannot make a significant contribution. There are many, many areas of scholarship where important contributions are waiting to be made. Maybe it is deciphering a papyrus from Oxyrhynchus, discovering relationships between a Hebraic and Septuagint section of Jeremiah, or creating a new argument within apophatic theology. Similarly, many professors also have niche areas where they make important contributions. If the calling is there, pastor-scholars may make important contributions to the advancement of knowledge.

Make time to write, but write in the time you have.

The path to scholarship is writing, and writing takes time. Fulfilling a call as a pastor of a local church ministry means a busy, hectic lifestyle. Yet, as a rule: In the 21st century, everyone is busy. Professors are very busy people too. No one has time to write the way pre-modern, aristocratic philosophers did. When my writing comes up in discussion, often people assume that I have more time to write now that I am a professor, but that isn’t true. I have about the same time; and in some ways, the time to participate in scholarship while serving as a pastor was easier than it is now as a professor. This is why, whatever the scholar’s role is, the scholar must learn to make

8. This is true even among congregations that do not struggle with anti-intellectualism, but especially true among those that do; close to 25 years after Mark Noll’s *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, this is still an issue.

the most of time as it comes to them. Sometimes that may be a whole day, but often it is only an hour here or there.⁹ While no two situations are the same, the pastor-scholar must evaluate their calendars and plan accordingly.

Talk about baseball and family, not scholarship, with members of the congregation. Because scholarship is a narrow form of communication, written in passive voice and filled with jargon (and German), it is a form that average people do not feel they can access. When a pastor-scholar chats with church members about their scholarship, many members may feel the subject is arcane, but they will listen because it is *their* (pastor's) scholarship. Since the pastor-scholar is passionate about their work, and the work is contributive, it will be tempting to talk about it regularly. Yet, if someone talks too much about themselves to others, it is a turn off—so also is it a turn off to talk too much about one's own scholarship. As a pastor, though, I loved the opportunity to talk about my work, but I learned quickly that in almost all cases it worked best to mention what I was working on in one or two sentences, and then quickly turn the conversation to the other person's family or something of mutual interest. If you find someone who truly wants to know more about your scholarship, and are trustworthy, consider it a treasure.

Encourage professors who also engage in scholarship. Just because a person is a professor does not mean they regularly participate in scholarship. Numerous professors get tenure (if their school offers it), and then focus largely on their teaching role. Professors often have difficult jobs; speaking only from my personal experience, the idea of a professor sitting in an ivory tower undisturbed for weeks on end thinking deep thoughts is a myth (or at least, a rare occurrence) in our world today. Pastor-scholars, working outside the modern-accepted guild, should create positive relationships with professors, building up their fellow travelers whenever possible. Since many, if not most, pastors and professors have never walked any steps in the other's occupations, it is incumbent on the pastor-scholar to build positive relationships with those whose careers are more closely associated with scholarship. When I participated in scholarship as a working pastor, I found some curiosity—but very rarely animosity—between professors engaged in scholarship with whom I had built some form of relationship with. Scholars are people, and we would do well to encourage them whether they are first pastors or first professors. Finally, writing, especially scholarship writing, is an incredibly difficult undertaking for all; rejections will occur, and pastor-scholars must not give in to “if I only were a professor ...” negative emotions. Nothing worthwhile is built quickly or easily.

Embrace the strengths and weaknesses of a pastor who engages scholarship. The strength and weakness of the pastor-scholar is context. Writing in general, and writing scholarship in particular, will take time away from your ministry, but if

9. Tremper Longman, “Writing in the Gaps,” *Didaktikos* 1:2 (2018): 12–13.

handled well, will also improve your ministry by bringing depth to your teaching.¹⁰ A strength of the pastor-scholar is that a local ministry context will sharpen their understanding of the how the biblical texts are meant to work in real-life situations. But the weakness of the pastor-scholar is that their context is outside the knowledge-sharpening conversations that often occur in academic environments. I always found focusing on the strengths of the pastor's context was superior to worrying over the weaknesses of the context. If you believe God has called you to a pastoral role, and to participate in scholarship, rejoice in those opportunities. They are vital, and exceptional.

The pastor-scholar is a bird of strange feather, created by need in the modern era to address a lack that occurs in theological discussion. We should not be surprised to find that in our generation, we are not the first to raise questions of the relationship between faith, ministry, and the advancement of knowledge. Douglas A. Sweeney notes this about Jonathan Edwards' love for the advancement of knowledge:

Edwards surely would have jumped at the chance to live with us today. He would have given almost anything for access to the historical and scientific knowledge that has burgeoned so dramatically since the early nineteenth century. His eighteenth-century world seems far away, a distant land. And Edwards was a man of his times. But he was also keenly curious and usually open-minded. He was a forward-looking thinker with an insatiable appetite for information about the Bible, its ancient historical contexts, and the structure of the natural world in which its events, stories, songs, poems, prophecies, morals, and other teachings were—and continued to be—realized.¹¹

From Augustine to Edwards to the pastor-scholar of today, participating in scholarship is a vital opportunity to advance knowledge of Christianity and to be sharpened by this advancement. For those called to this role, whether it be to explore new avenues for apophatic theology, or to identify a clue for a koine Greek lexical gloss in a yet-unread Oxyrhynchus Papyri, “whatever you do . . . do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col 3:17 NIV).

10. This type of depth is not limited to pastor-scholars, but is often limited to pastor-theologians (whether acknowledged as such or not). I believe it is rooted in the passion to learn that, when harnessed, allows for truly thought-provoking teaching.

11. Douglas A. Sweeney, *Edwards the Exegete: Biblical Interpretation and Anglo-Protestant Culture on the Edge of the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 4.

Pastoral Theology in a Missional Mode

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Abstract: In this article I argue for the renewal of pastoral theology from a missional mode. This approach to pastoral theology offers rich resources addressing critical areas of contemporary concern. This article is more than just academic reflection. In fact, this reflects a curricular work in progress at Missional Training Center, Phoenix, Arizona—an extension site of Covenant Theological Seminary, St Louis, Missouri.¹ For the past six years we have been attempting some creative approaches to theological education based on the rich insights from the 1960s–1980s offered by Western mission leaders and Southern hemisphere church leaders on theological education in a missional mode. I am especially indebted to the insights of Lesslie Newbigin, Harvie Conn, and David Bosch, and will draw primarily on their work in this article.

I begin by briefly exposing the roots of this problematic view of pastoral theology. I then sketch the missional turn in the 20th century and note its considerable impact beginning with ecclesiology, and then on theology and leadership. This understanding of mission provides a solid theological foundation for the renewal of pastoral theology. Finally, I work out some of the significant implications of this missional turn for rethinking pastoral theology.

Key Words: Pastoral Theology, Missional Ecclesiology, *Missio Dei*, Pragmatism, Professionalization of Ministry

Introduction

Roots of Pastoral Theology Today

Recently I spoke with a theologically astute young Brazilian pastor. He is pursuing a doctoral degree in pastoral theology from an American institution. He described the most recent courses he had taken, and after offering appreciative words on some of the wisdom he had gained, he offered a twofold critique. On the one hand, the courses were pragmatic, primarily concerned with skills and technique. The courses followed a methodology rooted in the social sciences; there was little theological reflection on the subjects. On the other hand, the courses were designed to be relevant for the

1. You can read more on our website: <http://www.missionaltraining.org/>

internal life of the institutional church. They equipped professional pastors to feed and care for the flock but lacked any missional vision for a world beyond the walls of the church. I believe these critiques are on target and addressing them is part of a larger agenda for the rethinking of pastoral theology today.

The pair of problems sketched by my Brazilian friend emerges out of the historical development of pastoral theology over the last two centuries. Pastoral theology initially arose out of a faulty theory-praxis dichotomy and subsequently was given its contours by the professionalization of ministry. Moreover, this whole process took place in the context of an ecclesiology that had lost its missional identity. Thus, to understand some of the problematic issues involved in pastoral theology today, we must look briefly at three crucial assumptions that shaped its historical growth as a theological discipline: a theory-practice dichotomy, a professionalized view of the pastoral ministry, and a non-missional understanding of the church.

A Theory-Practice Dichotomy

The discipline of pastoral theology—or, perhaps better, the aggregate of a number of disciplines gathered together within the theological curriculum under the rubric of ‘pastoral theology’—emerged out of the *theory-practice* dichotomy that molded the curriculum of theological education. Specifically, it developed in the 19th century when the fourfold pattern of theology arose especially under the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher and became the norm for theological education. There were three theoretical disciplines—biblical studies, systematic theology, and church history. The fourth, pastoral theology became a “bridge-building” discipline that connected to pastoral ministry the previously established abstract truth gained in the other theoretical disciplines.² In the 20th century, pastoral theology continued its development in this direction as it splintered into various sub-disciplines that followed the methods of the social sciences. Under the growing pragmatism of a postmodern culture impatient with all abstract theoretical reflection, pastoral theology “became more and more functional and pragmatic. Practical is that which can be *used* immediately and which *works* within a short period of time. With this emphasis, practical theology tends to lead to a ‘preoccupation with technique.’”³

The pragmatic nature of pastoral theology resulted from at least two factors. The first is the illegitimacy of the very dichotomy itself. Al Wolters rightly observes that this dichotomy is an “idolatrous perspective on the world” and a “distorted mind-set” shaped by a “humanistic thought-pattern.” The source of this dualism is “Aristotelian

2. Edward Farley, “The Reform of Theological Education as a Theological Task,” in *Theological Education* 1, (1981): 102–106. Emphasis mine.

3. Bernhard Ott, *Beyond Fragmentation. Integrating Mission and Theological Education: A Critical Assessment of Some Recent Developments in Evangelical Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 225; Farley, “Reform of Theological Education,” 105.

paganism, which made a god out of theory or analysis.” Aristotle “like many Greek philosophers before and after him, singled out one aspect of created reality, the reasoning function, and gave it the absolute status of God.” What creational capacity, the Greeks enquired, would enable the human being to rise above their creational status to universally valid truth? Reason or *theoria* is singled out as human function so capable of accessing timeless truth. “Having fallen into this idolatry of the rational, all the rest of human functions and activities are lumped together and are downgraded in comparison to it, and are mindlessly labeled the ‘practical.’” The very category of practical “in its value laden opposition to ‘theoretical’ is a pseudo-concept deriving directly from Greek philosophical idolatry.” The result of this false dichotomy is a constant pendulum swing back and forth between the exaltation of intellectual reflection and a pragmatism that rejects all theoretical activity as irrelevant or is at least suspicious of it.⁴

This partially explains why pastoral theology has become so pragmatic. There is no such thing as context-free or timeless theory; this is an illusion of the pagan Greek mind. All theoretical reflection as a human activity—and this includes all theology, of course—is embedded in the whole fabric of human life. And so all theological reflection necessarily *arises out of* some particular context. When theoretical reflection in biblical, systematic, and historical theology arises from an academic setting that has been disconnected from the church-in-mission it will naturally be irrelevant to pastoral ministry. All theological reflection is also *directed toward* some particular context. When the various branches of “theoretical” theology are directed toward the self-generated agendas of scholars, again naturally it will usually be irrelevant to pastoral ministry. No amount of bridge-building will be able to satisfactorily connect to pastoral ministry a theology conceived as timeless content derived from a different context. It is not hard to see why impatience with irrelevant theological reflection leads pastors down the road to pragmatism which rejects all theological reflection as unhelpful to ministry.

The Professionalization of Ecclesial Ministry

The *professionalization of ecclesial ministry* exacerbates the problem of pragmatism—this is the second factor. In the North American seminary model, the fourfold pattern of theology developed in the 19th century has been connected in the 20th century to a professionalized model of ministry. A professional in Western culture is a person with expertise in a narrowly defined field who plays a specialized role within society. A professional requires specialized knowledge and certain skills to fulfill this position, and this demands a long and intensive academic preparation in which the professional is trained for their role especially through the mastery of certain skills.

4. Albert M. Wolters, *Ideas Have Legs* (Toronto: Institute for Christian Studies, 1987), 7–9.

There are numerous problems with the professionalized approach to ministry.⁵ For our purposes here we can simply note that when the minister is considered to be a professional, pastoral theology is reduced to a process of passing along the necessary skills, know-how and needed information to qualify them for their specialized function. Not only does it stunt broader theological development, and potentially personal spirituality, it contributes to the pragmatic direction of pastoral theology. Pastoral theology delivers skills and techniques designed to equip the professional to fulfill their specialized task.

Non-Missional Understanding of the Church

This whole development of pastoral theology has taken place in the context of a *non-missional understanding of the church*. Winston Crum uses a helpful image to describe a full ecclesiology. He says:

The Church is rather like an ellipse, having two foci. In and around the first she acknowledges and enjoys the Source of her life and mission. This is an ingathering and recharging focus. Worship and prayer are emphasized here. From and through the other focus she engages and challenges the world. This is a forth-going and self-spending focus. Service and evangelization are stressed. Ideally, Christians learn to function in both ways at once, as it were making the ellipse into a circle with both foci at the center.⁶

Similarly Karl Barth claims that the church's "mission is not addition to its being. It is, as it is sent and active in its mission. It builds up itself for the sake of its mission and in relation to it."⁷ Both authors emphasize the two poles of the church's existence: the vocation of the church to make known the good news in the midst of the world and the importance of its inner, communal life to empower it for mission. Both the inner life and outward vocation are essential to the church's identity. If either is lost our ecclesiology is distorted.

Pastoral theology developed in a time when the pole of missional vocation was marginalized. Thus, pastoral theology was a matter of equipping the pastor for tasks within the institutional church primarily aimed at the goal of care for the members of the congregation. Preaching, worship, sacraments, counselling, pastoral care, and

5. E.g., Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 244–247; Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 11–12, 115, 127–135; Harvie Conn, *Eternal Word and Changing Worlds: Theology, Anthropology, and Mission in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 278–282.

6. Winston F. Crum, "The Missio Dei and the Church: An Anglican Perspective," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 17, 4 (1973): 288.

7. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV, 1, 62, 2 (Peabody: Hendrikson, 2010), 725.

so on are treated, at best, simply as pastoral tasks that nurture the spiritual life of the congregation. This is the specialized expertise of a professional pastor.

Donald Messner rightly laments that “contemporary theological education has been oriented primarily toward the pastoral care of congregations, not the church’s mission to the world” and further warns that “ministry detached from God’s mission in the world is heretical.”⁸ This point can be well made by a brief reference to Karl Barth’s discussion of *beneficia Christi* (benefits of Christ) and sacred egocentricity.⁹ He asks a simple question: What does it mean to be a Christian? The “classic answer” is, to be a recipient and possessor of the *beneficia Christi*. Barth lists these benefits: regeneration, conversion, peace with God, reconciliation, justification, sanctification, forgiveness of sins, and more. All these come by grace as gifts of God in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit in response to repentance and faith. Christians are those who have received these benefits. It is this that inspires the pastoral ministry of the church.

“There can be no disputing,” says Barth, “that something true and important is meant and envisaged in all this.”¹⁰ Yet if we are not alert it would be easy to make the reception, possession, and enjoyment of these benefits what is essential to being a Christian. Barth wonders: Can it really be the end of Christian vocation that I should be blessed, that I should be saved, that I should receive, possess, and enjoy all these gifts and then attain to eternal life without any regard for others? Does this not smack of a pious or sacred egocentricity? Would it not be strange and even contradictory that the selfless and self-giving work of God should issue in a self-seeking concern with our own salvation? Would not this egocentricity stand in stark contrast to the being and action of the Lord? Would this not turn the church into an institute of salvation that forgot its missional purpose in the world? Would this not make us *pure* recipients and possessors of salvation?¹¹ Barth rightly asks: “Is not every form of egocentricity excused and even confirmed and sanctified, if egocentricity in this sacred form is the divinely willed meaning of Christian existence and the Christian song of praise consists finally only in a many-tongued but monotonous *pro me, pro me*, and similar possessive expressions?”¹²

Barth’s critique stings because this is the vision that has informed much pastoral theology. Pastoral theology is shaped by the assumption that the fundamental task of pastoral ministry is to minister the means of grace to God’s people. But if it is left there, we betray the role and vocation to which God has called his people and their leaders in the biblical story. We are blessed to be a blessing; God works first *in* but then *through* his people. If I can rephrase a fitting comment by N.T. Wright: “The

8. Donald E. Messer, *A Conspiracy of Goodness: Contemporary Images of Christian Mission* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 17, 21.

9. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Part 3, 2*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1961), 554–569.

10. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV, 3, 2, 563.

11. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV, 3, 2, 568.

12. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV, 3, 2, 567.

church, believing that all the benefits of Christ were just for them, has betrayed the purpose for which God has given them. It is as though the postman were to imagine that all the letters in his bag were intended just for him.”¹³ How can pastoral theology takes a missional vision on board? How would this change the whole discipline? These are questions important for pastoral theology. However, before turning to these questions it is important to attend to exactly what we are talking about with the much-used word mission with a brief look at the missional turn in the 20th century.

The Missional Turn and Its Implications for Pastoral Theology

During the 20th century there was a recovery of the fundamental missional dimension of the Christian faith. This turn has manifold implications for pastoral theology. Indeed, this recovery of a missional vision is an important step on the way to the renewal of pastoral theology. In this section I will briefly sketch the recovery of mission and its importance as a theological foundation for pastoral theology.

***Missio Dei* and the Missionary Nature of the Church**

The year 1952 represents a convenient starting point because the shifts that took place in mission theology at that time had a widespread impact on many areas of theology and of the church’s life. That was the year the International Missionary Council met in Willingen, Germany, and proposed a new theological framework for mission. In the decade and a half up to this time massive changes had been taking place. The growing church in the non-Western world, the increasingly self-critical posture of the missionary movement itself on its own theological foundations, the loss of confidence in Western culture as in any sense Christian in the wake of demonic ideologies and rapid secularization, and the demise of colonialism all led to a crisis in understanding mission. The understanding of mission as only a cross-cultural activity initiated by mission organizations in the ‘Christian’ West and carried out in the ‘mission fields’ of the non-Christian non-West simply did not fit the reality of the mid-20th century. The task of Willingen was to draft a new theological vision for mission in the midst of this turbulent time.

The final statement adopted at Willingen entitled ‘The Missionary Calling of the Church’ begins: “The missionary movement of which we are a part has its source in the Triune God Himself.”¹⁴ Mission is not first of all a human enterprise; rather it begins with the work of Triune God. Mission has its source in the love of the Father

13. N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 108. In the original quote, he speaks of the covenant rather than the benefits of Christ.

14. Norman Goodall, ed., *Missions Under the Cross: Addresses Delivered at the Enlarged Meeting of the Committee of the International Missionary Council at Willingen, in Germany, 1952; with Statements Issued by the Meeting* (London: Edinburgh, 1953), 190.

for his world who sent the Son to reconcile all things to himself. The Son completed his work and sent the Spirit to gather his church and empower them for mission. The church is sent by Jesus to continue his own mission: “There is no participation in Christ without participation in his mission to the world. That by which the Church receives its existence is that by which it is also given its world-mission. ‘As the Father has sent Me, so send I you.’”¹⁵

This new framework for mission made clear that the starting point for mission was, first, the mission of God as narrated in Scripture, and second, the missionary nature of the church as it participates in God’s mission. Here we see a radical shift and also a remarkable widening of mission. A host of colonial and Christendom assumptions are shattered. Rooted in God’s reconciling mission the missional vocation of the church is no longer limited geographically to the non-West nor to certain intentional activities of outreach. Mission defines the identity of the church as given in the role it is called to play as covenant partners with God in his mission. Mission is to, from, and in all six continents.

It is often overlooked that this crucial moment coincided with the ascendancy of biblical theology. Brevard Childs observes three major elements of consensus in the biblical theology movement: 1) theological: the main character in the Bible is God who is acting in history; 2) narrative unity: the Bible is one unfolding story of God’s redemptive work that climaxes in Jesus Christ, and all books and events must find their meaning within this narrative context; 3) history: the redemptive work of God is revealed in his mighty acts in history especially in the death and resurrection of Jesus.¹⁶ All three of these components are present in an ecumenical document issued just three years before Willingen entitled *Guiding Principles for the Interpretation of the Bible* (Oxford, 1949). The statement affirms “the unity of the Old and the New Testaments is...in the ongoing redemptive activity of God in the history of one people, reaching its fulfilment in Christ.”¹⁷ Thus, as Willingen spoke of the redemptive activity of the triune God, it was not simply a theological formula of sending but is rather a historical record summarizing God’s long redemptive journey in the biblical story and the central role of God’s people in that story. The participation of God’s people in his mission must also be articulated in this narrative context. Their missionary identity issues from the role they play for the sake of the world in this story of God’s mission.¹⁸

This ‘Willingen moment’ is pregnant with significance for many areas of theology and the church’s life. This is not merely a matter of articulating a new

15. Goodall, *Missions Under the Cross*, 190.

16. Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970).

17. Ellen Flesseman-van Leer, ed., *The Bible: Its Authority and Interpretation in the Ecumenical Movement*. Faith and Order Paper No. 99 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 14.

18. See Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011) where I have worked this out in detail.

framework for cross-cultural missions traditionally conceived. This is a radically new understanding of mission teeming with implications far beyond the cross-cultural missionary task of the church. Willigen is doing nothing less than pointing us to a central thread of the story of the Bible that has been long neglected: God has taken up the people of God into his mission to reconcile all things to himself. This determines their very identity. This is nothing short of a sea change in understanding the very nature and vocation of the church that will have multiple ripple effects.

What is Mission?

The word ‘mission’ has been variously understood and sometimes quite badly misunderstood by both proponents and opponents of the missional turn. So it is important for this paper to articulate exactly what I mean by mission. Mission is the participation of the church in what God is doing to renew the whole of human life and the entire creation. What is the vocation and role that God has given his people? We can capture it in four phrases.

The church is *chosen by God for the sake of the world*. The church’s identity and role is found in terms of two orientations: toward God and toward the world. The church is oriented toward God to carry out and make known his purposes in the world. The church is also oriented toward the world as God is going to use the community he has chosen to bring about a comprehensive restoration and renewal to the whole creation and the entire life of humankind. Their responsibility to the world and existence for the sake of the world constitute God’s people as missional.

Second, the church is *blessed to be a blessing*. The biblical story begins with humanity blessed in the garden as they live in harmony with God, with one another, and with the non-human creation. Sin shatters that blessing and replaces it with a curse. God’s promise to Abraham is that he and the people that come from him will be blessed; that is, God’s creational *shalom* will be restored to them. But their blessing is *so that* they might be a channel of blessing to all nations. They are to embody God’s creational intent to which they have been restored and invite others into it. N. T Wright puts it this way: the people of God are to “model genuinely human existence”¹⁹ and “function as a people who would show the rest of humanity what being human was all about,”²⁰—all for the sake of the world. Restored to creational blessing can never be separated from being a channel of that blessing to those outside the covenant community. And, sadly, how often this happens!

The third expression that helps to capture missional nature of the church is that they are *a distinctive people on display to the nations*. This flows from what we have just said: God’s people are blessed and on display to the nations. They are to

19. N.T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 51.

20. Tom Wright, *Bringing the Church to the World: Renewing the Church to Confront the Paganism Entrenched in Western Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1992), 59.

be distinctive as they reject the idolatry that is destroying the lives of their cultural contemporaries. Thus, we might say that God's people face in three directions: back to creation, forward to new creation, and outward to their contemporary cultures. Backward: they are to *embody* God's creational intention for humanity. Forward: they are to be a *sign and preview* of the coming new creation. Outward: they are to *engage and challenge* the culture and its idolatry.

Finally, I distinguish between a *missionary dimension* and *missionary intention*. This distinction emerged shortly after Willingen. It was clear that mission was broadening: mission was the whole life of God's people as a sign of the coming kingdom. However, the intentional activities traditionally associated with mission that had as their deliberate purpose the goal of bringing people to Christ—such as evangelism and cross-cultural missions where there was no witness to the gospel—needed to be maintained. There is a missionary dimension to the whole of the Christian life—the whole of life is restored for the sake of the world. But not everything the church does has the missionary intention of bearing witness to Christ so as to bring others to know him. And to lose these activities of intentional witness is a betrayal of the gospel.

A Missionary Ecclesiology

What does this new view of mission mean for the church? And, of course, our ecclesiology will determine ministry and pastoral theology. Hendrikus Berkhof has offered a systematic formulation of ecclesiology that takes seriously mission as central to its being. Indeed, he believes that mission must be the primary resource to revitalize ecclesiology. He argues that there is a “necessity of re-studying ecclesiology, in fact all of theology, from the standpoint of the [church's] relationship to the world.”²¹ He sets out to rethink ecclesiology from this standpoint.

Traditionally ecclesiological reflection has focused on the study of the institutional church, that is, on preaching and teaching, on sacraments and worship, on leadership and church order, and so on. His restructuring of ecclesiology divides the doctrine of the church into three main parts: institution, community, and mission. The church as institution is concerned with a totality of activities organized to be a means of grace that minister Christ to the congregation. He treats traditional themes like instruction, baptism, preaching, the Lord's Supper, pastoral care, and leadership. The church as community deals with the totality of personal relationships within the fellowship of congregations. The church exists as a community and each member has gifts to build up the others in the shared life of the community. And finally, he comes to the church as mission: here he treats the role of the church in the midst of the world in all the ways it functions as salt and light. While the institutional church had been

21. Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith*, English translation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 411.

the primary focus of ecclesiology from the early days of the church, the church as community had developed since the Reformation. As for the church as mission it had only been since the middle of the 20th century with the breakdown of Christendom that this has taken hold.

The order of Berkhof's ecclesiology is important: his overall treatment is first, institution, then, community, and finally, mission. The church's mission in the world comes last and he begins this new section: "As the institute mediates Christ to the congregation, so the congregation in turn mediates him to the world. In this chain the world comes last, yet it is the goal that gives meaning and purpose to the preceding links. Everything that has come before serves this goal."²² All that is done in the gathering of congregations—the means of grace, leadership, spiritual gifts, and relationships—form God's people for their missionary calling in the midst of the world. "Around the institution a congregation is being gathered, which subsequently is scattered among the peoples of the world as God's people. Whatever comes before, this final development is the goal. But without all the preceding the latter lacks roots, drive, and force."²³ The church as institution and community serves the church's mission in the world.

Defining the relationship of the church in terms of its calling in the world raises an urgent ecclesiological issue: what is the relationship of the church to the culture in which it is set? Berkhof argues that both "antithesis toward" and "solidarity with" is the only faithful stance.²⁴ There must be solidarity with our culture yet separation from its idolatry. The church may betray its identity in two directions. The first is "churchism" or "sacralization." This is when the church forgets its solidarity with its culture and "turns in upon herself as a bulwark in an evil world or, less aggressively, as an introverted, self-sufficient group, which is content with her own rites, language and connections." The second is "worldliness" or "secularism." Here the church abandons its antithesis toward culture and becomes "as much as possible assimilated and conformed to the world." In both cases the church "does essentially the same thing: she avoids the clash and the offense."²⁵ A true encounter with culture demands identification and rejection, yes and no, participation and withdrawal. Loss of either one is a recipe for unfaithfulness.

Pastoral theology has often been guilty, in Berkhof's terms, of "churchism" or "sacralization." That is, it is the church as institution and community turned in on itself and divorced from its missional vocation in the world that has guided pastoral theology. As Newbigin puts it, when the church takes this posture it "thinks primarily of its duty to care for its own members, and its duty to those outside drops into second place. A conception of pastoral care is developed which seems to assume that the

22. Ibid., 410.

23. Ibid., 411.

24. Ibid., 415.

25. Ibid., 421.

individual believer is primarily a passive recipient of the means of grace which is the business of the Church to administer.”²⁶

Missional Theology

The ripple effects of a new understanding of mission and the church were far reaching. There were at least four important areas where its impact was felt: hermeneutics, theology, leadership, and theological education. Indeed the implications of mission for all four have continued to work themselves out in the succeeding decades with a relentless historical logic. For our purposes in this paper it is important to note the implications of a missional ecclesiology for theology and leadership. After all, pastoral theology is first and foremost theology, and our understanding of the ministerial leadership will shape our pastoral theology.

If mission is a dominant motif in the biblical story, it is imperative to ask how this motif forms theological reflection on Scripture. The early pioneers of the Western missionary movement were primarily concerned with the pragmatics of carrying out cross-cultural mission. Little theological reflection on mission seemed necessary in view of the confident assurance of what they were doing. The crisis of mission in the early to mid 20th century raised new questions about the nature, goal, and validity of Christian mission. This produced a growing theological reflection on mission—a theology of mission. The theology addressed mission as one more theme in the Bible and asked ‘what is mission?’ However, the centrality of mission in the biblical story obstinately refused to be reduced to one more biblical theme. A growing chorus of voices called for something more radical—a move beyond a theology of mission to a missional theology. Harvie Conn insists that the “question is not simply, or only, or largely, missions and what it is. The question is also theology and what it does.”²⁷

‘Missional’ as an adjective here is not another minor sub-species of theological reflection like liberation or feminist theology. Rather it defines a constituent component of all theological reflection if it is faithful to Scripture. Thus, we are in need, says David Bosch, of a “missiological agenda for theology rather than just a theological agenda for mission; for theology rightly understood, has no reason to exist other than critically to accompany the *missio Dei*.”²⁸ Along the same lines Darrell Guder urges that the “formation of the church for mission should be

26. Lesslie Newbigin, *Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (New York: Friendship Press, 1953), 166–167.

27. Harvie Conn, “The Missionary Task of Theology: A Love/Hate Relationship?” *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983): 7

28. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 494.

the motivating force that shapes and energizes our theological labors in all their diversity and distinctiveness.”²⁹

These authors are rightly reacting against a theology that “received its main features [during] the period in which Christianity had practically ceased to be a missionary religion.”³⁰ Both the nature and purpose of theology and its main curricular divisions were formed at a time when the church had lost the horizon of mission from its existence. A major problem was that “the present division of theological subjects [were] canonized in a period when the church in Europe was completely introverted.”³¹

Missional theology is a theological task that probes the implications of the church’s missional vocation as it participates in the *missio Dei*. The question is what difference does it make *for theology* if the mission of God and the missionary nature of the church is a constituent thread in the biblical story? This question must address both the content and goal of theology. Obviously Scripture is the primary source and authority for theological reflection, and if mission is central to the Bible then theology must take account of this. Mission must inform the *content* of theology. One cannot follow, for example, covenant theologians who can theologize long about the covenant without ever taking into account the very missional nature of the covenant given to Abraham and Israel at Sinai—the blessing of the nations! Moreover, if the central identity of the church is missional then the question arises as to how theology equips the church for its vocation. Mission as a central scriptural theme, thus, must also shape the *goal* of all theological work. Thus, missional theology is the theological consequence of taking seriously God’s mission and the church’s participation in that mission.

This needs to be worked out in at least two areas: the congregational life of the church and the theological curriculum. And it is clear that both of these areas are very important for pastoral theology. First, how does the missional nature of the church impact the life of the congregation—its nurturing ministry, its vocation of witness, and its structures to enable nurture and witness? Second, how does the dominant motif of mission in the biblical story shape the theological enterprise—its content of the various disciplines (biblical studies, systematic and historical theology, church history, ethics and ecumenical studies, pastoral theology), its curricular division between theoretical theology (biblical studies, systematic theology, church history) and practical theology, its purpose, its unity, and its methodology? To quote the striking words of Harvie Conn: “Missiology stands by

29. Darrell Guder, “From Mission and Theology to Missional Theology,” *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* XXIV, 1, (2003): 48.

30. Lesslie Newbigin, *Honest Religion for Secular Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 102.

31. David Bosch, “Theological Education in Missionary Perspective,” *Missiology* 10, 1 (January 1982): 26.

to interrupt at every significant moment in the theological conversation with the words ‘among the nations.’”³²

Those reflecting on missional theology did not simply add ‘for the sake of the world’ to existing theologies as missional icing on an otherwise existing theological cake. In fact, we hear a call for renewed reflection on the very nature of theology itself.³³ To what degree has Western theology been shaped by the idolatry of its own culture? The limitations of space do not allow us to wade into these deep waters here even though there are implications for pastoral theology. But we do need to at least note a couple of issues that were prominent in the writing of mission scholars and are relevant to our topic. Specifically theology must be both contextual and formational. Grasping these two characteristics of theology will challenge a theory-praxis dichotomy.

All theology is *contextual*. Perhaps this is one of the most important contributions that both mission theology and Third World theology can make to the West dominated as it is by pagan Greek thought. Missional theology rejects the notion of a *theologia perennis* or *confessio perennis*—a timeless theology or confession valid for all times and places—and is alert to the fact that all theology and all confessional statements take place in a particular historical and cultural context. There is no supra- or meta-cultural theology; in fact, it is dangerous to believe there is. All attempts to construct timeless and universal theology, says Harvie Conn, are “destructive of mission. Seeing theology as an essentializing science and the creeds as the product of that kind of theological reflection inhibits us as well from facing up to our own contemporary missiological task and its risk.”³⁴ Theology, which makes the claim to be timeless, is actually attempting to pass off a contextual theology from another time or place as universal theology. Yet this is an illusion born of a Greek view of truth where one misunderstands theology as an “abstractionist task, a searching for essences untouched by the realities of the cultural context.”³⁵

There is only theology that reflects on the gospel in a particular context and is directed to the particular needs of a church. While the gospel has universal validity our particular theologies and confessions do not. Theology is contextual in two senses: “Theology *speaks out of* the historical context; and theology must *speak to* that context.”³⁶ Latin American evangelical theologian Orlando Costas argues that theology is “reflection that takes place in the concrete missionary situation, as part of the church’s missionary obedience to and participation in

32. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 224.

33. An excellent example is Conn’s chapter “Theology and Theologizing: A New Course,” in *Eternal Word*, 211–260.

34. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 223.

35. Harvie Conn, “Contextual Theologies: The Problem of Agendas,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990): 59.

36. Conn, *Contextual Theologies*, 61. Emphases mine.

God's mission and is itself actualized in that situation."³⁷ Theology arises out of and addresses the current issues that churches face in their missional calling. One might rephrase a popular comment attributed to Martin Luther: "If your theology deals with all aspects of Scripture with the exception of the issues which deal specifically with your time you are not doing theology at all." Theology is always contextual; it brings the enduring light of Scripture to bear on the church's mission in a particular time and place. While particular contextual theologies may well enrich churches in other cultural contexts—in fact, they always will if they are rooted in Scripture since the gospel is universally true—they will be formed by particular cultural traditions and missional contexts in response to the needs of the church in that setting.

The very nature of theology as contextual reflection on universally valid divine revelation urgently requires a threefold dialogue with Christians from other cultures, from other historical eras, and from other confessional traditions. If our theologies are not to become parochial and accommodated to the idolatry of our particular cultures we will need the mutually correcting and enriching voices of Christians from other settings.

Theology that is contextual in this sense will always be *formational*. If theology arises out of a missional context and is directed back to that context it will have transforming power. Theology is not just a matter of passing along accurate information although it will not be less than that. Theology must have power to form and equip leaders for their pastoral calling to lead missional congregations. Conn argues that the "ultimate test of any theological discourse, after all, is not only erudite precision but also transformative power."³⁸ Costas agrees: "It is a question of whether or not theology can articulate the faith in a way that is not only intellectually sound but spiritually energizing, and therefore, capable of leading the people of God to be transformed in their way of life and to commit themselves to God's mission in the world."³⁹

Conn borrows and transforms the notion of conscientization from liberation theology to describe the goal of theology. Conscientization is "the awakening of the Christian conscience to reflection and action in God's world" under the comprehensive authority of the Scriptures.⁴⁰ Theology, then, has this conscientizing goal of forming a people by making them aware of what it means to be faithful in each missional situation to the gospel: "theologizing becomes more than the effective communication of the content of the gospel to the cultural context; it

37. Orlando Costas, *Theology of the Crossroads in Contemporary Latin America* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1976), 8.

38. Conn, *Contextual Theologies*, 63.

39. Orlando Costas, "Evangelical Theology in the Two Thirds World," *TSF Bulletin* 9, 1 (September-October, 1985): 10.

40. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 310.

becomes the process of the covenant conscientization of the whole people of God to the hermeneutical obligations of the gospel.”⁴¹

Here theoretical reflection and missional praxis are much more deeply intertwined than is evident in a theory-praxis dichotomy that begins with abstract theoretical reflection, which is then applied as a second step to a particular context. Theological reflection arises out of a particular missionary situation in which we are committed to missionary obedience, and it has the goal of shaping the people of God for their missionary calling.

Missional Leadership

The missional turn leading to a renewed ecclesiology has also produced fresh reflection on ecclesial leadership. If the church is missional in its very nature the question arises as to what kind of leadership is needed for this kind of church? There is a growing sense among many after Willingen that a missionary understanding of the church demands new forms of leadership. For example, Lesslie Newbigin pressed this issue. A missional church demands a very different kind of leader than the maintenance church of Christendom. “We cannot talk long about ministry without talking about mission. Ministry must be conceived always in terms of the Church’s mission.”⁴² His repeated refrain is the “question that has to be asked—and repeatedly asked—is whether the traditional forms of ministry which have been inherited from the ‘Christendom’ period are fully compatible with the faith that the Church is called to be a missionary community.”⁴³

Both Conn and Newbigin set out to rethink ministerial leadership in a missional church. Conn sketches three concepts of ministry: minister as pedagogue, as professional, and as participant. His primary concern is that the first two images, the more traditional notion of ecclesial leadership, separates the minister from the missional calling of the church in the world.⁴⁴ Newbigin is likewise concerned about this. Two operative words repeatedly appear in his discussion of ministerial leadership to get at this issue: lead and equip. What is distinctive is the way he relates the two: leaders are those who lead first by following hard after Jesus in mission, and in the process equip others to follow after.

Two Scriptural texts undergird his notion of leading: “Follow me as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1); and Mark 14:42 which Newbigin translates “Come on: let’s go.” In this Marcan text we see Jesus leading by way of example as he goes to the cross. Newbigin draws on a picture of Jesus portrayed by the Italian

41. Ibid., 231.

42. Lesslie Newbigin, *Priorities for a New Decade* (National Student Christian Press and Resource Centre, Birmingham, 1980), 8–9.

43. Lesslie Newbigin, “Developments Since 1962: An Editorial Survey,” *International Review of Mission* (January 1963), 8.

44. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 272–289.

director Pasolini in the movie *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Jesus is pictured as a commander leading his troops into battle. He goes ahead of the disciples leading them while throwing words of encouragement, instruction, and challenge back over his shoulder as they follow him in their missionary task. A leader is not “like a queen bee who remains at the center while the worker bees go out into the world.”⁴⁵ Nor is a leader “like a general who sits at headquarters and sends his troops into battle. He goes at their head and takes the brunt of the enemy attack. He enables and encourages them by leading them, not just by telling them. In this picture, the words of Jesus have a quite different force. They all find their meaning in the central keyword, ‘Follow me.’”⁴⁶

Newbigin makes a strategic choice with the word ‘leadership’ precisely because he wants to convey this notion of participatory engagement in leading. He recognizes that in the New Testament there are many metaphors for leadership: shepherds, overseers, watchmen, stewards, ambassadors, servants, and so on. He notes that the primary metaphor today is that of a shepherd with the term ‘pastor.’ He says, however, that the shepherd today conveys a very different picture than in biblical times. Then a shepherd was a king who governed his people and led them into battle. Leadership best conveys the combined notion of discipleship and leadership found in the New Testament.

As one who leads, a leader is also to equip others for the task. Newbigin uses many terms—serve, nourish, sustain, guide, enable, encourage.⁴⁷ He points to four ways a leader may equip the congregation: the ministry of word and sacraments to the congregation; upholding in prayer the congregation “by name before God as they go out into the world day by day to wrestle with the principalities and powers;”⁴⁸ providing “space” and structures in which training for cultural callings may take place;⁴⁹ being deeply involved in the ministry of the world themselves so that the first three are not to be carried out in a Christendom pattern. This will involve both engagement with the powers in a social and political setting and evangelism: a leader “should be ready himself to be engaged—as opportunity offers and calls—in direct evangelistic efforts or in pioneering movements of Christian action in the secular world.”⁵⁰ This does not mean that the minister is directly involved in all areas of

45. Newbigin, *Ministry* (Unpublished paper, 1982), 3.

46. Lesslie Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 240.

47. E.g., Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 234–241.

48. Lesslie Newbigin, “Bible Studies: Four Talks on 1 Peter,” in *We Were Brought Together*, ed. David M. Taylor (Sydney: Australian Council for the World Council of Churches, 1960), 119; cf. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd: Meditations on Christian Ministry in Today’s World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 143.

49. Lesslie Newbigin, “Episcopacy and Authority,” *Churchman* (1990) 104, 4, 338; *Good Shepherd*, 80–81.

50. Lesslie Newbigin, “The Bishop and the Ministry of Mission,” in *Today’s Church and Today’s World*, ed. J. Howe (London: CIO Publishing, 1977), 246; see also *Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 240; *Good Shepherd*, 60–61.

culture. Rather as situations arise the leader is called to represent the whole church in challenging the idols and powers in public life.

Rethinking Pastoral Theology in Light of Mission

In this final section I address the question of the nature of pastoral theology⁵¹ or pastoral theologizing⁵² in a missional mode. I offer a framework along with suggestions at a fuller outworking in various areas via snapshot illustrations.⁵³ I suggest five components. First, pastoral theology is *theological reflection or theologizing*. This statement really needs much deeper reflection on the nature of theology than I can give it here.⁵⁴ Certainly, to say no more, theological reflection will always set issues in the ultimate context of the biblical story, and shed the light of relevant scriptural themes on the topic. But the main point to be made here is that when pastoral theology is considered to be simply skills and know-how shaped by the social sciences it has lost any status of being theology.

And more, it is dangerous to dispense with theology. Preaching must be anchored in sustained theological reflection on the nature of the gospel, the purpose and authority of the Scriptures, a rich and multi-faceted hermeneutic, the role of proclamation and teaching in the church, among other important fundamentals. These issues cannot be by-passed and reduced to communication theory with the assumption that they are covered in biblical studies, systematic theology, and other theological disciplines. Counselling must flow, likewise, from the nature of the gospel and how it is brought to bear in a formative way on people's lives. This is not to advocate the biblicistic and moralistic approach of some nouthetic counselling that rejects the creational insights of the social sciences. Psychology disinfected of its humanism by the gospel, for example, may offer much wisdom and can be drawn into reflection. But it must first be firmly embedded in the context of the biblical story. In all areas of pastoral theology theological themes such as ecclesiology in a broader context of the biblical story and the kingdom, the role of leadership in the congregation, the meaning of nurture in the New Testament, and so on will shape our practices. And to not attend to them in a focal way will allow certain unexamined theological assumptions to operate tacitly as an implicit background theology. It will also likely mean taking on board much of the idolatry of the social sciences.

Second, pastoral theology *equips leaders* for their callings in the church. This will mean, on the one hand, that pastoral theology is ongoing theological reflection on

51. I prefer the terminology of 'congregational theology' to pastoral or practical theology for various reasons.

52. Theology means a finished product. Theologizing highlights the ongoing reflection that must take place.

53. In this same journal Andrew Zantingh, Professor of Congregational Theology at MTC and Lead Pastor at the Journey Church will offer more concrete and extensive examples.

54. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 211–260.

the pastoral vocation and practice. It will be theological reflection that arises out of the setting of ecclesial leadership and is directed back to shaping it more faithfully. Our educational history has passed along a questionable legacy that separates our theological reflection from what may be called ‘skills’ and practices. Perhaps a term I encountered almost thirty years ago early in my academic career may be helpful. The term is designed specifically to move beyond a theory-praxis kind of dichotomy at work in the university. The context was the growth of professional programs in the university that focused on teaching ‘skills.’ The question was how to fit these professional programs into a liberal arts university with a tradition of theoretical reflection. The term offered as a way beyond this impasse was ‘serviceable insight.’⁵⁵ We need insight that enables us to serve Christ’s kingdom, and that insight may be focused theological reflection, and may also attend to practices in light of that reflection. We struggle under the authority and in the light of Scripture to reflect on what we are doing as leaders in God’s church with the goal of gaining insight that equips us to serve God’s people for the sake of the world. This sets all reflection on ecclesial leadership in a theological context as each aspect of pastoral ministry is brought under the searching light of Scripture. But the goal is how can one be a faithful leader in the church.

Third, pastoral theology *equips missional leaders for their calling in a missional church*. Here our ecclesiology deeply impacts our pastoral practice. If an ecclesiology that recognizes much of Berkhof’s concern as valid then the whole institutional and communal life of the church is to nourish the people of God with the life of Christ. But that is not an end in itself; we are blessed to be a blessing. Thus, the question must be pressed: how does an orientation to the world reshape preaching, pastoral care, counselling, formation, worship, sacraments—the whole breadth of areas often considered in pastoral theology? To take the example of pastoral care: Often this area is considered primarily in terms of care for various members. And when this is connected to a consumerist ecclesiology that sees the church as a vendor of religious goods and services, this vision of pastoral care can be deadly. What would pastoral care look like if the primary goal was to equip members for their calling in the world? How would a missional vision, moreover, reshape our practices on Sunday morning including preaching, liturgy, and sacraments?⁵⁶

There is much to explore here but to provide one example. An area of worship that has been part of the church’s liturgy for much of its history is confession of sin. In

55. *The Educational Framework of Dordt College*. <https://dordt.edu/sites/default/files/documents/imported/framework.pdf>. Accessed 23 September 2017.

56. See John F. Kavanaugh, *Following Christ in a Consumer Society* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006; 3rd edition) 147–176, who reflects on how various Christian practices, including sacraments and prayer, can enable us to maintain Christian faithfulness in an idolatrous culture of consumerism. On this see also Benjamin T. Conner, *Practicing Witness: A Missional Vision of Christian Practices* (Eerdmans, 2011), and Jonathan R. Wilson, *Why Church Matters: Worship, Ministry and Mission Practice* (Brazos, 2006).

my own Reformed tradition, the service of confession might proceed as follows: call to confession, confession of sin, words of forgiveness and assurance, and possibly the call to walk in obedience. Such a way of proceeding will teach the members each Sunday that forgiveness of sins is simply a gift they can enjoy. However, if in our call to confession we remind the congregation that our failure to follow Christ is also a matter of unfaithfulness in our missional calling, and if we conclude the service of confession with a call to walk in obedience *for the sake of the world*, it would nourish a missional vision week by week.

Fourth, pastoral theology will equip leaders in three areas—nurturing ministry, missional vocation, and ecclesial structures.⁵⁷ One way of structuring pastoral theology in a missional way is to consider ecclesial leadership in terms of three areas. There is the nurturing ministry in the institutional and communal life of the church. Here many traditional areas are considered such as preaching, worship, sacraments, fellowship, pastoral care, formation, leadership training, equipping families, and so on. Again, as mentioned in the previous point the question must be pressed how these can be carried out within a missional vision for the church.

There is also the outward calling of the church. What is the role of leaders in equipping and leading the congregation in evangelism, mercy and justice, cross-cultural missions? But there are many neglected areas we need to consider if we take seriously our vocation in the world. For example, if our congregations are going to be a faithful presence they must live out a missionary encounter with the idols of culture. In this way, they must know their culture and religious vision shaping it. Also, the question of what it means to be a distinctive community in our particular cultural context is urgent. Finally, faithfulness in our vocations in public life is an important area.

A final area of pastoral theology would be a consideration of the structures that either enable or hinder the church from working out its nurturing life and its vocation in the midst of the world. On several occasions, Newbigin rightly pressed the question, “Does the very structure of our congregations contradict the missionary calling of the church?”⁵⁸ He charges that we “are saying that we have recovered a radically missionary theology of the Church. But the actual structure of our Churches ... does not reflect that theology.” The problem is that the “actual structures continue to placidly reflect the static ‘Christendom’ theology of the eighteenth century.”⁵⁹ Here we need to ask about congregational, leadership, ecumenical, missionary, and budgetary structures of our congregations. Our question is whether or not these structures enable the church to be faithful to its calling.

57. This is how I structured a course I taught at Calvin Theological Seminary from 2012–2015 entitled ‘Introduction to Missional Ministry’. It is also the way we structure the whole ‘congregational theology’ component of our curriculum at Missional Training Centre—Phoenix.

58. Newbigin, “Developments During 1962,” 9.

59. Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Updated Autobiography* (Edinburgh: St Andrews Press, 1993), 148.

Fifth, as one thread in the seamless fabric of theology pastoral theology will be connected to and integrated with the other theological disciplines. Theological reflection in biblical studies, systematic theology, and church history will shape and inform pastoral theology. This is not to say that these areas of theology provide neutral theoretical grist for the practical mill of pastoral theology. It is the organic and connected nature of theological reflection or theologizing as a whole that means each area may and must contribute to the whole.

But there are two neglected areas within the theological curriculum that must be revived for the sake of faithful pastoral theology: cultural theology and spiritual formation. In the latter half of the 1960s, the missionaries and Third World theologians began to question Western practices of theological education, that would ultimately lead to the terminology of ‘contextualization’ in 1972. Their rethinking revolved around the insight that understanding cultural context could no longer be a side issue in training pastoral leadership.⁶⁰ Taiwanese theologian Shoki Coe believes pastoral leaders needed a “deeper understanding of the Gospel in the context of the particular cultural and religious setting of the Church, so that the Church may come to a deeper understanding of itself as a missionary community sent into the world and to a more effectual encounter within the life of the society.”⁶¹ Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama argues that a missionary pastor needs “two kinds of exegesis: exegesis of the Word of God and exegesis of the life and culture of the people among whom he lives and works.”⁶²

The church will always embody the gospel in a particular cultural context. Our preaching, our forms of leadership and worship, our understanding of counselling and pastoral care—indeed, every aspect of our pastoral life will be shaped by cultural assumptions. Thus, it will be essential to be aware of both the creational and idolatrous currents at work in any culture if we are to be faithful to the gospel in our pastoral practice. The problem is that we are like fish swimming in our cultural waters unaware that it is polluted. How easy it is to take on, for example, Harvard business models of leadership within the church or therapeutic practices of pastoral care or entertainment features of popular culture in our worship with little critique of the idols that shape them? A study of culture, therefore, cannot be an optional extra in theological education but must inform theological reflection on pastoral theology.

Spiritual and moral formation is also important. If leaders are set aside for prayer and the Word (Acts 6:4), and if leaders must be examples in their godly conduct (1 Tim 3:1–8), then the intellectual formation and skills acquisition that has been the

60. See Harvie M. Conn, “Theological Education and the Search for Excellence,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 41, 2 (Spring 1979): 311–363.

61. Shoki Coe, “In Search of Renewal in Theological Education,” *Theological Education*, Vol. IX, No. 4 (Summer, 1973): 236.

62. Kosuke Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology* (25th anniversary edition, revised and expanded; Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999 [1974]), p. 65. In fact, says Koyama, we maintain our “missionary identity” only if we are “entangled in” or “sandwiched between” these two realities.

traditional emphasis of pastoral theology is simply inadequate and even dangerous. Many questions arise as to how this might take place in the formation of leaders and this is not the place to enter the conversation. But reflection on the prayer and family life of the leader, as well as how they have learned to listen to God's address in Scripture, for example, needs to be part of that training.

Conclusion

The insights of mission leaders and Southern hemisphere leaders of a generation ago on the theological equipping of pastors still offers much to us if we are willing to listen. They can see the limitations and distortions of Western culture on our pastoral theology. No doubt it offers only one source for the renewal of pastoral theology. But if we are wise we will listen and ask if there is biblical insight that may make us more faithful.

Toward a Theology of Pastoral Care in a Missional Mode

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Abstract: For close to twenty-five years, I have been learning how to care for the congregations God has called me to serve. In this respect, I am like most other professional pastors who paid significant money to be trained by professional professors to gain the necessary skills and techniques to do specialized care in a congregational setting. In addition to being a pastor, I now also teach graduate level pastoral care courses for pastors. The following paper is my theological reflection on the task of training pastors to do pastoral care in a missional way. There are some significant problems with our current approach to pastoral theology. In this volume, Michael Goheen identifies three crucial assumptions that have negatively shaped pastoral theology's historical growth as a theological discipline: a theory-practice dichotomy, a professionalized view of the pastoral ministry, and a non-missional understanding of the church. My pastoral care experience bears out how these three assumptions have led to a faulty pastoral theology. In this article, I wish to offer an alternative approach to pastoral care from a missional mode. In doing so, I offer a solution which overcomes the theory-praxis dichotomy, that properly positions the role of the pastors as lead discipler, and one that correctly locates pastoral care in the context of a missional understanding of the church. I will do this by sketching the problem of pastoral care from ministry experience, by constructing theological contours that reframe pastoral care in the missional mode, by offering a concrete example of this kind of pastoral care in action, and finally by sketching a dynamic approach to theological education that can equip pastors for such care.

Key Words: Pastoral care, Pastoral Theology, Missional Theology, Pastoral Ministry

Introduction

A Critique of a Contemporary Approach to Pastoral Care

There are three assumptions that have given rise to a faulty approach to theological education as a whole and to the pastoral theology in particular. The first is the theory-practice dichotomy. My theological training would be considered top drawer academically, but my training clearly embodied this problematic dualism. The expressed aim of my seminary education was to help seminarians *to think theologically*, which came to mean the ability to think theoretically and abstractly about God, the Bible, God's people and the world. It was then the task of the practical theology department to take us "theological pit bulls" and turn us into "caring practitioners." The phrases in quotations were the actual words of my pastoral care professor. He had to teach us how to access our hearts through empathy—which enabled us to feel as well as think. But herein lies the problem. He had to try to put together inside of us what our education had artificially pulled apart into categories of theory and praxis. To put it in the vernacular, he had to try to get theology students "out of their heads and into their hearts." I remember covenanting with myself that if I ever got the opportunity to train others, I would try to heal the wounds created by this theory-practice lobotomy.

Two decades of professional ministry highlight the second problem with pastoral theology—that we assume it is the proper task of professionals to care for church members. After graduating from an American seminary, it was my aim to become a consummate professional, someone who could integrate theory and practice in a particular congregation in a Canadian context. In the mind of the members, I was clearly viewed as the trained professional who alone could provide the primary care to the church. So a second dualism, the clergy-laity distinction, persisted in both pastor and parishioners. This invisible divide provided an on-going recipe for congregational disappointment and disempowerment. If I did not provide care often enough, there was disappointment. Even if I trained elders, deacons and caregivers to provide care in my place, they felt disempowered by members' tacit expectations to be cared for by a professional. This invisible divide also fed my pastoral guilt over never caring enough and deepened my discouragement over never be able to be enough to meet the high consumer demand for professionalized care.

This error leads to a third problem I experienced in the parish—the church's non-missional self-understanding. I served both an established church and young church plant; and in both I discovered a similar mindset. The church exists for its own members—for the sake of itself. In the established church I served, the remaining members of this aging congregation were a highly introverted group who were singly focused on the survival of their institutional church. They were not able to articulate a purpose for their church's existence beyond the benefitting of its

own members—a clear expression of “sacred egocentricity.”¹ This inward-focused view limited pastoral care to the horizon of “members only.” In the church plant, the congregants could articulate a much more outwardly focused orientation for its existence in the community. But in actuality, pastoral care was largely determined and driven by consumer expectation of paid staff caring for the supporting community. In neither context was there truly an active missionary ecclesiology, an expressed and experienced reality of the church existing to care for the world.

In my experience of training pastors in Canada, the US and in Europe, it is clear to me that these problems in pastoral theology are perennial and persistent. These problems exist in the traditional church, and they persist in contemporary church plants. Collectively, they are inhibiting the church’s witness at best and contributing to its demise at worst. But our hope for a new church and a new creation are not tied to what humans can do, but to what God has done, is doing and will do to bring about the renewal of the church and the entire creation. God has promised to do this; we get to participate in this mission. This includes the renewing of pastoral theology.

Theological Contours for Pastoral Care

I now move from critique to construction. This construction task requires, in the first place, a robust theological framework of pastoral care. I suggest seven aspects of this framework that are critical for constructing a pastoral theology capable of equipping the church for its mission. These seven aspects are all unified in the gospel of the kingdom: God is restoring all humanity and all creation from the divisive effects of sin through the person of Jesus Christ and by the Spirit. This gospel is the hope for the renewal of all things and includes how we think about pastoral care. The starting point for a robust theology of care begins with this simple assertion: *God cares*. Caregiving originates with God, with His character and identity. Human experience testifies to the goodness of God’s character. Psalm 145:8–9 celebrates that “The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made” (ESV).

This song affirms that God’s care is focused on the human and non-human creation. God cares that human beings flourish and experience being fully alive to his goodness. God cares that all creation shares in the shower of His daily good graces. God’s inherent goodness is the bedrock and wellspring of all the care that exists in the cosmos. His goodness is precisely what our negative experience of life in this world causes us to question. But caregivers must cling to this profoundly deep faith commitment—that God is good and that He cares, even if our life’s experience is often far from it. Without this mooring in God’s character of care, the entire universe becomes a hostile environment we must either attempt to conquer or escape. With

1. Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Part 3*, 2, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1961), 554–569.

this grounding in God's caring goodness, human beings can learn to rest assured and receive the care of God.

All creation, human and non-human, testifies to the reality that God truly cares. The creation is marvelously vast and intricate. Humans are fearfully and wonderfully made. All created reality is complex—a complexity that reveals the care of its maker and sustainer. To his complex imager-bearers, God shares his vocation by mandating them to become caregivers of each other and caretakers who cultivate communities that shape culture and realize the creative potential latent in the world.

The logic of pastoral care derives from this theological starting point: pastors care because God cares. As humans, we share God's capacity to care. As pastors, we are called to reflect His care in local congregations. God knows that our capacity for care has been greatly diminished by sin. But He cares enough to set out on a long road of redemption to restore humanity—including our care-giving capacity. That is how much He cares.

A second aspect of a theological framework derives from the long road of redemption that God travels in the biblical story: *God's care for his creation leads to his mission of restoration*. He does so by forming a people who will be restored to their full humanity and live as a light in the midst of the dark world. Early on the road of redemption, God focuses his attention on one single person named Abraham and his people in order to save all families and all creation. God calls a particular people out of Egypt, plants them into a new land and puts them on display at the crossroads of the nations. There God cares for His people and calls them to reflect His care for all peoples. God calls Abraham and his children into a vocation of care — for each other and for the sake of the nations. Within Israel, God set aside leaders (Levites, kings, priest, and prophets) with the task of equipping his people with the end goal of training people how to receive grace and extend that grace to all. Today, church leaders are called to shape a culture of care within the church. In particular, pastors must take the lead in reflecting God's care for and to His people. But the goal of this care is to equip the people He has chosen to grow into their full humanity so that they can be His display case to the world. This missionary view of the church acts as an essential corrective to our current view of pastors purposed to be paid professionals that serve paying members for their own sake and satisfaction. By contrast, pastors are called by God to show others how to live fully human lives so that they can take their turn in showcasing God's care for all people.

If the goal of pastoral theology then is to help all human beings be fully alive, then we need to understand human beings; we need an adequate anthropology. This is the third aspect of a theology of care: *God's image bearers are multifaceted creatures*. If people are to be restored to their full humanity, we need an understanding of humanity that enables us to grasp the multifaceted nature of humanity. The anthropology of Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd is extremely helpful here. He expresses the complexity of the human person as a unity in diversity

by employing a modal scale.² Dooyeweerd views the human person as existing in a rich variety of irreducible modes starting from the basic biotic mode on up to the creedal mode on top. In between, he suggests others modes such as emotional, rational, historical, lingual, social, economic, aesthetic, political, and ethical. This structured diversity has a radical and integrating center in the religious center, often called the heart in Scripture (e.g., Proverbs 4:23). This religious center integrates and gives meaning to all of human life either by directing it all to Christ or to an idol. Either Christ or a Christ-substitute will direct, unify, and give meaning to all the other aspects of human life. As faith is directed to Christ one is able to live in line with the creational intent of God, thus increasing the flourishing of life. But if faith is directed toward the creature rather than the Creator, all modes of human life are corrupted. [Diagram 1]

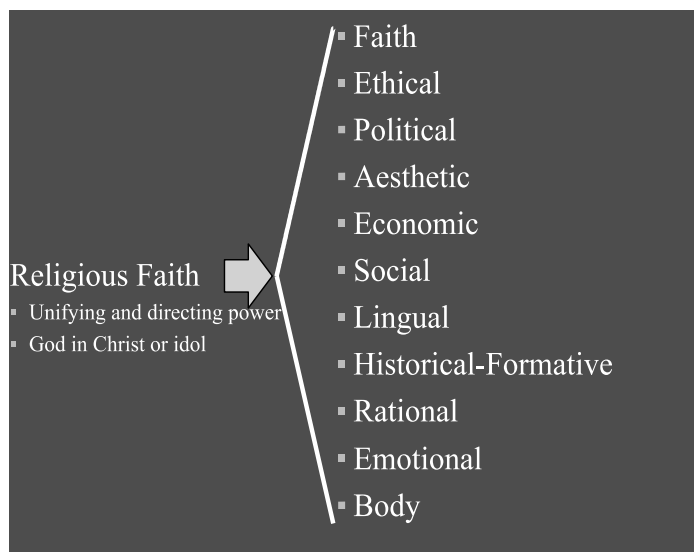


DIAGRAM 1

One need not agree with all aspects of this philosophical framework to see that this modal scale can help us see that we often over-simplify and reduce the nature of humanity, rather than embracing our complex or multifaceted existence. A good pastoral theology must have an anthropology something like the one offered above if we are going to appreciate the complex nature of human functioning. As pastors, we want to see humanity flourish at every level of their existence and especially at the religious control center of the heart. Moreover, such an anthropology enables us to understand the comprehensive and complex twisting power of sin, the theme of our next point.

2. Cf. further, Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *Christian Philosophy: A Systematic and Narrative Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 253–259.

The fourth aspect of our theological framework is that *sin is much bigger and more complicated than we often realize*. Sin is not just bad behavior; it is a power. G.C. Berkouwer speaks of sin as a “seductive power,” an “active, dynamic and destructive force,” and a “power that seeks to rule and to ruin everyone and everything.”³ Sin is also parasitic. It feeds off of and twists our God-given life and creational functions. Sin is itself a non-entity, a non-being with no ontological existence apart from something like a living human host.⁴ Sin resides in the human heart and hi-jacks all good human desires and distorts them into inordinate love of created things. This reality, called idolatry in Scripture, causes humans to behave in all kinds of dehumanizing ways and to experience all manner of dysfunction. Sin is also pervasive: it affects and pollutes every mode of human existence. The end result is that sin is just plain painful. Human beings groan and are filled with pain; there is no simple or easy cure for what ails us. In response to this pain, pastors must carefully try to understand the unique and complex nature of each person’s ailments before attempting to alleviate their suffering. If our view of sin remains too small and too simplistic, we simply will not be able to provide a proper diagnosis or cure. Our care is impacted by this reductionist understanding and will suffer as a result.

But to further complicate matters we need to see that Paul’s view of evil, for example in Ephesians 2:1–3, moves beyond the individual. Here he speaks of evil in terms of three realities: the sinful nature, the world, and the powers. [Diagram 2]⁵

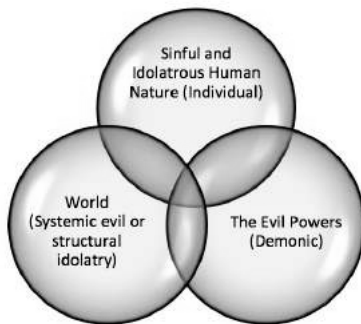


DIAGRAM 2

The first is the *sinful nature*—corrupted human nature that gives humanity a powerful propensity for sin. The second is the *world*. This is not to be confused with the good creation. Rather it is human culture as it has been formed and organized around idolatry. The flesh or sinful nature is the propensity of each individual toward idolatry

3. G.C. Berkouwer, *Sin*, Studies in Dogmatics. Translated by Philip C. Holtrop (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 235, 240, 259, 262.

4. There is a long history of reflection of sin in terms of *privatio* that goes back to Augustine. Augustine said the evil “has no existence except as a privation of the good” (Confessions 3.7.12). See Berkouwer’s discussion, *Sin*, 256–267.

5. This diagram is borrowed from my former New Testament professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, Mariano Avila, who used it in his opening convocation address in 2013.

while the world is culture that such people create to serve other gods. Just these two together would create such a colossal and complicated mess that no amount of human effort could ever clean it up. But now consider a third reality: *the powers*. They are the demonic powers who harass and hurt human beings and incite them to the personal and systematic vandalism of shalom. These powers act in and through the oppressive cultural systems or the world. As N.T. Wright put it: “For Paul, the powers were unseen forces working in the world...through the oppressive systems that enslaved and tyrannized human beings.”⁶

Paul’s understanding of sin is the overlapping of these three powerful realities with a central “sweet spot”—or perhaps “sour spot”—that could be considered “hell on earth.” Apart from Christ, according to Paul, that is where we live, and move, and have our pastorates. If this is an accurate picture of how evil impacts reality, then it is not difficult to draw this conclusion: the world and its caretakers are so complicated by sin that any care response to save what has been spoiled by sin must be simultaneously complex and comprehensive, both deep and wide.

The good news is that the nature of salvation in Jesus is as far as the curse is found. Salvation restores every aspect of human life—and this is our fifth point. *Salvation is much bigger, deeper and wider in scope than we often believe.* Salvation is far bigger than just saving souls; it is instead the restoring of human beings to their full humanity. Pastoral care is far more than just soul care; it is care for the full human person so that they may again flourish in every dimension of their created nature. Jesus himself testifies to the comprehensive scope of his calling to care for all humanity in Luke 4. Here Jesus reveals that the Spirit of the Lord is equipping Him to lead the long-awaited turn around beginning with the people who need that care most: the poor, the prisoner, the sick, and those pressed down by injustice. This reiteration of the Messiah’s mission from Isaiah 61 would have certainly resonated with oppressed Israel. Yet the recipients of God’s care and concern are not only for people like Israel who find themselves in political exile, actual prisoners in danger of losing their sight during unending dark nights of unjust exile. The intended recipients of this salvation are to be understood in the most comprehensive sense possible, in the sense of all sinners suffering from all the corrupting and complicating effects of sin upon human life. People need salvation from sin in every sense —politically, emotionally, physically, morally, economically, and so on. And for Luke salvation has just this scope.⁷ This is more just soul care of soul salvation. The salvation envisioned here is a reversal of sin’s effects on creation’s crown in every respect, as far as the curse is found, so that all creation can share in this freedom from sin’s frustration.

6. N.T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: IVP, 1986; reprint, 2008), 77.

7. E. H. Scheffler has studied the word “salvation” in Luke and concludes that salvation has at least six dimensions: spiritual, physical, economic, political, social, and psychological in *Suffering in Luke’s Gospel* (University of Pretoria: Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, 1988).

This salvation being discussed here is more than just a special focus of care for God's special people. Jesus makes sure that the scope of the servant's saving work is not limited here to just Israel by including direct references to foreigners like the Canaanite widow and a Syrian military commander who become beneficiaries of God's healing grace. Jesus clearly connects God's favor now present in his work as the power to renew Israel in its calling so that that they might care for all nations, and not just behave as the sole beneficiaries of God's care. According to Luke's gospel, Jesus' restoration is to be understood as a comprehensive work—in Israel and through them to all peoples. This is the proper missional perspective that ought to frame all pastoral work. It is not just soul care for God's special people. It is not less than that, but it is far more. Pastoral care is more than just to care; it is the care for the full human person as members of a missional body called to care for the whole human family.

Imagine for a moment how this big view of salvation and mission might impact a specific person and through that person others. Imagine the person as a diverse complexity that is unified and directed by their religious center. Imagine Jesus' saving power touching the human's heart, dislodging idols, awakening faith and re-directing life back to God. Imagine this same grace freely flowing from the heart into all other modes of that person's existence restoring order, true direction, and healing to all these created areas. Imagine this saving work start to impact how this person then lives in all arenas of life. See this re-creative power flow through this person into the created structures of marriage, family, and the workplace. See this re-creative power rearranging this person's private and public life under Christ's Lordship. Imagine the powerful witness this person's life could become to those around them because Jesus is not just saving their soul, but renewing their entire heart and life. Imagine this human being becoming fully alive in Jesus and imagine the impact of this one life on the larger human family. Imagine shalom spreading to the entire creation, restoration flowing as far as the curse is found. This is the scope of Jesus' kingdom mission. As pastors, we get to help steward this salvation in the lives of God's people for the sake of all people. Can we imagine this?

A note of caution is warranted here. Being faith-filled caregivers is not to assume that we will ever fully experience human beings becoming fully restored in this era of redemptive-history. And so we must add a sixth aspect to our theological framework: *restoration must be seen in light of the already-not yet nature of the coming kingdom.* Because the kingdom is already here but not yet fully arrived, human beings have not yet and will not yet reach their full human potential.

On the one hand, we must believe that the kingdom has come (cf. Matthew 12:28). The power of God is present for the healing of all of human life. Pastors must believe that in the gospel there really is healing power to deliver people from the on-going effects of sin and evil. Pastors must be trained in the practices that bring freedom from these powers of the old age. Without these tools, both pastor

and congregation will not be properly equipped to engage in God's mission in this world. On the other hand, we must not believe that the kingdom has fully arrived. We will continue to suffer from the squeeze of the sinful nature, the world, and demonic powers. We will continue to suffer all forms of dysfunction up to the reality of death and its accompanying grief. We should not preach or practice a theology that assumes the powers of the old age have already passed away, for they are still present and powerful. People still choose to participate with them resulting in real pain. Good pastoral care responds fully and faithfully to this pain with the Spirit's power, even though there is not yet full restoration despite our most faithful efforts. This is sobering, because it means we must learn to suffer with people in patience and in hope of the full salvation still coming in Christ.

We conclude this section on theological contours with a last one that puts pastoral ministry in proper ecclesiological perspective: *the church is a sent people*. The church is a community called and commissioned by Jesus to be a distinctive people, a people fully alive to their true humanity in a dead and dying world, a display people who showcase what it looks to be truly human and invite others into this life-giving reality. The church is sent with the authority of Jesus to make disciples, learners of the way of Jesus, who themselves learn to make disciples who also make disciples. Multiplication of the life of Jesus is clearly in view here. Pastors are called by God to lead and equip the church in its continuing mission to make disciples of all nations. It is essential to understand the key role the pastor plays in the fulfillment of this mission. Pastors are not intended to simply provide soul care to congregational members for their own sake. Instead, they must be equipped to live into their "sentness."

Lesslie Newbigin's model of ministerial leadership is extremely insightful here as it directly combines the three notions of leadership, discipleship, and mission. In his discussion of John 20:19–23, Newbigin rightly claims that Jesus is speaking to the disciples neither as exclusive church members nor as exclusive leaders of the church.⁸ Rather, he addresses them as both members and leaders. Both share the same calling. The church is commissioned to make disciples; and leaders are called to lead and equip the church to fulfill its disciple-making calling. To state this simply: leaders exist to enable disciples. Pastors then are lead disciple-makers, not simply caregivers. As Newbigin puts it "ministry in the Church is so following Jesus on the way of the cross that others are enabled to follow and to become themselves leaders of others in the same way."⁹ Care is part of disciple-making.

This umbrella of lead discipleship is the proper umbrella for understanding the place of pastoral care in the missionary church. In my judgment, pastoral care is about removing barriers in people so that they may be faithful and fruitful in following

8. Lesslie Newbigin, *Ministry*. Unpublished paper, 1982; *How Should We Understand Sacraments and Ministry?* Unpublished paper, 1983.

9. Newbigin, *How Should We Understand Sacraments and Ministry?*, 9.

Jesus. Sin and all its effects constantly threaten to ransack people and sideline them from the family business of making disciples. Pastoral care is the ministry of diagnosing what ails people and carefully restoring them to health through the gospel *so that* they can continue to learn to follow Jesus for the sake of the world and teach others to do likewise. Without placing pastoral care in its proper context of missional discipleship, the church's care ministry becomes disoriented and functions as an end in itself. This is precisely where the contemporary church in the West finds itself. But as the church rediscovers its sent-ness as God's missional people sent to make disciples, pastoral care takes its rightful and critical place in healing people for the sake of mission. Without this ministry of pastoral care, disciples simply get taken out by sin and evil, and fail to become a living example of Jesus for others to see and follow.

An Example of Pastoral Care in a Missional Mode

Before moving to pastoral care in theological education, a concrete living example might be helpful to illustrate the theological framework sketched thus far. This is a true story about the Carlson family and their missional calling in their neighborhood. The inclusion of this story provides a living illustration of how critical care is to the disciple-making mission of the church. It offers a glimpse of what pastoral care operating in a missional mode might look like.

The Carlson family is a young family of six, two parents and four children, living on a rather typical city street. This couple, in their mid-thirties, has been intentionally disciple toward incarnational mission by a local pastor and his wife. This pastoral couple established a long history of caring for the Carlson family through pre-marital classes, the wedding ceremony, and the birth of each child. This same pastoral couple came alongside the Carlsons through critical periods of grief (the loss of a parent) and crisis (a child diagnosed in vitro with heart trouble). The pastoral couple imitated for them a lifestyle of care and intentionally trained to follow their lead. As a result, the couple started to lead their young children into an intentional life-style of caring for each other and for the neighbors on their street. The missional engagement began in earnest with Mrs. Carlson inviting young mother with children to have coffee in her home on Thursday mornings. In this welcoming space, these neighbors learned to care for each as they followed the host mother's lead over a period of months. The coffee time built into regular rhythms of weekly open homes, special holiday street parties, and contributed to an overall shift towards care in the culture of their street.

But then a crisis developed. One single mother of three fell ill with cancer. Her life was threatened. She was forced to plan the adoption of her children. Moved to compassion, the Carlsons made regular visits to the home to care for the family. The relationship of trust deepened. Mrs. Carlson grew in her confidence to minister to

others in Jesus' name. So she asked if she could pray for her friend. Her dying friend agreed to receive prayer. But on the way to the palliative care facility, Mrs. Carlson became very anxious. Her faith had grown, but she was feeling her inexperience and inadequacy. So she invited a member of the pastoral staff at church to accompany her. The staff soon arrived and modeled some simple steps for healing prayer. Mrs. Carlson joined in and eventually took the lead. Later, she visited routinely and prayed on her own repeatedly. Within a few days, the terminally-ill woman revived and returned home to resume a reasonably normal life.

Notice some of the contours of pastoral care at work here. The pastors cared, but they were not paid to simply care for members. They took the lead in caring for their members in order to equip them for God's mission of disciple-making. They intentionally made disciples who made disciples who in turn cared for others in Jesus' name. Furthermore, the effects of sin certainly loomed large in the sick woman's situation. She was confined to a bed of physical, emotional, relational, and financial need. There was no simple fix to this sin-sick situation. But into this complicated situation, Jesus's salvation came through the multifaceted care of Mrs. Carlson and her family. Through their example, disciples of Jesus were being made of the children in both families. In addition, the neighbors watched the Carlsons and observed what God was really like through the lives of His people. In fact, people from several nations from around the world had been gathered on that street to witness this intentional act of caretaking. The Carlsons and their congregation were and still are on display. Their faith is carefully shining forth. This is the already of the kingdom being lived out at street level.

But at the same time, the not-yet of the kingdom was painfully present. The cancer returned two years later with a deadly vengeance. The single mother died, and her children were adopted. The Carlson family struggled with deep grief and great existential questions. Then to complicate matters, the pastor who discipled the couple also died from cancer. Mr. Carlson was especially close to this pastor, and his grief was further compounded when he lost a good friend at work in the environmental waste management business. Mr. Carlson began to struggle seriously to stay engaged at work, at church, and in his neighborhood. He was sidelined by grief and greatly in need of pastoral care. His wife knew it, but she was filled with her own grief and was staving off depression. God's kingdom mission seemed to be sidelined. If we consider the Carlsons to be the sharp point of the kingdom spear in that neighborhood, then sin and suffering had blunted the couple's passion for serving God there. Faith had been eclipsed by fear and doubt. Care had been clouded by anger and apathy. The not-yet of the kingdom was squeezing the life out of this Jesus following family.

But the story was and is far from over. Another pastor from the same church noticed that the family was regularly absent from the Sunday gathering. She touched base by means of a caring text and a follow up phone call. Mrs. Carlson responded in kind and acknowledged their need for care. What happened next was even more

complex caring into a complicated context. But the pastor had been trained well. She knew the dynamics of grief; she knew that grief comes in like a storm of madness and breaks with tears of sadness. In her visits, she helped the couple move from mad to sad, from anger to grief. Thanks to her sensitivity and the Spirit's work, the storm clouds of grief blew through. Her empathic listening helped them gradually move from despair to hope. The pastor set up regular times to help them visit their grief in order that they might heal. She did all this because she genuinely cared for them out of the care she herself had received from the Father. She did all this, not because no one else could do it, but so that others could learn how to do it as well. The good news is that the Carlsons are being restored again to being attentive care-givers to their children, their neighbors, their co-workers, and to the environment as well. This is just one example of how a faithful and fruitful process of pastoral care unfolded. It resulted in a people equipped again to participate in God's mission.

Teaching Pastors to Care in a Missional Mode

This story demonstrates clearly the critical place of pastoral care in the process of preparing people for their missional calling. The task remains to teach pastors to offer pastoral care in this kind of missional mode. How can we equip them to care so that they might equip others to take up their calling?

We begin with a discipleship process for doing theological education. Discipleship is an intentional process of a lead learner imitating the life of Jesus so that the follower may learn this life in the process. Discipleship can be done in cohorts of people who travel together with the lead disciple. An added benefit of cohorts is that it allows for learning from each other along the way. Jesus' practice of investing himself for three years in a cohort of future leaders is worthy of notice and imitation. I am not proposing that this process can only involve one missional leader teaching a group of people all the theological disciplines in a live-in situation, for there can and should be contextual adjustment. But the process ought to allow for imitation and not just information, for action with the missional leader that also allows for reflection. Perhaps a change of life-style for theological educators might be required if they are going to actively engage in the very mission they wish to prepare their disciples for.

The primary reason for doing theological education through discipleship is that it is a cure to the current theory-praxis dichotomy. If we continue to believe that best way to do theological education involves theorizing about ministry and then expecting the student to apply that theory in internships, then we can continue to limit learning to the classroom environment. Disciples will be made through this disintegrating process. Disciples can even be mass-produced through this model. These people will likely go on to function as resident theologians in churches that expect their pastors to do all the care ministry. But these pastors might never engage in

God's mission or develop a life-style worth imitating. They themselves have not been led in a way that equipped them for mission; and therefore they will not be equipped to lead others to do the same. Lead disciples are made through intensive, intentional, life-on-life interaction over time. Lead disciples cannot be mass-produced. Because of its intensive nature, making lead disciples who make disciples must start slow. But it eventually picks up speed through multiplication. This is the life-style Jesus commissioned us to lead, a life that leads to equip. Doing theological education in this discipleship mode is the cure for theory-praxis dichotomy.

I could easily be misunderstood here as impatient or mistakenly viewed as anti-intellectual and opposed to academic scholarship or qualified professors. But this would be a mistake and a misunderstanding of my position. The church will continue to need a sustained and deep theological reflection of its experiences of ministry and mission in the world, but the academic reflections must be combined with our born from actual experiences and directed back into the service of the mission. Professors of theology who train pastors must have a life-worth imitating, not only in terms of their scholarship, but also in terms of their own discipleship journey. What needs to change is not the rigor of our theological reflection, but our overly abstracted reflection detached from missional praxis and our rigid educational structures that deliver a static formation process, which does not effective disciple-makers make. Going forward, we will need to be flexible experimenting with models that help us make disciples in the missional mode. It will likely take numerous iterations to develop a theological education that integrates reflection and imitation, but those engaging in this enterprise are worthy of their calling.

It is within this context of discipleship that pastoral care can find its rightful place. As mentioned earlier, pastoral care is a dynamic process of finding out what ails our disciples, removing those barriers to fruitfulness, and restoring them to health *so that* they might take up their place in God's mission to make disciples of the world. The Carlson's example above demonstrates what a dynamic process this is. Pastoral care in the missional mode must teach lead disciples how to diagnose the dynamics operating in the lives of people, marriages, families, and church families if they are to be going to be effective in equipping a people for mission.

The theological reflection on humanity and on sin discussed earlier helps us gain insight into the human's complex condition and for the need for equally nuanced diagnosis. Diagnosis begins at the level of human behavior. Dooyeweerd's philosophical anthropology helps us understand the direct connection between the diversity of human behavior and its center in the heart. An individual's outward behavior in any given area of life or mode of existence never lies. It reveals the direction of the heart and the idols that live there. Idolatry creates all kinds of inordinate desire, distortions, dysfunction, and dehumanizing behaviors. If we learn to read behavior, we can carefully help expose these dynamics, displace these false

loves with a greater love, and help people develop healthier rhythms of life rooted in grace and freedom.

Furthermore, if we understand human life as mired in the triad of the sinful nature, the world, and the demonic, we gain further diagnostic help for the individual living in community. The sinful individual always functions as a part of a much larger communal-field of idolatrous distortion and demonic involvement. People come by idols honestly from their family of origins and society at large. Displacing these idols requires leaders to do good work to carefully expose the idols that are communally owned. Sin-sick people struggle to become healthy if there is no change in their marriage and family, or if there is little understanding of their larger communal and cultural situation. The dynamics involved here are incredibly complex, but there are very helpful insights provided by psychology, sociology, and other social-scientific disciplines. Psychological terms like co-dependency, differentiation, shame-based families, transference, and many others function as indispensable tools that explain and expose hidden realities operating below the surface that contribute to unhealthy patterns of life. The insights of family system theory can help us understand the tacit sinful scripts that reinforce harmful behaviors in nuclear, extended and church families. Understanding anxiety as emotional pain and how it often functions to sabotage change in the church's emotional system enables pastors to lead through the necessary change without becoming themselves hurt and reactive. Understanding the importance of emotionally healthy spirituality and leading others through a process of growing up can only help to form a showcase people. All these realities involve hidden, invisible dynamics that must be properly diagnosed if they are to be exposed and healed. And the social sciences may provide helpful insight. At the same time—although we can't enter this topic now—we must also be critical of the humanist religious vision that often drives these insights.

Perhaps the most difficult dysfunction to diagnose is the presence of the demonic that oppresses at all levels of human life. This is in part because the demonic prefers being invisible and operating out of plain sight. But it is also our collective and categorical denial of the demonic in Western culture that remains the main reason why we fail to realize and deal with the demonic and their devices. But there is hope even for secular humanists who deny the reality of the powers. To paraphrase the great Reformation hymn of Martin Luther: "Although this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us; we will not fear for Christ has willed his truth to triumph through us." Our theological training ought to help our disciples recognize the presence and power of the demonic power operating both individually and corporately, and to deal with them decisively.

In the individual, the demonic works to enslave through individual adherence to idolatry, and is often manifest in addictive and compulsive behaviors. The demonic also inhabits areas of wounds or unforgiving disposition, but can be easily evicted once a person is led through the cleaning process of forgiveness. Leaders must be

trained in facilitating inner healing processes that can send the demonic packing and can restore people to following Christ with greater freedom. In the corporate sense, the demonic encourage the creation of cultural idols and ideology which also create distortion, dysfunction and dehumanizing behavior. For example, consumerism is culture patterned on the service of the consumptions of goods and experiences. It forms the whole of human life and promises fulfilment. As Jane Collier has put it: "Precisely because the culture of economism is a quasi-religion, with a pretense of encompassing the totality of life and of bringing happiness and fulfilment, we find ourselves obliged from a Christian point of view to denounce it as dehumanizing idolatry..."¹⁰ The cure here is to lead leaders in learning how to use intentional discipleship, rhythms and practices to shape a contrast community that can withstand the spirits of the age and live as an alternative to people caught in the grip of the powers. In this way, God's people can become dynamic participants who cooperate with the already present and vastly superior power of the Spirit for the sake of freeing captives currently living under the curse of consumerism.

But the not-yet of the kingdom is a dynamic in our reality that also cannot be denied. The illustration of the Carlson's situation demonstrates that healing may but does not always happen. When death occurs, good grieving must follow. Leaders can facilitate this grief through the dynamic of empathic listening. Empathy is not sympathy, that is, simply feeling sorry for people. Nor is it identification, that is, relating one's own similar experience to the grieving person. Rather it is entering another's emotional frame of reference through active listening. Empathy is a capacity that all human beings have, but it also must be developed and deepened through intentional training, the imitation of others and routine practice. When empathy is properly employed, grieving individuals can be moved over time from despair to hope. When empathy is practiced in community, belief survives and belonging thrives. When leaders lead their own grieving disciples through the valley of the shadow of death to the others side, these disciples are no longer stuck or sidelined by their grief. They can eventually get on with the mission of getting others to the other side of grief as well. One day, we know that even death will be no more. But until that day, pastors must be deal with dynamic reality of grief that pervades all human experience.

The treatment here of the content of pastoral theology is obviously not intended to be exhaustive, but illustrative. This is just a sampling of the kind of subjects that need to be incorporated into a dynamic process of theological discipleship and reflection. Far more work needs to be done to fill out this skeletal sketch. But it is offered with the intention of providing some initial insight into how one might re-imagine the process of pastoral care in a missional mode.

10. Jane Collier, "Contemporary Culture and the Role of Economics," in *The Gospel and Contemporary Culture*, ed. Hugh Montefiore (London: Mowbray, 1992), 122.

The Care of Souls: John Calvin's Shepherding Ministry

MARCUS J. SERVEN

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Abstract: Many Christians today have distinct impressions of who John Calvin was, but most have never read a single line from his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, or benefited from the careful exegesis found in his *Commentaries* on the Bible, or reflected upon a single salient point from one of his many published sermons. In brief, the reformer John Calvin (1509–1564) has been misinterpreted, misread, and misunderstood.¹ He is, perhaps, best known for his views on the doctrines of election, predestination, and reprobation.² He is also known for his pivotal role in the prosecution of the arch-heretic Michael Servetus (1511–1553) who rejected the Trinity and the deity of Jesus Christ.³ But none of these disconnected pieces of information can demonstrate, in my opinion, the true character of the man. And so, who really was John Calvin? Hughes O. Old, a noted scholar of Calvin's life and theology, states the opinion that, "John Calvin is chiefly remembered as a biblical scholar and a systematic theologian."⁴ Clearly, Calvin distinguished himself through his theological writing and teaching ministry. However, he also was the preeminent pastor of the city of Geneva during the time of the Protestant Reformation. John T. McNeill notes, "Jean Daniel Benoit, the expert on Calvin's work in the cure of souls, states boldly that the Genevan Reformer was more pastor than theologian, that, to be exact, he was a theologian in order to be a better pastor. In his whole reforming work

1. Marilynne Robinson, "The Polemic Against Calvin: The Origin and Consequences of Historical Reputation," in *Calvin and the Church*, Calvin Studies Society Papers 2001, ed. David Foxgrover (Grand Rapids: Calvin Studies Society, 2002), 96–122. Robinson perceptively notes, "The usual charges against Calvin are: predestinarianism and the execution of Servetus." Ibid., 97.

2. Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., "Predestination," in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 291–293.

3. Nathan P. Feldmeth, "Michael Servetus," in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 349.

4. Hugh O. Old, "John Calvin," in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 45–48.

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he was a shepherd of souls.”⁵ Thus, it is Calvin's shepherding ministry that will be explored in this article—in particular, his pastoral care of souls.

Key Words: John Calvin, shepherding, Reformation, pastoral care, pastoral ministry

Introduction: Calvin's Life

John Calvin was born and raised in Noyon, France (July 10, 1509), and at fourteen years of age was sent away by his father to the University of Paris to pursue the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church.⁶ After finishing his *Bachelor of Arts* degree from the College de Montaigu in 1528, his father encouraged him to shift his focus to the study of law. He obediently moved south and took up his studies at the University of Orleans where in 1532 he completed his *Juris Doctorate*. It was during this formative period of life, that he experienced a “sudden conversion” and fully identified himself with the French Evangelicals.⁷ As a result, he thoroughly rejected the unbiblical doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church and embraced a faith based solely upon the Bible. He fled from France as a religious refugee in 1533 and, in God's providence, he eventually settled in Basle, Switzerland where he finalized his manuscript, the well-regarded *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536).

Clandestinely returning to France in the summer of 1536, he sought to bring his younger brother (Antione) and sister (Marie) to safety. When French troops blocked his way, he took the southern route to Switzerland through Geneva intending to stay only one night. While there William Farel (1489–1565), the fiery missionary-evangelist of western Switzerland, forcefully recruited him to settle in Geneva and to join efforts in furthering the reformation of that key city.⁸ Regarding this event, Calvin wrote, “I felt...as if God had from heaven laid His mighty hand upon me to arrest me from my course...I desisted from the journey which I had undertaken.”⁹ Thus, on September 5, 1536 when the Genevan City Council providentially appointed Calvin to be their “Professor of Sacred Literature” they probably had no idea that they were beginning

5. John T. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1951), 198.

6. Theodore Beza, “The Life of John Calvin,” in *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, ed. and trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: the Calvin Translation Society, 1844; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), xxi. The personal information contained in Theodore Beza's seminal biography of John Calvin will be used throughout this paper. Beza succeeded Calvin in Geneva and worked closely with him. The fact that Beza was an eyewitness of Calvin's conduct puts him in an ideal position to write a comprehensive and reliable biography on John Calvin.

7. John Calvin, “The Author's Preface,” in *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845; reprint edition, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), xli–xlili.

8. Partee, “William Farel,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 135–36.

9. Calvin, “The Author's Preface,” in *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, xlii.

a pastoral relationship with Calvin that would make a significant impact upon the city of Geneva, and, in time, upon the whole Protestant world.¹⁰

Not all citizens in Geneva were enthused about Calvin's arrival, since he was a religious refugee from France, and they snidely referred to him in the minutes of the Genevan City Council as "ille Gallus" (or, "that Frenchman").¹¹ Yet, the sovereign Lord did indeed have a place of on-going ministry for Calvin, although it proved to be a turbulent place filled with many troublesome people. As the early efforts at reformation progressed in Geneva, opposition against the reformers increased. This resistance culminated in the spring of 1538 when the ministers refused to allow the people to receive the Lord's Supper and "profane so holy a mystery." As Easter Sunday approached on April 21, 1538 the tension became so thick that Calvin reported more than sixty musket blasts were shot off in front of his home late one night.¹² Since the ministers stubbornly refused to offer the Lord's Supper, the Little Council of Geneva voted to ban the ministers from their pulpits. Despite this prohibition, they preached and did not serve the Lord's Supper as they had been ordered to do. The next day the Little Council voted to oust the rebellious preachers. They gave them only three days to get their affairs in order and to leave the city. Theodore Beza (1519–1605),¹³ one of the first biographers of Calvin's life, recalls this chaotic time with Calvin's own words:

This decision being intimated to Calvin, "Certainly", says he, ". . . had I been the servant of men I had obtained a poor reward, but it is well that I have served Him who never fails to perform to his servants whatever he has promised."¹⁴

On April 25, 1538, the three unwanted ministers departed the city leaving behind all the angry denunciations, jeers, and threats. After making unsuccessful appeals for mediation of the dispute in Berne and Zurich, Calvin was uncertain of where to go next. He was eventually recruited by Martin Bucer (1491–1551), a mature and seasoned reformer, to come to Strasbourg and serve as pastor to a burgeoning congregation of French refugees.¹⁵ While there Calvin married a lovely French widow, Idelette de Bure, and he adopted her two children, Jacques and Judith, bringing them under his fatherly care.¹⁶

10. Beza, "The Life of John Calvin," in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, vol. 1, xxix.

11. Emanuel Stickelberger, *Calvin: A Life*, trans. David Georg Gelzer (London: James Clarke & Company, 1959), 49–50.

12. *Ibid.*, 60.

13. Holtrop, "Theodore Beza," in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 34–35.

14. Beza, "The Life of John Calvin," in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, vol. 1, xxxiii.

15. David F. Wright, "Martin Bucer" in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 43.

16. Joel R. Beeke, "Practical Lessons from the Life of Idelette Calvin" in *Theology Made Practical: New Studies on John Calvin and His Legacy* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 24.

Except for this short interlude of two and a half years in Strasbourg (1538–1541), Calvin served as the head pastor of the Genevan Church for the remainder of his life. In this role, he sought to reform the doctrines and morality of the Genevan people. The years of 1541–1555 proved to be especially tumultuous. His opponents (the Libertines, or *Enfants de Geneve*) sought to thwart him, oppose him, intimidate him, discourage him, and, when they became truly desperate, to assassinate him.¹⁷ But God in his providential care, protected Calvin's life and the reform in Geneva steadily progressed.

By 1555 the tide of reformation grew so strong that his opponents either came to embrace his position, or they fled the city. His major achievements are as follows: the steady exposition and preaching of several thousand transcribed sermons,¹⁸ the writing and ongoing use of the *Genevan Catechism*,¹⁹ the establishment of the Genevan Academy,²⁰ the recruitment and training of a large number of elders and deacons to administer the affairs of the Genevan church, the publication of the fifth edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*,²¹ the training of numerous missionaries who were sent throughout Europe, the translation and publication of the *Geneva Bible*,²² the translation and publication of the *Genevan Psalter*,²³ and the thorough-going reform of the city—in its constitution, civil defense, hospitals, legal system, morals, assistance of refugees, social welfare, and worship.²⁴ His motto, *Cor meum tibi offero, Domine, prompte et sincere* (or translated into English, “My heart I offer to you, O Lord, promptly and sincerely”) became a reflection of his diligent and

17. Stickelberger, *Calvin: A Life*, 102–105; 122–125; 133–138.

18. T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 65–68. In God's wise providence, on August 25, 1549, the Genevan deacons hired Dennis Raguénier, a French refugee, to transcribe Calvin's sermons for publication. Over the course of twelve years he recorded 2,042 of Calvin's sermons for posterity. This large archive of sermons became the foundation for Calvin's influence throughout Europe and later in America. Thanks to Raguénier's indefatigable efforts we can enjoy the preaching of the great Genevan Reformer today. Hughes O. Old, an expert on Reformed preaching, notes, “John Calvin was a master of the art of biblical interpretation and a skilled craftsman in word usage. His sermons are simple, clear, and informative.” See: Old, “History of Preaching” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 287.

19. Charles Partee, “Geneva Catechism,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 151.

20. Robert M. Kingdon, “Geneva Academy,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 150.

21. Hughes O. Old, “Institutes of the Christian Religion,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 194–195.

22. Dan G. Danner, “Geneva Bible,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 150–151.

23. LindoJo H. McKim, “Psalmody,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 308.

24. David W. Hall, *The Legacy of John Calvin: His Influence on the Modern World* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 11–13.

earnest character.²⁵ Worn out from the many trials of ministry and his poor health, he finally succumbed to death on May 27, 1564 and he was buried in an unmarked grave in Geneva. The entire city mourned. Theodore Beza tells us that, “He lived 54 years, 10 months, 17 days, the half of which were spent in ministry.”²⁶

Over the course of his career he engaged in all of the normal duties that church pastors typically participate in—preaching, teaching, prayer, leadership, and shepherding. The esteemed Calvin scholar Jean-Daniel Benoit offered the following assessment of Calvin’s pastoral ministry:

The work of Calvin is immense and varied. Theologian, churchman, organizer of Protestantism in France, founder of the Academy of Geneva, public lecturer, Bible commentator, preacher at Saint Peter’s—Calvin was all of these. But to forget or to neglect the fact that Calvin was essentially and above all a pastor would be to misunderstand precisely that aspect of his personality which discloses the essential unity of his work, and to overlook the deep source of those waters which fecundate the entire field of his activity. In fact, theologian though he was, Calvin was even more a pastor of souls. More exactly, theology was for him the servant of piety and never a science sufficient unto itself. His thought is always directed towards life; always he descends from principles to the practical application; always his pastoral concern occurs.²⁷

Hence, if a person wants to fully understand John Calvin then they must come to grips with his most prominent responsibility—the care of souls.

Developing a Plan

Calvin’s overall plan for the pastoral care of Geneva is contained in the “Ecclesiastical Ordinances.”²⁸ This brief document was initially drafted by Calvin in 1537, but it was not until his return to Geneva in 1541 that it was finally approved by the City

25. John Calvin, *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, ed. Jules Bonnet, vol. 4 (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844; reprint edition, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 280–281. An allusion to Calvin’s motto can be found in a personal letter he wrote in August of 1541 from Strasbourg to William Farel who invited him to return to Geneva as soon as possible. Calvin was extremely reluctant to return to that tumultuous city. He wrote, “But when I remember that I am not my own, I offer up my heart, presented as a sacrifice to the Lord.”

26. Beza, “The Life of John Calvin,” in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, vol. 1, xcvi–xcvii.

27. Jean-Daniel Benoit. “Pastoral Care of the Prophet,” in *John Calvin Contemporary Prophet*. 450th Anniversary Volume celebrating the birth of John Calvin, edited by Jacob T. Hoogstra (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959), 51.

28. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, trans. and ed. Philip E. Hughes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 35–49. For another source that may be easier to find, see *John Calvin: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (Scholar’s Press, American Academy of Religion, 1975), 229–244.

Council.²⁹ The actual enforcement of these biblical principles, however, formed the main area of difficulty in Calvin's pastoral ministry until 1555. Although the people may have approved the "Ecclesiastical Ordinances" in theory, they had not reckoned with the application of them to all areas of life.³⁰

Following the elections in 1555, when the opponents of Calvin were soundly defeated, the provisions of the "Ecclesiastical Ordinances" were finally embraced by the City Council and they were able to be regularly enforced by the Genevan Consistory. The main components of Calvin's plan of pastoral care can be broken down into eight specific areas of ministry: (1) Four orders (or offices) in the Church; (2) Concerning the Sacraments; (3) Concerning Marriage; (4) Introduction of Hymns; (5) Concerning Burial; (6) The Visitation of the Sick; (7) The Visitation of Prisoners; and (8) The Preserving of Discipline in the Church. Here we see the organizational genius of John Calvin clearly demonstrated. He developed a plan, a road map as it were, and in his words—"a certain rule and method of living...which our Lord demonstrated and instituted by His Word."³¹ As the years went by he was able to fully implement that plan for the reformation of the city of Geneva. This illustrates the great value of having a plan (i.e. a philosophy of ministry with specific goals) that is clearly written out, understood and embraced by the people, and implemented by the church leaders. Let us deal now with various aspects of Calvin's plan.

Raising-Up Leaders

Calvin understood that the ministry of church leaders is one of the ordinary means for accomplishing spiritual growth in the members of the church. He stated, "If then, we wish to have the church well-ordered and maintained in its entirety, we must observe this form of government."³² In other words, the four officers of the church—pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons—are all used by God to advance the spiritual maturity of every member. Calvin puts forward a similar thought in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* where he observes:

Paul writes that Christ, "that he might fill all things," appointed some to be "apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all reach the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to perfect manhood, to the measure of the fully

29. Ibid., 35. The City Council of Geneva voted on November 20, 1541 to approve the "Ecclesiastical Ordinances." This decision, however, did not end the quarrelsome struggle between the ministers and the magistrates over who had the power of excommunication from the Lord's Supper—that dispute continued until 1555.

30. Robert D. Linder, "Ecclesiastical Ordinances," in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 112–113.

31. "Ecclesiastical Ordinances," in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 35.

32. Ibid., 35.

mature age of Christ” [Eph. 4:10–13, Comm., but cf. also Vg.]. We see how God, who could in a moment perfect his own, nevertheless desires them to grow up into manhood solely under the education of the church.³³

Calvin reasons that the Lord could have supernaturally transformed men and women by means of his Spirit, but instead God has chosen to use the ordinary means of a “ministry of men to declare openly his will to us.”³⁴ This ministerial authority and power is “delegated” by the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ. Calvin further notes:

Now we must speak of the order by which the Lord willed his church to be governed. He alone should rule and reign in the church as well as have authority or pre-eminence in it, and this authority should be exercised and administered by his Word alone. Nevertheless, because he does not dwell among us in visible presence [Matt. 26:11], we have said that he uses the ministry of men to declare openly his will to us by mouth, as a sort of delegated work, not by transferring to them his right and honor, but only that through their mouths he may do his own work—just as a workman uses a tool to do his work.³⁵

Thus, as pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons carry out their respective ministries, they do so under the watchful eye of the head of the church. They are required to give an account of their ministerial labors to the heavenly Master—have they fed the sheep, rescued those who have strayed, and protected the sheep from wild predators who would do them harm?³⁶ In as much as the officers of the church conduct themselves in an honorable fashion then they are blessed by God for their efforts.

Calvin describes the particular duties of pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons to a great degree in the “Ecclesiastical Ordinances.” Here are his observations concerning the responsibilities of the pastor. He descriptively writes:

With regard to pastors, whom Scripture also sometimes calls overseers, elders, and ministers, their office is to proclaim the Word of God for the purpose of instructing, admonishing, exhorting, and reproving, both in public and private, to administer the sacraments, and to exercise fraternal discipline together with the elders or delegates (*commis*).³⁷

Moreover, pastoral ministry is not to be seen as an itinerant office so that the minister travels from place to place, but it is one in which the pastor cares for a specific flock

33. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4:1:5

34. *Institutes*, 4:3:3.

35. *Institutes* 4:3:3.

36. cf. Ezekiel 34:4–6, 15–16; Acts 20:28–30; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1–5.

37. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances,” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 36. Note that Calvin uses the terms “pastors” and “ministers” interchangeably. He does not distinguish between these two terms, but sees them as the same ecclesiastical office.

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of believers in a fixed location. Calvin argues that ministers can “aid other churches” as occasion dictates, but that primarily a pastor focuses his energy upon his own flock.

Although we assign to each pastor his church, at the same time we do not deny that a pastor bound to one church can aid other churches—either if any disturbances occur which require his presence, or if advice be sought from him concerning some obscure matter...Consequently, this arrangement ought to be observed as generally as possible: that each person, content with his own limits, should not break over into another man's province.³⁸

Regarding the duties of the elder, Calvin writes:

Their office is to watch over the life of each person, to admonish in a friendly manner those whom they see to be at fault and leading a disorderly life, and when necessary to report them to the Company, who will be authorized to administer fraternal discipline and to do so in association with the elders.³⁹

In this way, the elders carry out a ministry of admonition and encouragement. They are instructed to not be harsh, but to give their counsel “in a friendly manner.” The elders are to work hand in hand with the ministers in promoting the spiritual well-being of the people under their care. The duties of teachers differ from both pastors and elders. Calvin adds, “The proper office of teachers is to instruct the faithful in sound doctrine in order that the purity of the Gospel may not be corrupted either by ignorance or by false opinions.”⁴⁰

Calvin envisioned that the teachers would be involved in giving public lectures on the Bible and theology in the Auditoire, which is located next to St. Pierre Cathedral. He also envisioned the formation of a future college. The “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” sets forth the following plan:

Establishment of a college: But since it is impossible to profit from such teaching only if in the first place there is instruction in the languages and humanities, and since also there is need to raise up seed for the future so that the Church is not desolate to our children, it will be necessary to build a college for the purpose of instructing them, with a view to preparing them both for the ministry and for the civil government.⁴¹

Years later his dream was finally realized in the founding of the Genevan Academy, which specialized in the training of ministers, evangelists, and missionaries.⁴² In regards to the office of the deacon, Calvin writes:

38. *Institutes* 4:3:7

39. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances,” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 41.

40. *Ibid.*, 40.

41. *Ibid.*, 41.

42. Robert M. Kingdon, “Geneva Academy,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 150.

There were always two kinds of deacons in the early Church. The one kind was deputed to receive, dispense, and keep the goods for the poor, not only daily alms, but also possessions, revenues, and pensions; the other kind to care for and remember the sick and administer the allowance for the poor, a custom which we still retain at present.⁴³

Calvin referred to these “two kinds of deacons” as stewards of church finances and those who administered the local Genevan hospitals. He gives a more comprehensive description of their duties in the *Institutes*, where he writes:

The care of the poor was entrusted to the deacons. However two kinds are mentioned in the letter to the Romans: “He that gives, let him do it with simplicity;...he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness” [Rom. 12:8]. Since it is certain that Paul is speaking of the public office of the church, there must have been two distinct grades. Unless my judgment deceive me, in the first clause he designates the deacons who distribute the alms. But the second refers to those who had devoted themselves to the care of the poor and the sick...If we accept this (as it must be accepted), there will be two kinds of deacons: one to serve the church in administering the affairs of the poor; the other, in caring for the poor themselves. But even though the term *diakonia* itself has a wider application, Scripture specifically designates as deacons those whom the church has appointed to distribute alms and take care of the poor.⁴⁴

Calvin argues that any one of the offices of the true church should not be taken upon oneself without the endorsement of a church. These offices necessarily involve receiving an outward call, or public invitation, to minister in a local church by its own members. In addition, ordination signifies that a man is set aside for “sacred service” within Christ’s church.⁴⁵ In these following quotations Calvin explains ministerial calling and ordination.

Therefore, in order that noisy and troublesome men should not rashly take upon themselves to teach or to rule (which might otherwise happen), especial care was taken that no one should assume public office in the church without being called.⁴⁶

There remains the rite of ordination, to which we have given the last place in the call. It is clear that when the apostles admitted any man to the ministry, they used no other ceremony than the laying on of hands...Although there exists no set precept for the laying on of hands, because we see it in continual use with the apostles, their very careful observance ought to serve in lieu of a precept. And surely it is useful for the dignity of the ministry to be commended

43. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances,” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 42.

44. *Institutes* 4:3:9

45. Thomas D. Parker, “Ordination,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 263–264.

46. *Institutes* 4:3:10

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to the people by this sort of sign, as also to warn the one ordained that he is no longer a law unto himself, but bound in servitude to God and the church.⁴⁷

These statements by Calvin demonstrate the way in which he believes the outward call to ministry is elevated by God. It is a serious matter for a man to be called to serve as an officer in Christ's church, and his calling must be outwardly confirmed by the local congregation. It should never solely be a matter of an inner call, or a "secret call," which is only between that man and God. Church officers should always be confirmed by a public calling.

Administering the Keys

Calvin further explains how all of the ministers and designated elders in Geneva will gather as a Consistory once a week on Thursdays. It is in this context that they administered the "keys of the kingdom" amongst the people of Geneva.⁴⁸

The delegates (*commis*) shall assemble once a week together with the ministers, namely, on Thursdays, to see whether there is any disorder in the Church and to consult together concerning remedies when necessary. Since they have no authority or jurisdiction to coerce, we have decided to give them one of our officers for the purpose of summoning those to whom they wish to give some admonishment. If through contempt anyone should refuse to appear, it is their duty to inform the Council so that remedial steps may be taken.⁴⁹

These ministers and elders had the spiritual responsibility to advance the teaching of biblical doctrine and Christian behavior. Violations of biblical standards would be enforced by the Genevan Consistory; which was made up of representatives from both the church and civil government.⁵⁰ If the violations were of a serious nature and recurrent then a person could be suspended from the Lord's Table.⁵¹

What breaches might lead to suspension from the Lord's Table? Here are seven stipulations listed in the "Ecclesiastical Ordinances:"

(1) "If anyone speaks critically against the received doctrine," (2) "If anyone is negligent to come to church in such a way that a serious contempt of Christians is apparent," (3) "if any one shows himself to be scornful of the ecclesiastical order," (4) "those who mock at the specific admonitions of their neighbor," (5) "for those notorious and public vices which the Church cannot condone," (6) "for those crimes which deserve not only verbal rebuke but

47. *Institutes* 4:3:16

48. cf. Matthew 16:19; Matthew 18:15–20; Hebrews 13:17.

49. "Ecclesiastical Ordinances," in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 48.

50. Robert M. Kingdon, "Geneva Consistory," in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 152.

51. Scott M. Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609* (London, England: Oxford University Press, 2013), 182–188.

correction with punishment,” (7) “If through contumacy or rebelliousness such a person attempts to intrude himself contrary to the prohibition.”⁵²

The length of the suspension, whether it was temporary or permanent, would depend upon the offending person’s repentance.

Moreover, the pastor who was responsible for administering the Lord’s Supper was also responsible to “Fence the Table” so that those who were “unworthy” partakers would not be able to participate in the Lord’s Supper. The minister was required to say:

We have heard, brethren, in what manner our LORD celebrated the Supper among his disciples; whence we see that strangers, who are not of the company of the faithful, may not approach it. Wherefore, in obedience to this rule, and in the name and by the authority of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, I excommunicate all idolaters, blasphemers, despisers of God, heretics, and all who form sects apart, to break the unity of the Church; all perjurers, all who are rebellious against fathers and mothers, and other superiors, all who are seditious, contentious, quarrelsome, injurious, adulterers, fornicators, thieves, misers, ravishers, drunkards, gluttons, and all others who lead scandalous lives; warning them that they abstain from this Table, lest they pollute and contaminate the sacred food which our Lord JESUS CHRIST giveth only to his faithful servants.⁵³

We witness here the serious manner in which the reformers led the people to the Lord’s Table. A careful distinction is made between those who are “despisers of God” and those who are “of the company of the faithful.” Those who are true disciples of Jesus would, by definition, readily confess their sins, repent from their wicked behavior, and embrace the forgiveness of sins found only in Jesus Christ.⁵⁴ Such people were welcome to participate in the Lord’s Supper.

One key area of controversy in Geneva was the subject of excommunication and upon whose authority it was to be exercised. The “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” clearly gives that authority to the Consistory, whose decisions were to be enforced by the civil government, known as the City Council. This disciplinary practice became an area of great controversy in Geneva, with the City Council challenging the authority of the Consistory more than once.⁵⁵ In the end, however, Calvin and the reformers prevailed and it was the Consistory who “administered the keys of the kingdom.”

52. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances,” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 48–49.

53. Charles W. Baird, *The Presbyterian Liturgies: Historical Sketches* (New York, NY: M. W. Dodd, 1855; Reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publications, 2006), 53–54.

54. cf. Psalm 32:1–2, 3–5; Psalm 51:7–10; Romans 8:1–2; 1 Peter 2:24–25; 1 John 1:7, 9.

55. Stickelberger, *Calvin: A Life*, 122–124.

Leading Worship

The Sabbath day worship services in Geneva began to take a regular form in 1542, following the pattern that Calvin prescribed for the church. Calvin was certainly influenced by the liturgy he found in use at Strasbourg during his two and a half years of service while ministering to a congregation of French exiles (1538–1541). Martin Bucer (1491–1551), as one of the initial Reformers of Strasbourg, had developed his own liturgy for the city and put it into practice since 1525. Constantly making improvements, it was finalized and printed in 1539. Upon Calvin's return to Geneva in November 1541—and perhaps inspired by Martin Bucer's Strasbourg liturgy—he began work on his own form of liturgy in Geneva which was published in 1542 as “Forms of Prayers for the Church.”⁵⁶

Central to Calvin's plan for weekly worship services was his commitment to make certain that the key elements of the worship service were found within Holy Scripture. He purposefully skipped over the numerous “inventions of men” that were to be found in the Roman Catholic Mass. Charles Baird summarizes Calvin's intent:

The ritual of Calvinism, like its creed, was founded, therefore, on the theory of a simple return to the scriptural and primitive pattern. Differing from the systems of Luther and Cramner, it lost sight completely of all practices which had originated in less remote antiquity; it left the missal and the breviary among the rubbish of “idolatrous gear” swept out from its renovated churches; refusing to tamper with the complications of a corrupt ceremonial, whose forms had long enough weighed upon and wearied the souls of men. It went back for authority and inspiration to the law and to the testimony of GOD. Calvin's form of worship is distinguished by a plain and logical structure. The several acts of devotion follow in progressive series, commencing with those which are more primary and preparative, and culminating in the highest exercises of adoration and faith. This systematic character places it in marked contrast with other formularies, taken from the old mass-books; the proper order and connection of whose parts it is sometimes difficult for a mind not educated in their use to discover.⁵⁷

Thus we find Calvin's liturgy to be a thoroughly scriptural form of worship. Moreover, it is also drawn from the earliest known examples of corporate worship in the history of the Church; thereby connecting it with the historic practices of earlier Christians who fervently worshipped their Lord by the use of a liturgy. What follows is an example of a Sabbath Day worship service from St. Pierre Cathedral during the time of John Calvin (1541–1564).⁵⁸

56. Bard Thompson, “John Calvin, The Form of Church Prayers,” in *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1961), 183–224.

57. Baird, *The Presbyterian Liturgies*, 20–21.

58. Thompson, “John Calvin, The Form of Church Prayers,” in *Liturgies of the Western Church*, 183–224.

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- Reading of Holy Scripture (an appropriate text was chosen by the reader)
- Recitation of the Ten Commandments (or perhaps, this was sung by the Congregation)
- Call to Worship/Invocation (e.g. Psalm 124:8)
- Exhortation
- Confession of Sins
- Declaration of Pardon (e.g. Psalm 103:8–12)
- Singing of a Psalm (the entire congregation sings in unison)
- Prayer of Illumination and the Lord's Prayer
- The Sermon⁵⁹
- Prayer of Intercession
- The Lord's Supper⁶⁰
- Invocation
- Recitation of the Creed (e.g. the Apostles' Creed in unison)
- Words of Institution (1 Corinthians 11:23–30 is read aloud by the Minister)
- The Warning (or, Fencing the Table)
- Call for Personal Examination
- The Invitation
- Sursum Corda⁶¹

59. Calvin's sermons follow the pattern of *lectio continua*; or one verse after another through an entire book of the Bible. He would take the Hebrew or Greek text into the pulpit and give a free translation of the passage in French, and then proceed to preach on that particular text with an open Bible. His illustrations were sparse, and his applications and exhortations were focused exclusively upon the text of Scripture. His sermons were, therefore, thoroughly filled with the particular Bible passage that was the subject of his exposition, and additional references from the Bible in support. Hughes O. Old, an expert on Reformed worship, notes, "John Calvin was a master of the art of biblical interpretation and a skilled craftsman in word usage. His sermons are simple, clear, and informative" (Old, "History of Preaching" in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 287). Each sermon was roughly thirty to forty minutes in length and produced an effect upon the listeners that was remarkable and profound. God used Calvin's expository preaching to further the reformation of doctrine, family life, and morals.

60. The Lord's Supper was observed four times a year in Geneva, upon the order of the Magistrates, even though Calvin wished for a greater frequency. See: *Institutes* 4:17:43 where Calvin clearly states his preference for weekly communion—"at least once a week."

61. Sursum Corda = "lift up your hearts." The real presence of Jesus Christ is found in the heavens rather than in the physical elements on earth (see: Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church*, 187).

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- Distribution of the Bread and the Wine⁶²
- Prayer of Thanksgiving
- The Blessing, or Benediction (Numbers 6:24–26, Geneva Bible)
- An Exhortation to Give Alms

Calvin writes in other books and tracts more specific principles and policies regarding the worship of God. Particularly, his short treatise, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, makes a strong appeal to regulate worship by the Word of God alone; specifically, those who plan corporate worship are to listen “only to his voice.”⁶³ Calvin forcefully argues:

Moreover, the rule which distinguishes between pure and vitiated worship is of universal application, in order that we do not adopt any device which seems fit to ourselves, but look to the injunctions of him who alone is entitled to prescribe. Therefore, if we would have him to approve our worship, this rule, which he everywhere enforces with the utmost strictness, must be carefully observed. For there is a twofold reason why the Lord, in condemning and prohibiting fictitious worship, requires us to give obedience only to his voice. First, it tends greatly to establish his authority that we do not follow our own pleasure, but depend entirely on his sovereignty; and secondly, such is our folly, that when we are left at liberty, all we are able to do is to go astray. And then when once we have turned aside from the right path, there is no end to our wanderings, until we get buried under a multitude of superstitions.⁶⁴

Hence, churches within the Calvinistic tradition have sought to regulate their worship services according to the Scriptural “elements,” and the “forms” that are acceptable to God. Moreover, the “circumstances” of the church, which may require minor variations in liturgy, place, and time, were to be determined by the local church leaders.

Shepherding the Flock

Calvin experienced most of the typical pastoral counseling situations throughout his career as would the modern-day pastor. Influential pastor and Calvin scholar, Ronald S. Wallace, observes the following qualities of Calvin's pastoral emphasis:

62. In Geneva those who were admitted to the Lord's Supper came forward to be served the Bread and the Wine while standing before the Table; they did not kneel. For a detailed analysis of the varied practices of receiving the Lord's Supper in Reformed and Presbyterian churches, see: Benjamin B. Warfield, “The Posture of the Recipients at the Lord's Supper” in *Benjamin B. Warfield: Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. John E. Meeter (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1973), Vol. 2, 353–356).

63. John Calvin, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* (Reprint, Dallas, TX: Protestant Heritage Press, 1995).

64. *Ibid.*, 17.

We find him therefore often directing his ministry towards the individual with a special concern to give pastoral and personal care and guidance where there was a perplexity of heart, doubt, or spiritual darkness. As Thurneysen has pointed out: the Reformation itself was a pastoral care movement growing directly out of care for the salvation of the soul. His theological writing was often pastoral in its aim. The pages of the *Institutes* are studded with sentences and even paragraphs written to help the struggling soul. He says in the preface to the book that initially he “toiled” at the task of writing it, “chiefly for the sake of my countrymen, the French, multitudes of whom I perceived to be hungering and thirsting after Christ. His writing is sometimes entirely pastoral in its direction and motive.”⁶⁵

Calvin’s regular pastoral routine consisted of administering baptisms, preparing and preaching sermons, catechizing children so that they could make a credible profession of faith, working with young couples to prepare them for marriage, performing funerals, and consoling people in their grief and discouragement. T. H. L. Parker provides a fascinating example:

Calvin was not only the architect of the Church in Geneva, bearing, as the leading pastor, the chief responsibility for the Church’s life and organization, but he was also actively engaged in the pastoral work. Undoubtedly he looked upon his life work in Geneva primarily as “proclaiming the Word of God” and “instructing believers in wholesome doctrine.” His time was not spent in sitting in an office and planning, nor was it devoted entirely to committees. He was a pastor, busied with the common run of pastoral duties. For example, glancing through the *Annals of Geneva*, we find that on November 5th, 1553, he married two couples in the Cathedral; that on December 10th of the same year he “blessed a marriage and administered baptism at St. Pierre.” The first quarter of 1554 kept him busy: on January 7th he had a marriage at St. Pierre, on the 28th two, two more on February 4th, three on the 18th, one on the 4th of March, and a baptism on the 18th, and three marriages on April 1st. All in all, for the ten years 1550–1559 for which we have a register, he took about two hundred and seventy weddings and fifty baptisms.⁶⁶

Calvin was extremely busy with all of the details of pastoral ministry, and he was not solely given to study and theological writing. He was concerned to meet people in the midst of their afflictions and to minister to their most pressing needs as disciples of Jesus Christ.

65. Ronald Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva, and the Reformation: A Study of Calvin as Social Worker, Churchman, Pastor and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988; Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1990), 169.

66. T. H. L. Parker, *Portrait of Calvin* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), 81.

Counseling the Broken-Hearted

The reformers in Geneva did not have a specialized counseling ministry with pastors trained to perform only this one aspect of ministry. Instead, all of the pastors saw it as their solemn duty to counsel any whom the Lord might bring to them. Regarding the responsibilities of the pastoral office Calvin wrote:

Here, then, is the sovereign power with which the pastors of the church, by whatever name they be called, ought to be endowed. That is that they may dare boldly to do all things by God's Word; may compel all worldly power, glory, wisdom, and exaltation to yield to and obey his majesty; supported by his power, may command all from the highest even to the last; may build up Christ's household and cast down Satan's; may feed the sheep and drive away the wolves; may instruct and exhort the teachable; may accuse, rebuke, and subdue the rebellious and stubborn; may bind and loose; finally, if need be, may launch thunderbolts and lightnings; but do all things in God's Word.⁶⁷

Thus, the primary text and handbook for all godly counsel was from the Bible alone. Calvin did not advocate an authoritarian, cold, and sterile approach to counseling. He was truly concerned with the "care of souls." This type of individualized pastoral care was introduced to Calvin by Martin Bucer during his brief ministry in Strasbourg (1538–1541).

Bucer, the older and more experienced pastor, discipled the younger man in pastoral theology and during this time he published a book entitled, *Concerning the True Care of Souls* (1538).⁶⁸ Calvin clearly followed Bucer's example when he wrote his *Commentary* on Acts 20:20:

For Christ hath not appointed pastors upon this condition, that they may only teach the Church in general in the open pulpit; but that they may take charge of every particular sheep, that they bring back to the sheepfold those who wander and go astray, that they may strengthen those which are discouraged and weak, that they may cure the sick, that they may lift up and set on foot the feeble, (Ezekiel 34:4) for common doctrine will oftentimes wax cold, unless it be holpen (*helped*) with private admonitions.⁶⁹

This meant that pastoral counseling was not to be based only upon personal experience, but on a thoroughly comprehensive knowledge of the Bible. In this way, the counsel that was given was capable of addressing every area of human concern—whether it was the need for assurance, overcoming personal anxiety, dealing with covetousness, fear of death, despair, irrational fears, a struggle with lust, pride, sorrow, or excessive

67. *Institutes*, 4:8:9.

68. Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, Peter Beale trans. (Reprint, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009).

69. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1855; Grand Rapids: Baker, reprint, 1998), 244.

worry. Calvin firmly believed that the Bible, either by proof-text or by principle, was sufficient to minister to every human need.

Ministering through Letters

Calvin wrote an amazing variety of letters to people throughout his entire ministry and many of these have been preserved.⁷⁰ He wrote to those who were seeking advice, giving them counsel from the Bible. He wrote to those who were troubled, offering them compassion and encouragement. The following consolatory letter, written by Calvin to Monsieur de Richebourg, shows the caring heart of the young minister of the gospel.

Calvin was only thirty-one years old at the time that he penned this letter, and he was away on an important mission to Ratisbon, Germany where he represented the city of Strasbourg at an ecclesiastical gathering. Two deceased men are mentioned in Calvin's benevolent letter; (1) Louis—the young son of Monsieur de Richebourg, and (2) Claude Ferey—the distinguished professor at the Academy of Strasbourg and Louis' personal tutor. Sadly, both men were carried away by the plague that swept through Strasbourg with deadly consequences in April, 1541.

Calvin writes with great compassion and sympathy. Here is a short portion of his lengthy letter:

The son whom the Lord had lent you for a season, he has taken away. There is no ground, therefore, for those silly and wicked complaints of foolish men: O blind death! O horrid fate! O implacable daughters of destiny! O cruel fortune! The Lord who had lodged him here for a season, at this stage of his career has called him away. What the Lord has done, we must, at the same time, consider has not been done rashly, nor by chance, neither from having been impelled from without; but by that determinate counsel, whereby he not only foresees, decrees, and executes nothing but what is just and upright in itself, but also nothing but what is good and wholesome for us...However brief, therefore, either in your opinion or in mine, the life of your son may have been, it ought to satisfy us that he has finished the course which the Lord had marked out for him...May Christ the Lord keep you and your family, and direct you all with his own Spirit, until you may arrive where Louis and Claude have gone before.⁷¹

With these words we see an open window into the heart of Calvin. And surprisingly, for some skeptics, it reveals a heart that is warm and tender towards those who suffer through the many trials of life, rather than one which is cold and hard. It is the heart of a true shepherd and pastor to his people. In this way, Calvin compassionately exercised the “care of souls.”

70. John Calvin, *Letters of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980).

71. Calvin, *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, vol. 4, ed. Jules Bonnet, 246–253.

Caring for Prisoners

The “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” requires the regular visitation of those in prison.⁷² This duty was to be conducted by the ministers of the Company of Pastors.⁷³ Both preaching the Scriptures and godly counsel were to be given. Special care was to be given to condemned criminals who were facing execution. Calvin explains:

We have further ordered that on a certain day of the week there shall be an address to those in prison for the purpose of admonishing and exhorting them; and two members of the Council shall be deputed to be present lest any fraud should be committed. And if there is anyone in irons whom it is not desirable to bring out, a minister may, with the approval of the Council, be allowed to enter in order to console him in person, as above. For when one waits until condemned prisoners are to be led away to death they are often so overwhelmed with horror that they are unable to receive or understand anything. And the day appointed for doing this is Saturday, before dinner.⁷⁴

Calvin, himself, gave this kind of pastoral care over the years of his ministry to many condemned criminals. He made particular efforts to preach the gospel of grace to Michael Servetus, a most difficult and hardened heretic, before his execution in 1553. But after several visits in his cell, he failed in making any notable inroads with Servetus. Since Calvin had been involved in the trial, arrangements were made so that William Farel could travel to Geneva and ride in the cart with Servetus to his death on October 27, 1553.⁷⁵

In this way, Calvin was not put into the awkward situation of being accused of gloating over Servetus' death. This action, however complicated it may be, demonstrates that Calvin was sensitive to the spiritual needs of those who were facing great peril. He not only sought to alter the means of Servetus' death to a more humane method, but he also gave every opportunity for Servetus to repent and place his faith in the eternal Son of God. Despite Calvin's well-meaning efforts, Servetus persisted in his theological errors to the very end and he never repented.⁷⁶

Ministering to the Sick and Visiting Households

One of the central duties of the Pastors, Elders, and Deacons in Geneva was to visit the sick. Calvin strongly urged this duty in the “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” requiring

72. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 46.

73. Robert M. Kingdon, “Geneva Company of Pastors,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 151–152.

74. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 46.

75. Stickelberger, *Calvin: A Life*, 128–130.

76. Hughes ed., *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 290–291.

that the minister visit those who were very ill within the time of “three full days.”⁷⁷ Calvin writes:

Because many are negligent to console themselves in God with His Word when they find themselves in necessity through illness, and consequently many die without any admonition or teaching, which is then more than ever salutary for man, for this reason we have decided and ordered that no one is to remain three full days confined to bed without being that the minister is notified, and that when any wish the minister to come, they shall take care to call him at a convenient hour, so as not to distract him from that office in which he and colleagues serve the Church in common. It is to remove all excuses that we have resolved on this course, and especially we enjoy that relations, friends, and guardians are not to wait until the man is at the point of death, since in this extremity consolations are for the most part of little avail.⁷⁸

During the course of his pastoral duties he regularly visited the sick throughout the city. The plague of 1543, however, put his resolve to the test.

Besides the fear of contracting the disease himself through these visits, his family was harassed by his enemies—they smeared human detritus from those who had died in the plague on the doorknobs of his home! In essence, they sought to infect his entire household with the plague.⁷⁹ But what his enemies intended for evil, God turned to good. When it was discovered what his adversaries had done, rather than making Calvin shrink back in horror it strengthened his resolve to persevere in his pastoral care, to continue improving the established hospitals, and to set up additional clinics that would minister to the sick, to orphans and widows, the poor, and refugees.

In regard to the hospitals, his plan for staffing and structuring them primarily involved the work of the church deacons.⁸⁰ This effort was designed to be a ministry of mercy and compassion run by the church, rather than a secular bureaucracy overseen by the authorities of the city. Now, that there was a compelling need, Calvin labored with the deacons to make it all come to pass. This is a fine example of Calvin’s resolute leadership; he was determined to accomplish his goals and to persevere against all odds until they were met.

The New Testament records that when the Apostle Paul was in Ephesus he busied himself by not only “teaching...in public” but also going “from house to house.”⁸¹ This same pattern of family visitation was regularly performed at Geneva,

77. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 43–44, 46.

78. *Ibid.*, 46.

79. William C. Innes, *Social Concern in Calvin’s Geneva* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1983), 134–135.

80. “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” in *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 43–44.

81. cf. Acts 20:20.

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and it has come down through the centuries as a distinct practice of Reformed and Presbyterian pastors and elders. Charles Bridges notes:

Calvin often lays down the Scriptural obligation to this work, and reports the fruitful harvests reaped at Geneva, when the ministers and elders went from house to house, and dealt closely and individually with the consciences of the people.⁸²

Additionally, Ronald Wallace thoughtfully adds:

Like Bucer, he lamented that many preachers in his day were either too short-sighted in their view of the ministry or too lazy to visit the homes of those who listened to them from the pews. Therefore they failed too often in the task of reaching the individual. They looked on the Church building as an auditorium, and the congregation as an audience. They took the easy way of avoiding the sharp evangelistic edge of the Gospel, and the close application of their teaching to the individual soul. Calvin condemned this approach.⁸³

Besides visiting in homes, the visitation of the rural churches by the leading pastors of Geneva was also strongly encouraged. In 1548 Calvin and several other ministers were chastened by their brethren for failing to carry out this duty in a timely manner. The rebuke was recorded in *The Register of the Company of Pastors* and it was, no doubt, a source of some embarrassment to Calvin and the others.⁸⁴ Within a short time, though, new efforts were made and the assignment was brought to its completion.⁸⁵

Conclusion

What was the overall impact of Calvin's ministry; and did it bear good fruit? Wallace suggests a much wider achievement occurred for Calvin's shepherding ministry than just within the walls of Geneva. Wallace asserts an influence with international scope that continues to this very day through the legacy of Calvin's pastoral method and the prominence of his city. He perceptively writes:

Calvin's influence in the sixteenth century however was due not only to his writing, counsel and teaching but also to what Geneva itself became under his influence. The perplexed pastor of today finds much of what is written by experts, and given as advice even at heart-warming church conferences, does not really fit into his own actual situation in the parish ministry. Calvin, however, instead of writing a "Utopia", actually produced it in Geneva. He

82. Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry* (Originally published 1830; reprint, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1959), 348.

83. Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva, and the Reformation*, 173.

84. Hughes ed., *The Register of the Company of Pastors*, 82–83; see the entry for January 11, 1548.

85. *Ibid.*, 83–84.

translated his ideas into ecclesiastical and even political institutions. He influenced the kind of individual people could meet as they went about the city. Geneva itself therefore became a fact of great importance. It attracted people. They sent their children so that they could come under the influence of the place. They came to believe it was possible for them to have something like it where they themselves lived and worked.⁸⁶

In this way, Calvin's influence as pastor and shepherd to the church of Jesus Christ emerges. He demonstrated this legacy in three ways: first, by a city that was transformed by the gospel and that served as a beacon of righteousness for many centuries; second, by a church which established patterns for ministry that are still being imitated by churches today; and third, by a worldwide institution that became known in time as the Reformed church. Indeed, John Calvin was a faithful and successful pastor. His closest associate and personal successor, Theodore Beza, gives a fitting tribute to Calvin's life with these stirring words:

Having been a spectator of his conduct for sixteen years, I have given a faithful account both of his life and of his death, and I now declare, that in him all men may see a most beautiful example of the Christian character, an example which it is as easy to slander as it is difficult to imitate.⁸⁷

Calvin's shepherding ministry—"the care of souls"—not only profoundly affected the individuals of his own time, but it also provides an ongoing and reproducible model for effective Christian ministry during our own time. Let us learn how to shepherd the flock from this humble servant of Jesus Christ—John Calvin, pastor of the church in Geneva.

86. Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva, and the Reformation*, 43.

87. Beza, "Life of John Calvin," in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, Vol. 1, c.

Book Reviews

Hays, Richard B. *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016, xix + 504 pp., \$49.95.

Richard Hays, George Washington Ivey Professor of New Testament at Duke Divinity School, is well known to scholars and students alike as one of the world's foremost experts on the use of the Old Testament in the New (as well as on Paul, NT ethics, and hermeneutics more generally). This book was completed after Hays received a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, with special research assistance and with Baylor's fast-tracking publication of the manuscript. Mercifully, as of this writing, that cancer is still in remission.

Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels mirrors the name of the author's classic *Echoes of Scripture in Paul*, published in 1989. Then Hays was eager to go beyond the obvious quotations and even allusions to the OT in Paul's letters to the significant clauses, phrases, and even key words that seemed likely to show Paul's deliberate use of OT phraseology. In this work on the Gospels, Hays still identifies some echoes not regularly discussed elsewhere but is keener to survey the major quotations and allusions as well, especially when attention to their larger OT contexts discloses additional potential insights for the Evangelists' deployment of them. The overall thesis disclosed is that each of the four Gospels testifies "that Jesus was not only the Son of God but actually the embodiment of the divine presence in the world" (p. 9). In each Gospel, the author makes his claim by "reading backwards" (the title of an earlier, shorter book that Hays penned to preview many of the ideas he would flesh out here). By interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures figurally, the Evangelists create "a retrospective hermeneutical transformation of Israel's sacred texts" (p. 14).

Even a detailed review could scarcely do justice to Hays' treatment of even one of the four canonical Gospels. His first example in his chapter on Mark demonstrates the rich fruit to be gleaned from his exegesis. Most commentators note that the heavenly voice at Jesus' baptism combines snippets of quotations from Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1 when it declares, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11 NRSV). Fewer highlight that Mark's distinctive language in the previous verse about "the heavens" being "torn apart" (v. 10) echoes Isaiah 64:1 where the prophet implores God to "tear open the heavens and come down" to bring deliverance to his people. Fewer still observe that in the larger context of Isaiah 64:1, the prophet has just asked the Lord why he hardens his people's hearts so that they do not fear him (63:17). Yet Mark would have been aware of all these associations and most likely drew on them as he composed a narrative of Jesus' ministry that stresses secrecy, disobedience, and the people's and even the disciples' hardened hearts, even as God is fulfilling his promises to deliver his people in Jesus.

Mark's is thus a Gospel that contains both the harbinger of judgment and the new exodus. Both of these themes come to a climax in the temple incident with its combined allusions to Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. God intended for his temple to be a house of prayer for all nations but the Jewish leaders have turned it into a den of robbers. Less obvious but no doubt relevant is the conceptual allusion to Zechariah 14:21 in which in the eschatological restoration "there shall no longer be traders in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day."

Proceeding through Mark in this fashion fits a Gospel that repeatedly depicts hidden things that are being revealed (4:22). That Mark highlights a Jesus who calls himself Son of man and whom others envision as Messiah and Son of God is well known but it is only rarely observed that "Mark actually depicts the man Jesus as *the embodied presence of the God of Israel*" (p. 46; italics his). But the Lord of Mark 1:2–3 whose coming Jesus enacts is Yahweh, God of Israel. He is the one who alone forgive sins (2:1–12), who makes wind and waves obey him (4:35–41), who is Israel's shepherd (6:34), who walks on the sea (vv. 45–52), who makes the deaf hear and the mute speak (7:31–37). Every one of these roles is a role of the Lord God in Scripture, not of a separate, albeit messianic individual. The Passion Narrative draws repeatedly on Psalm 22 so that even in his cry of dereliction (Mark 15:34; Psa. 22:1), the context of the entire Psalm with its triumphal second half (vv. 19–31) must also be in view. God will deliver his people, with their messiah, even if the original ending of Mark only reiterates that promise without explicitly narrating its fulfillment.

Matthew's Gospel makes plain what often remains obscure in Mark. Jesus' entire ministry fulfills Torah (Matt. 5:17). Both typologically and predictively, passage after passage of the Hebrew Scriptures finds its fullest meaning in details from Christ's life. Where Israel had failed, Jesus succeeds, nowhere more dramatically than in the temptations in the wilderness (4:1–11). But he is not concerned "with literal performance of all of the law's commandments" but with "a particular *hermeneutical construal* of Torah" (p. 122; italics his). The Prophets take privilege over the legal material. Jesus as "Emmanuel" (God with us) creates an *inclusio* around the Gospel (1:23; 28:20) and occupies a central role as well (18:20). Jesus is a new Moses but he is greater than Moses. He is a new Wisdom but he is greater than Wisdom. More so than in the other Gospels, in Matthew people worship Jesus precisely because he is the embodiment of Israel's God. What begins with Jesus acting like a conventionally nationalistic Messiah (10:5–6; 15:24) culminates with him as the Messiah for all people groups (28:19), precisely because that is the eschatological vision of the Writing Prophets, especially in Isaiah 40–66.

The Gospel of Luke characterizes its contents in its opening verse as "the things that have been *brought to fulfillment* (*πεπληροφορημένων*) among us" (p. 192, italics his). The entire Gospel unfolds as the completion of the story the OT left incomplete. Older Lukan redaction criticism often missed the liberationist strands of this work, largely because they failed to see the programmatic significance of the birth narratives

(Luke 1–2) for Luke’s theology. The end of the Gospel signals the reader that the story has just begun as repentance and forgiveness must be proclaimed in Jesus’ name to all the nations starting in Jerusalem (24:46–47). Then, what Anna foresaw about the redemption of Jerusalem (2:36–38), itself based on Isaiah 52:9, will incorporate what the next verse of Isaiah likewise foretold: “and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God” (v. 10). One is not surprised, then, to go back and read Luke 4:16–30 and see Jesus simultaneously announcing the “fulfillment of the Isaianic hope of national restoration” and a challenge to the “conventional conceptions of national privilege” (p. 230). Many of the categories of Jesus that permeate the other Gospels reappear in Luke—Jesus as Messiah, Son of David, Son of God, Lord, prophet like Moses—but a distinctive emphasis on the prophet both like and unlike Elijah and Elisha gets added to the mix. Less often observed is how Jesus’ divine identity is likewise highlighted in Luke. For example in 13:34a, he depicts Jesus as wanting to shelter Jerusalem under his wings like a mother hen does her chicks (cf. God’s care for Israel in Deut. 32:10–12 likened to a mother eagle caring for her young and covering them with her wings). In each case, too, only rebellion ensued (Deut. 32:15–18; Luke 13:34b–35).

As Luke progresses into Acts, the theme of God’s people confronting empire comes more to the fore, though there are hints already in Luke. Indeed, Acts needs to be taken into account for all of Luke’s themes but that goes beyond Hays’ purview, except for glimpses here and there. Overall, Hays discerns seven themes of the intertextual narratives in Luke’s two volumes: continuity with the story of Israel, God’s faithfulness to his covenant promises and his grace in his liberating power, the realistic recognition of the need for suffering for God’s people, God’s concern for the helpless and poor, his extension of the good news to all the peoples of the earth, and the countercultural position God’s people find themselves in with respect to earthly powers. Finally, Luke’s readers gradually but increasingly perceive “the unity of identity” between “the Lord” as Yahweh, God of Israel and “the Lord” as Jesus.

John’s is the Gospel that most directly confronts readers with Jesus’ divine claims. It also does not have direct quotations of Scripture quite as frequently as the other Gospels do. As a result, readers do not always realize how permeated it is by the OT. John 5:39–40 and 45–47 nevertheless call to mind Luke 24:27 with its Christological hermeneutic for interpreting the sacred texts. Mark has his mysteries, Matthew his explicit fulfillments, and Luke his more subtle allusions, but John is the master of the luminous image. Nowhere is this clearer than in his portrayal of Jesus as the fulfillment of each of the major festivals of Judaism. His comments to the woman at the well in Samaria prefigure this emphasis (John 4:21). Soon it will not matter *where* one worship because Jesus is the locus of God’s revelation and the object of one’s worship. At the same time, John is no supersessionist. Even his sweeping statements about “the Jews” should each be understood contextually. Never does he indict the entire nation because all of Jesus’ first followers were also Jews. Many

times *hoi Ioudaioi* is shorthand for the Judean religious leaders who represented Israel and most opposed Jesus. The story of Jesus' crucifixion is simultaneously "a glorious exaltation to power (Dan 7) and a painful vicarious suffering for the sins of others (Num 21:4–9 + Isa 52:13—53:12)" (p. 335).

In his conclusion Hays' summarizes the approach of each Gospel. Mark figures the mystery of God's kingdom, Matthew presents Torah transfigured, Luke offers Israel's redemption story and John refigures Israel's worship and temple. But how is this legitimate? Only if "the God to whom the Gospels bear witness, the God incarnate in Jesus, is the same as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." If that is true, "then the figural literary unity of Scripture, Old Testament and New Testament together, is nothing other than the climactic fruition of that one God's self-revelation" (p. 365).

With so many alleged echoes of OT texts, every reader is bound to demur at some point. Is Jesus calling his first disciples to be fishers of people a deliberate reversal of God's judgment of the wealthy women in Amos 4:2 being carried off with fishhooks? Do the Synoptics really not allude to the Suffering Servant text of Isaiah 52:13–53:12 to add that portrait to their mosaic of Christological images? Isn't the primary point of Matthew's inclusion of five women in his genealogy their suspicion of sexual impropriety rather than the (probable) Gentile background of only four of them? No matter how distinctive, can the attitude of Matthew's Jesus to Torah really be referred to just as *halakah*? Did Matthew really have fewer OT allusions in his passion narrative simply because he wants readers to figure out connections for themselves? For that matter, does he really have that many fewer allusions? Is Luke quite so anti-empire as Hays thinks, when it is Rome who consistently rescues the first Christians when various Jewish leaders would destroy them throughout the book of Acts? Must John 19:36 "certainly" (p. 317) allude to not breaking the bones of the Passover lamb when it is already adequately accounted for by the more obvious quotation of Psalm 34:19–20? Don't weak arguments "strain" credibility rather than "credulity" (p. 299), since credulity means gullibility?

These questions, however, arise only rarely, compared with page after page of treasures of exegetical insight into the use of the OT in the NT. Hays promises the reader an examination of the Evangelists' hermeneutics and delivers so much more—the veritable foundation, outline and central details for a biblical theology of the Gospels. We are so grateful that Hays lived to complete this project, and we pray that he may still have many years for fruitful scholarship and ministry.

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Oliver D. Crisp, *Saving Calvinism: Expanding the Reformed Tradition*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016. pp. 167. \$18.00, paperback.

As someone who has written a couple of books critiquing Calvinism, I must say I was intrigued, and somewhat amused by the title of this book. Why, I wondered, would a leading Reformed theologian think Calvinism needed to be saved, and from what? The answer, it turns out, is that Calvinism may need to be saved from some of its most zealous proponents. These zealous proponents, who have led a remarkable resurgence of Calvinism during the past few decades, have claimed the mantle of the great Reformer for those who subscribe to the clearly defined set of doctrines famously summarized in the Tulip acronym. This is particularly true of those devotees of Calvin that have been dubbed “the young, the restless, the Reformed,” who, enthusiastic though they are, may suffer from “a kind of theological amnesia” (p. 12).

Reflecting on the future of the movement, Crisp even goes so far as to say: “In one respect, if the name *Calvinism* were dropped tomorrow, and no one spoke of Calvinism again, it would be a blessing. Calvin would be turning in his grave to think that his name was used in the way it is!” (p. 42). But of course the name “Calvinism” is not going to be dropped anytime in the foreseeable future, so the only question is how the term is going to be understood and who will rightly claim it. If Crisp has his way, Calvinism will come to be understood in significantly broader terms than it currently is by many of its most partisan proponents. Indeed, his strategy for “saving Calvinism” is clearly signaled in his subtitle that calls for “expanding the Reformed tradition,” which is his prescription for curing those afflicted with theological amnesia.

Crisp advances his case with two fundamental claims. First, he insists that Calvinism is not synonymous with the five points of the Tulip, and that the Reformed tradition is in fact broader than Calvinism. The Reformed tradition is identified by three characteristics that do not necessarily apply to all those who claim the Calvinist label. First, the Reformed tradition traces its heritage back to the magisterial Reformation of the sixteenth century. Second, the Reformed tradition embraces either an Episcopal or a Presbyterian form of church polity. And third, the Reformed tradition places an emphasis on the sacramental life of the church.

The second large claim that Crisp argues for in this book is that there is considerable variety in the Reformed tradition with respect to those matters of soteriology that are the focus of the five points of Calvinism. After his first chapter, the rest of the book is devoted to demonstrating and documenting this sort of diversity within the ranks of Reformed theology. In his second chapter, he takes on the Calvinist doctrine that God elects some to salvation, and passes over the rest, which he admits is a “difficult pill to swallow” (p. 59). Given God’s sovereign power, it is only natural to wonder why he does not save more than he does, or even why he does not save all. One classic Reformed answer is that God must display his wrath on those destined

for destruction in order to be fully glorified. But here a number of Reformed thinkers have objected. While all might agree that he *can* display his wrath, it is another thing altogether to say he *must*. Surely God could choose to forgive all if he so chose, and not ordain any to destruction. Karl Barth famously reframed the doctrine of election in light of this consideration.

The next chapter takes up the vexed issue of free will and salvation, a major point of contention between Calvinists and their critics. Given their view of sovereignty, irresistible grace and unconditional election, it is usually thought that Calvinists must embrace some version of compatibilism. Crisp shows that some Reformed thinkers dissent from this, citing the example of John Girardeau, who contended that human beings sometimes have the “power of contrary choice” with respect to some significant decisions. These choices, however, do not pertain to salvation, but only to more mundane matters. While Crisp thinks Girardeau’s position is confused or not fully developed, “it does show that not all Reformed thinkers have been of one mind on the matter of theological determinism” (p. 79). The following two chapters take up the issues of universalism and the nature of atonement. While Calvinists have typically rejected universalism, Crisp contends that Calvinists may at least hope for the salvation of all. He also points out that some classic Reformed thinkers like Warfield and Shedd held that the majority of humanity will actually be saved, in contrast to the popular notion that Calvinism teaches that the elect will comprise only a small remnant of fallen humanity. In his discussion of the cross, he challenges the notion that the penal substitution theory of the atonement is *the* Reformed view. While that theory has undeniably been enormously popular among Calvinists, it is hardly the only view espoused by Reformed theologians, and Crisp demonstrates that a number of other theories have been defended within the tradition.

On all these points, Crisp successfully shows that the Reformed tradition is more diverse, or in some cases nuanced, than the popular Calvinism zealously promoted by its young and restless proponents. Scored on these terms, this book is completely successful, and represents a valuable contribution that should be enthusiastically recommended to all those Calvinists who suffer from the kind of “theological amnesia” Crisp diagnosed. The question remains, however, whether recognizing and embracing the diversity in the Reformed tradition can save Calvinism.

This brings us to Crisp’s final chapter, which I want to look at a bit more closely. Here he deals with the contentious issue of the extent of the atonement. The “L” in the famous Tulip, of course, stands for “limited atonement,” which is the doctrine that Christ died only for the elect, so that they, and they alone, are the only ones who can possibly be saved. Over against this, Crisp shows that a number of Reformed thinkers espouse what he calls “hypothetical universalism,” which rejects the claim that Christ atoned only for the elect. The crucial claim here is “that the atonement has the power to save all, and all who have faith will be saved as a consequence” (p. 135). Or to put

it in more traditional language, the atonement is sufficient for all, but efficient only for those who have faith.

Now this raises a crucial question: who is able to exercise faith? Are all those for whom Christ died given grace that makes it possible for them to do so, and whether or not they do so is up to them? Or is the gift of faith given only to those who are the unconditionally elect, and they, and they alone, are able to have faith? On this point, Crisp seems to equivocate.

Consider the example he uses to illustrate the difference between sufficiency and efficiency. A medical team arrives on an island with enough, indeed more than enough, of a vaccine to protect them from a deadly disease. All are invited to receive it as a free gift, but they must “choose to be vaccinated, coming to submit themselves for vaccination.... It is efficient or efficacious only for those who make this choice” (p. 136). Now this example seems amenable to both understandings of who can exercise faith mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Compare what Crisp says in his earlier chapter on free will and salvation when he is explaining Girardeau’s view of decisions in which we do not have the “power of contrary choice”: “There are those brought about by divine grace, enabling us to do them—supremely, in the case of salvation. These spiritual choices, as he calls them, are not actions that are free in the relevant sense because we cannot choose to do them without God’s enabling” (pp. 77–78). Notice particularly here that Crisp speaks of these choices as being “brought about by God,” and also as being made possible by “God’s enabling.” Now the idea that a choice is brought about by God suggests that that choice is caused or determined by God. However, the idea of God’s enabling a choice suggests that God empowers the choice, and makes it possible, but does not determine it. The fact that one is able to do something does not entail that he will in fact do it.

When read in terms of enablement, Crisp’s example resonates deeply with an Arminian rather than a Calvinist view of soteriology. Crisp insists, however, that hypothetical universalism is truly a Reformed view, and he distinguishes it from Arminianism (p. 148).

He shores this claim up by pointing out that hypothetical universalism holds that “only the elect are given the gift of faith in order to obtain the benefits of Christ’s saving work” (p. 139). If faith is “given,” this suggests that God causes it or brings it about in the elect in a more determinate fashion than merely by “enabling” it. But if this is true, it raises an obvious question: What is the point of insisting that the atonement is sufficient for all if the non-elect are utterly powerless to avail themselves of its benefits? If only the elect are given the gift of faith, those who are not elect are no better off than they would be if Christ had not died for them at all. So if this is true, the glaring question that remains unanswered is, why does not God give everyone the gift of faith if he can bring it about in anyone he chooses?

Crisp is very much aware of the problems for Calvinism posed by this question, but he points out that it is true for any version of Calvinism, not just hypothetical universalism. As he does elsewhere in the book, Crisp appeals to mystery and the “secret will of God.” He also reminds us that we can hope for universal salvation, or at least for the salvation of the large majority of humanity so that “the sufficiency of the work of Christ matches (or almost matches) its efficiency” (p. 141).

Still, the possibility, if not the actuality, of any gap between the sufficiency of the work of Christ and its efficiency requires a satisfactory explanation if we are to maintain a substantive account of the perfect goodness and love of God. There is such an explanation if any who fail to have faith do so because they freely refuse to submit to the vaccination that will save them even though they truly could submit because of God’s enabling grace. This, of course, is the Arminian reading of Crisp’s example, cited above.

In short, if Calvinism holds that God could give all persons saving faith, but may choose not to do so, Calvinism represents a view of God that is not worth saving. But if Calvinists want to maintain a view of God’s love and goodness that is worth saving, perhaps the most straightforward way to save Calvinism is simply by embracing Arminianism. Arminius, after all, was a part of the Reformed tradition, too.

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Gentry, Peter. *How to Read & Understand the Biblical Prophets*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017, 141 pp., \$17.99, paperback.

The prophetic books of the Old Testament are often neglected or misinterpreted by the typical Christian due to the difficulty to understand them. Peter Gentry has written this short primer—*How to Read & Understand the Biblical Prophets*—to equip the average Christian with a better understanding of how Hebrew prophetic literature works and, thus, how the biblical prophets ought to be read and interpreted. Gentry is professor of Old Testament at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the coauthor of *Kingdom through Covenant*, author of many articles, and the director of the Hexapla Institute.

Through seven chapters, Gentry explains various aspects of the prophetic genre illustrated throughout with examples from the biblical prophets. In the first chapter, Gentry argues that the bulk of the content of the prophets has little to do with predicting the future but, rather, is concerned with calling the people of God back to the covenant of God—primarily using the language of the book of Deuteronomy (p. 30). Chapter two, then, surveys the genuine predictive statements of the prophets. Gentry shows that even these predictions of coming judgement and future restoration are still based on the Sinai covenant, for covenant violation leads to judgment (p. 40). He also explains that an important purpose of the prophetic predictions is that

they allow for God himself to interpret the coming exile (p. 37) and restoration. For example, the restoration will involve a physical return *and* a spiritual return from exile (p. 39).

Chapter three surveys the form of the prophetic message, in which Gentry describes the literary function of repetition in Hebrew literature (p. 44), word pairs (e.g. *hesed* and *’emet*, 46), and chiasms (p. 47). He then illustrates how this recursive nature of Hebrew literature functions also at the macro level by showing that the literary structure of the book of Isaiah reveals that Isaiah tells the same message—the transformation of Zion—seven times from different angles (pp. 51–55). Gentry, in chapter four, argues that the Oracles against the Nations, have their genesis in the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32 (p. 60) and that hope is extended to these nations to find their salvation within Zion (p. 65).

The final three chapters each look at different ways the prophets describe the future. Chapter five examines the prophetic use of typology to depict a New Exodus. Gentry defines typology as that which meets four criteria: (i) correspondence between people, places, etc., (p. 2) escalation from type to antitype, (iii) biblical warrant, and (iv) development of type coinciding with the progression of the biblical covenants (pp. 90–91). Chapter six tackles the apocalyptic, understanding it as both a genre and a literary type found within other genres (p. 101). Chapter seven describes the so-called “already-not-yet” as unveiled by the New Testament authors’ use of the Old Testament. The book then concludes with a brief appendix on the book of Revelation. It appears to be a central concern of Gentry to disprove the wide-spread purported “literal” reading of the prophets and to provide an alternative reading method. In the chapter on typology he “bluntly” addresses the issue of alleged literal interpretation (p. 85) and in the conclusion to the book writes:

The debate between literal interpretation and spiritual interpretation is entirely bogus. When the Reformers talked about the “literal sense” of the text, they meant the meaning intended by the author *according to the rules of the genre of literature* being used to communicate the message. (p. 124, italics original)

Gentry’s aim, therefore, is to begin to explain these “rules” of Hebrew literature. Relatedly, Gentry also argues against a strict chronological reading of the prophets. He supports this argument by showing how the New Testament authors use the same text (Zech 12:10) to refer to different periods of time (p. 122). Additionally, it appears that the chief purpose of the appendix on Revelation is also to show how John employs the recursive nature of Hebrew literature which thus precludes a strict chronological reading (p. 128). Those raised within the tradition which puts forward this so-called “literal” reading as the touchstone of orthodoxy will certainly be challenged as they interact with Gentry’s level-headed and exegetically sound alternative reading method.

Many significant insights from Gentry's years of studying the Hebrew literature and the prophets are peppered throughout the book. Some such insights significantly impact other critical issues on the prophets but were not further developed in the book. For example, Gentry argues that repetition is "how a *single author* communicates" in Hebrew (p. 44), thus critiquing those who would argue repetitions evidence different sources. Similarly, Gentry argues that prophets predicted the near future and the distant future so that when their near-future prophecies came true the prophet would be validated (Deut 18) regarding his distant-future prophecies (pp. 34, 74). This understanding of Hebrew literature implicitly challenges those who would argue that distant prophecies were in fact later additions, *vaticinium ex eventu*. Granted, it was not the intent of the book to address critical issues, but the aware reader will benefit from these perceptive statements recognizing their larger implications than those explicitly mentioned in the book.

The average Christian may at times find themselves struggling with the amount of technical terms within the book. When Gentry introduces a term, like hendiadys, he does provide a definition (e.g. p. 22) but, since the book is short and contains a number of potentially new concepts, the uninitiated may feel disoriented. This is not so much a critique of the book, but a disclaimer for the novice interpreter combined with a call to press on, labor hard, and develop the important skill of interpreting God's Word by learning from a master builder like Gentry.

One sad omission, however, is any extensive explanation from Gentry on how to discern the literary structure of a passage or a book. It is not as if literary structures are not important to Gentry, quite the opposite. He claims the "literary structure is the key to correct interpretation" (28) and "teaching must be more than communicating the content of the text; we must *explain the form* and show how this carries the meaning" (p. 106), and he provides numerous literary structures of texts throughout the book (e.g. pp. 20, 52, 56, 61, 66–69, 72–74, 79–80, 86, 95, 106). Yet the closest the book comes to a detailed explanation on *how* to derive the literary structure of a text is the mention of the methodology of M. P. O'Connor for Hebrew poetry and also discourse grammar, methods not for the beginner (p. 60). Yet, the ardent reader may be able to pick up clues from the literary structures provided by Gentry to begin determining literary structures on their own.

How to Read & Understand the Biblical Prophets is essentially a book on the nature of Hebrew literature and the appropriate hermeneutical tools required for accurately interpreting the prophets. It is written at a popular level to instruct the beginner while also offering correction for the seasoned interpreter. It fills an important gap in the literature since most hermeneutical or Hebrew literature textbooks are too complex for the common reader, and most books on the prophets cover only the content of the prophets rather than *how* to read them (though see Chalmers recent work *Interpreting the Prophets* which has a similar goal to Gentry, yet both have different emphases and complement each other). This book is recommended as an

excellent, thoroughly biblical, erudite, yet down-to-earth and practical handbook for all those wanting to learn how to properly read the biblical prophets.

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Senn, Frank C. *Introduction to Christian Liturgy*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012, pp. 244, \$29, paperback.

One of the foremost contemporary liturgical theologians, Frank Senn is a retired Lutheran pastor, who continues his vocation as a scholar and author. A past president of both the Liturgical Conference and the North American Academy of Liturgy, Senn earned a PhD in Liturgical Studies from the University of Notre Dame and has taught in various capacities at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, the University of Chicago, and Trinity Theological College in Singapore, among others. His works include *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (1997), a comparative and ecumenical study of Christian liturgy with a special focus on the Reformation; *Christian Worship and Its Cultural Setting* (2004), an anthropological analysis of Christian worship; and *The People's Work: A Social History of the Liturgy* (2006).

The title of the current work, *Introduction to Christian Liturgy*, is perhaps too basic to reveal its true contents. For a book intended as an introduction, Senn manages to be remarkably comprehensive in a few pages, covering the historical development of Christian liturgy—its pastoral aspects, history, and culture; the order of worship, calendrical cycle, lectionary use, and sacramental practice; as well as arts and architecture in worship—across time and traditions. Each of the eleven chapters addresses five questions ranging from the basic (“why do we worship?” in chapter 1) to the structural (“what are the parts of a eucharistic prayer?” in chapter 3) to the practical (“how is the body used in worship?” in chapter 11). The book’s consistent arrangement makes for a manageable reading and discussion schedule for both teacher and student.

A highlight of Senn’s book are his copious examples from pre- and post-Reformation worshipping traditions. The Byzantine liturgy and Roman mass; Reformational, Rationalist, and Revivalist influences; Pentecostal and Emerging worship; and more are all woven into Senn’s historical and developmental narrative in a succinct but substantive way. Readers who are not already steeped in the history of Christian worship may find the wide range of traditions and examples, along with the frequent references to dates and changes of dating for Christian celebrations and commemorations, bewildering at first, but Senn’s helpful categorization by chronology in chapter 2, “History and Culture,” serves as a frame of reference for the rest of the book (and should, perhaps, be read first). A helpful glossary at the end clarifies the vocabulary used in liturgical studies.

One chapter in particular serves as an example of Senn's format throughout. Chapter 7 on "The Church Year: Holy Week," covers not only the historical development of Easter and the days leading up to it, but also church customs closely connected to each day of Holy Week, including their rise and, in some cases, restoration in Christian worship. Senn uses a primary source, the travel diary of Egeria, a Spanish nun from the fourth century, to give the reader a glimpse into the rites and observances of Holy Week as celebrated in Jerusalem at the time. From there, and moving forward in time, he summarizes the origin and development of practices such as the washing of feet and stripping of the altar during Maundy Thursday, the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday (strangely absent, however, is any discussion of the role of Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in Holy Week). Concluding the chapter, Senn recognizes that fourth-century Jerusalem and the twenty-first century reader are far removed in time and experience from each other, and that ancient rites may require adaptation to contemporary styles of celebration.

Adaptation, or what to do with twenty centuries of Christian worship, is a lingering question in Senn's book. In the Afterword, Senn notes his original intent to conclude with a bibliography of current denominational worship books, but he abandoned the idea after questioning which traditions, languages, and specific books to include. Some traditions do not provide books for worshipers, while "those who offer contemporary services buy music for the worship team but words are projected on screens for the worshipers" (p. 211). Moreover, the rapid changes in communication over the last hundred years, from the invention of the mimeograph to the incorporation of high tech graphics, have exerted a profound influence on how churches worship; while an awareness of the global nature of the church means that congregations are acquiring a more cross-cultural character (pp. 37–38). The intersection of modernity, technology, and culture in the landscape of Christian worship will require a sequel to Senn's introductory volume.

Like Karl Barth discovering "the strange new world of the Bible," readers from less liturgical or non-liturgical churches encountering the vast and rich history of Christian worship for the first time through *Introduction to Christian Liturgy*, may find themselves in a strange new world of worship, but one worth discovering, engaging, and retrieving. Even though Senn confesses his experience with non-liturgical worshiping traditions is limited (as is his coverage of them), readers and leaders from more contemporary music-driven worship settings may still find in his work a resource for the renewal of both the theology and praxis of worship within their congregations. For students and readers already familiar with liturgical worship, who want to go deeper into the origins of their own and other worshiping traditions, Senn's work will whet their appetites for more; his suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter provide options for going even deeper into the history and development of specific worship practices.

Intended as a “pastoral liturgical handbook,” Senn defines pastoral liturgy as “the study and application of liturgy in the actual life of the church” (p. 1). In other words, *Introduction to Christian Liturgy* is not only a textbook, but also a resource for pastoral leadership and for discerning readers seeking to broaden their grasp of the history of Christian worship. Outside formal academic courses, pastors might consider using the book in a lay study group over the course of several weeks to strengthen the foundations of worship in their congregations.

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Snearly, Michael K. *The Return of the King: Messianic Expectation in Book V of the Psalter*. London: T&T Clark, 2016, pp. 236, \$112, hardback.

Michael K. Snearly’s revised doctoral dissertation, *The Return of the King: Messianic Expectation in Book V of the Psalter*, is one of the most recent and substantive contributions to the “canonical” or editorial-critical study of the Psalter. Snearly’s work focuses particularly on Book V (Pss 107–150) and argues the following thesis: “I contend that there is a purposeful arrangement of psalm groups in Book V and that this arrangement should be interpreted as signaling a renewed hope in the royal/Davidic promises” (p. 3).

Snearly begins with methodological issues. His thorough interaction with and rebuttal to the method’s skeptics (pp. 10–17) provides a great service to its practitioners, as the method currently faces a “crisis of credibility.” Also noteworthy are the pitfalls he highlights that must be avoided if the method is to remain credible (pp. 18–19). The greatest contribution of these chapters, however, is Snearly’s own development of the method. He provides it with a more solid linguistic foundation by finding in text-linguistics and poetics support for the oft contended notion that the Psalter can be read as unified text (pp. 39–50). Further, his study seeks to consistently apply a criterion that gives more objective footing to the method’s results: moving “beyond demonstrating similarities among proximate psalms to showing that those similarities do not occur with the same frequency in other parts of the Psalter” (p. 19).

An important aspect of Snearly’s study is the idea that Book V is part of a storyline discernible in the Psalter. Though many will remain unconvinced of this claim, Snearly does make it more tenable than previous studies by grounding it in narrative theory, arguing that the Psalter is a “multiple focus narrative” (p. 84). Snearly considers Pss 1–2 (which together depict an exemplary Torah-meditating king) and 89 to be the most significant psalms in the storyline prior to Book V (p. 79). In light of previous studies that make the opposite claim (à la Gerald Wilson), noteworthy is his contention that Ps 89 functions *positively* in this storyline. Support for this claim is the final supplication for Yahweh to “remember” (זכר) his anointed in vv. 47–52. This supplication indicates that the psalm ends on a hopeful note about the promises made to David (p. 98). Thus,

prior to Book V Yahweh appears to have forgotten his covenant with David, “but his covenant loyalty (חסד) is eternal (עולם), so there is reason for hope” (p. 98).

Turning to Book V, Snearly argues that it is divided into four psalm groupings. He

contends that each grouping is arranged around a key-word that plays an important role in Pss 1–2 and 89, each of which is related to the royal Davidic hope: חסד and עולם (Pss 107–118/ Ps 89); תורה (Ps 119/ Pss 1–2); ציון (Pss 120–137/ Pss 1–2); מלך (Pss 138–145/ Pss 1–2). According to Snearly, the significance of this arrangement is that “Book V reaffirms the importance of the Davidic figure in the Psalter” (p. 100), which signals a renewed hope in the royal/ Davidic promises.

The dominant theme of Pss 107–118 is Yahweh’s eternal covenant loyalty. Either חסד or עולם occurs in “every psalm of this corpus, and, moreover, they are integral to the interpretation of each psalm” (p. 120). An *inclusion* that includes this dominant theme even brackets the unit (Pss 107:1; 118:29) (p. 110). The importance of חסד and עולם in Pss 107–118 suggests that this group functions as a response to Ps 89, affirming the Davidic hope that concludes that psalm. The Davidic cluster in this section, Pss 108–110, sends the message that “David is back!” (p. 127).

Snearly notes that Pss 119 is “a *crux criticorum* within macrostructure of Book V”

(p. 133). Given that the psalm’s dominant theme (i.e., Torah) is unique to Pss 119 in Book V, he contends that Ps 119 acts “as its own macrostructural unit within Book V” (p. 137). This “psalm group” contributes to the Psalter’s storyline, argues Snearly, by recalling and bearing witness to the reemergence of the exemplary Torah-meditating ruler of Pss 1–2 (pp. 137, 139).

The next psalm group consists of the Songs of Ascents (Pss 120–134) and Pss 135–137. The group’s cohesiveness is demonstrated especially by five key-word links that bind it together (שיר, ציון, ירושלם, ישראל, and מעלה), features that occur far less frequently elsewhere in Book V (pp. 145–147). Further evidence that Pss 135–137 should be incorporated in this group is that, when included, the group is “bookended by similar psalms...written from the perspective of exile” (Pss 120 and 137) (p. 147). The significance of this group lies particularly in its emphasis on Zion (pp. 150–151). Observing the connection between David and Zion in the important Ps 132, Snearly argues that the message arising from this third group is that Yahweh has “not abandoned Zion or his king,” the program outlined in Pss 1–2 (p. 153).

The primary link binding Pss 138–145 together is the shared author designation לדוד. There are also a number of parallels with Book III and Pss 1–2 (particularly in Pss 144 and 145) that create cohesion within this group (pp. 160–167). The latter parallels are particularly significant since they show that “the end of the Psalter mirrors the beginning” (p. 168). The Psalter begins and ends with a focus upon Yahweh’s establishment of his anointed over his earthly kingdom (p. 169).

Psalms 144–145 serve as a conclusion to Book V, while Pss 146–150 function as a conclusion to the Psalter as a whole (p. 184). Snearly argues that the latter group fittingly concludes the Psalter because of verbal and thematic correspondences with its

introduction (Pss 1–2) (pp. 178–181). The purpose of this “final hallel” is to conclude the Psalter in a climax of praise grounded in the storyline of the Psalter, with its focus on Yahweh and his anointed “who form a people in the midst of a hostile world and extend their kingdom over unruly nations” (p. 181).

The Return of the King provides a great service to the disciple of editorial criticism as it pertains to the Psalter. Perhaps its greatest contribution lies in the area of methodology. Snearly’s rigorous defense, development, and application of the method is sorely needed given the skepticism that still surrounds it in Psalms studies. I suspect that Snearly will make not a few new converts to the method with this offering. While certainly a scholarly work, this book would serve as an excellent introduction for any student or pastor who is new to the method and looking for an exemplary model of how it should be properly applied. If the book has a weakness, it is (at least from the present reviewer’s perspective) the argument that the Psalter exhibits an *intentionally crafted* “storyline.” A whole host of questions related to the Psalter’s “shaping” would need to be addressed before such a claim could be convincingly made. Further, the claim would need to be based upon more than three, albeit significant, “seam” psalms (1–2 and 89). However, overall, Snearly’s impressive work is an important and welcome contribution to Psalms studies.

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Lee, Sang Hoon. *Trinitarian Ontology and Israel in Robert W. Jenson’s Theology*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016, pp. 196, \$25, paperback.

With articles forthcoming in a number of respected journals, Sang Hoon Lee is currently one of the pastors at Raynes Park Korean Church in London, England. The present monograph is a revised version of his doctoral thesis at the University of Aberdeen. In it, Lee clarifies a commonly misunderstood, if not neglected, aspect of Robert Jenson’s (1930–2017) later thought. Namely, the (often implicit) way in which the later Jenson holds onto his “trinitarian (onto-)theology” while developing, *as a result of the former*, a post-supersessionistic account of Judaism—two inextricable emphases that interpreters of Jenson have found difficulty in properly acknowledging and/or holding together (p. 1; whereas supersessionism is the long-held notion that God’s mosaic covenant with Israel has been superseded by the new covenant associated with the coming of Christ, so that the Christian church effectively supersedes Israel as the people of God, post-supersessionism—synonymous with non-supersessionism—is the belief that God’s original covenant with Israel continues on even in the church age for it was irrevocable). Lee thus writes to “make explicit the crucial links” (p. 1) within the corpus of one of the most influential Protestant theologians of our time. In addition, Lee’s examination of Jenson’s post-supersessionism brings fresh insight into

the ongoing debates concerning the relationship between Israel and the church, which have continual importance both theologically and politically.

What is most distinctive about Lee's study is the way in which he explores the influence of Jewish theologian, Michael Wyschogrod, on the development of Jenson's post-supersessionism (p. 9). Along such lines, in chapter one, Lee recounts the early Jenson's temporalistic revising of Barth's actualistic ontology as being the basis upon which Jenson's later post-supersessionism finds its *ontological* motivation (pp. 13–32). Because election for Jenson is dependent upon the "horizon of time" (e.g., Jenson saw the event of Christ's resurrection as *electively* being constitutive of God's trinitarian being), the election of Israel was determinative of God's eternal being as well (p. 32). Such a move by Jenson placed a *temporal* spin upon Barth's actualistic ontology, which Lee describes in this manner: "God is the event of (the enactment of) his decision.... God's triune being is his *action*." (p. 18). Following from this, chapter two describes Jenson's understanding of Christ's body as having been "placed in the eternal being of God," thus leading to an eternal "bodily" understanding of God that is eucharistically, ecclesially, and soteriologically accommodative (pp. 10, 33–58, 174). These emphases find consonance with Wyschogrod's proposals, as outlined in chapter three (pp. 59–88). A sympathetic reader of Barth, Wyschogrod's emphasis upon God's irrevocable "covenant relationship to the *bodily* existence of the people of Israel" results from his engagement with Christian perspectives on the incarnation and the Torah, and leads Wyschogrod to see Jewish identity as being a "'diluted incarnation' of God's presence by election" (pp. 61–62, 79). Amidst this, Lee highlights Wyschogrod's "mutual acknowledgment of the other community's distinctive role in God's one redemptive history" (p. 62). Jenson's affirming appropriation of Wyschogrod then forms the content of chapter four, which concludes that it is only in the church's anticipated union with Israel in the eschaton that the two, together, can be considered the people of God and body of Christ (pp. 89–118). Chapter five continues upon this post-supersessionist theme with respect to Jenson's hermeneutical ontology and its parallel stress upon Torah as both narrative and law (pp. 119–145). Finally, in chapter six, Lee surveys Jenson's eschatological ontology and its associated pneumatology, for it is the Spirit who is at work to eschatologically bring together Jews and gentiles under their one rightful head, Jesus Christ (p. 175, 146–172).

Lee's argument, structured chiasmatically in a way that lays stress upon middle chapters three and four (on Wyschogrod and Jenson's response to Wyschogrod, respectively), is on point and, as such, is enthusiastically endorsed by Jenson himself, who writes that Lee "succeeds handsomely" (back cover). In this regard, Lee's demystifying work on the question of how Jenson's trinitarian ontology is related to his post-supersessionism can rightly be considered an original as well as much needed contribution to the field of Jenson studies. That said, because Lee explicitly seeks to read Jenson more charitably than earlier commentators (p. 9), critical engagement within Lee's work has more to do with ensuring that Jenson is properly interpreted than it does with offering Lee's own critical evaluation of Jenson's thought (e.g., p. 176).

Lee effectively demonstrates that Jenson's post-supersessionist proposal finds its roots not only in the early Jenson's temporal actualistic ontology and corporeal theology, but most especially in his later engagement with Jewish thinkers like Wyshogrod (p. 61). That is, a "transposing [of] Wyshogrod's thought into Christian ecumenical rubrics" takes place in a way that "Jenson maintains that the church is the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit, *only* in its anticipated union with the Jewish people which will occur beyond this age" (p. 89). The implication of all of this is that the church cannot in actuality be the church without Israel, even if its union with Israel is more of an eschatological rather than a present reality. Supersessionism for Jenson is thus wholly at odds with the very essence of the Christian faith.

On this point, Lee's compelling description of Jenson is worthy of constructive consideration if one grants, as I do, that Jenson's post-supersessionist account of Judaism can in fact be seen as being more consonant with the overall New Testament witness regarding its prescribed relationship between Jews and gentiles in Christ than its supersessionist alternatives (e.g., it would not be difficult to coherently tease out a Jensonian post-supersessionistic reading of Rom. 9–11, Eph. 2:11–3:13; cf. pp. 95–99). If so, then Lee is right to suggest that "Jenson's theology of Judaism offers a non-supersessionistic understanding of [the] God of Israel in trinitarian terms and of Christian self-identity, without compromising the Christian faith about the messiahship and deity of Jesus" (p. 90). Even so, a stumbling block for many will continue to be the untraditional Jenson's seemingly panentheistic temporal actualistic ontology through which God, by the event of the incarnate Christ's resurrection, is said to not only have a body, but to also *ontologically* embody Israel and the church by way of their bodily *theosis* in the risen Christ's body (pp. 90–93). Questions also will arise as to whether the implications of Jenson's specific understanding of Israel's irrevocable election, which features his view that Judaism and the church are seen as "two paralleling detours to the Kingdom of God," with Israel as being the original route around which the church can only eschatologically find its place, is too idealistic to be truly applicable in the real world (pp. 102–104, 117–118). On a different note, Lee's study warrants comparative studies between Jenson's post-supersessionist view of Judaism and dispensationalist views of the same.

Jenson's recent passing in September 2017 should bring about a welcome renewed interest in his life and thought. In this regard, advanced students of biblical and theological studies will find Lee's book to be an accessible introduction to Jenson and to certain themes and aspects of modern Protestant theology. More than that, Lee's explicit reconstruction of Jenson's post-supersessionist argument provides a formidable foray into an important and consequential question that, if Jenson is correct, lies at the very heart of the gospel.

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Meister, Chad and James K. Dew Jr, eds. *God and the Problem of Evil: Five Views*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017, pp. 196, \$25.00.

The Spectrum Multiview book series by InterVarsity Press considers a topic, and allows experts on the topic to present their views and interact with one another. In this volume, the question of the nature and existence of God is debated in light of the existence and nature of evil. Each author is given the chance to set out their own view. Then at the end of the book, each author has an opportunity to engage, criticize, and develop their thoughts on the views of the other authors. Personally, I find this format very useful for going deeper into theological and philosophical issues. Chad Meister and James Dew have done an excellent job at finding authors that have well-developed views that are quite distinct from one another. Further, they have selected authors who have made interesting, and significant contributions to this issue. Readers who are fairly new to the problem of evil will be well-served by starting with this volume, and then following up by reading other works by each contributor.

The experts in this volume are as follows: Phillip Cary, William Lane Craig, William Hasker, Thomas Jay Oord, and Stephen Wykstra. Other than Phillip Cary, I am quite familiar with the works of the contributors on the problem of evil. Given my familiarity with the contributors' previous work, I can offer a particular praiseworthy feature of this volume. One impressive feature of this volume is that each contributor has done an excellent job of summarizing their work into a single essay. For example, William Hasker and Thomas Jay Oord each have previous book-length treatments of the problem of evil. Yet each author gives a clear and concise statement of their views. Readers will get an excellent introduction to the thought of each author, and have a serious launching pad for going deeper into their work.

Before delving deeper into the book, I wish discuss one important caveat. The title of the book might suggest that there is *one* problem of evil, but the book makes it very clear that there is no such thing as *the* problem of evil. Instead, there are many different issues related to the nature of God and evil that every Christian must consider. This is made clear in the introduction of the book as well as in each contributor's chapter. Each author clearly lays out what the particular problem of evil that he wishes to focus on, and then articulates his response accordingly. With that caveat out of the way, allow me to discuss each contributor's essay.

Phillip Cary offers what he calls the "Classic View," which is represented by such historical figures as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and C. S. Lewis. Cary notes that classical Christian theists have not, historically, asked questions like, 'If evil exists, how can God exist?' Instead, classical Christian thinkers were troubled by a different question: 'Since God is perfectly good, how is evil possible?' According to Cary, evil exists because God has a good reason for permitting it to exist. This 'good reason' is intrinsically connected to a greater good that God will bring out of the occurrence of that evil. Throughout Cary's essay, readers will encounter a careful

and nuanced articulation of Augustinian and Thomistic ideas such as that evil is the privation of the good, and that it is impossible for God to create creatures who are incorruptible. One interesting feature of Cary's view is that God is never "off the hook" for the existence of evil in the world. For Cary, God can be held responsible for the existence of evil since God permits every instance of evil. However, Cary maintains that God cannot be held culpable for evil since God has a good reason for permitting it.

William Lane Craig presents a "Molinist View," whereby God possesses exhaustive foreknowledge of what creatures would do in any possible circumstance that they might be placed in. Craig makes careful distinctions between different kinds of intellectual and pastoral problems that a Christian apologist should consider. Some versions of the problem of evil focus on the alleged internal incoherence of Christian belief, whilst others present evil as external evidence that the Christian God does not exist. Craig presents each argument, and explains how Molinism can, or cannot, help rebut each objection.

William Hasker offers an "Open Theist View." On open theism, God does not have exhaustive foreknowledge of the future because the future is open. God does possess an exhaustive knowledge of what creatures might do, and probably will do, in the future, and He uses this knowledge to providentially guide creation towards His intended purposes. Hasker offers an important contribution to this discussion by making a distinction between two kinds of theodicies: a general-policy theodicy and a specific-benefit theodicy. On a general-policy theodicy, God's permission of certain evils is justified on the basis of God adopting a good general policy for creation. For example, God might desire to create a universe that is life-sustaining, and that requires that God create a universe with regular laws of nature. A universe with orderly laws of nature is a great good, but it does entail the possibility of natural disasters like hurricanes. In contrast, a specific-benefit theodicy focuses on the justification for God permitting a particular instance of evil—i.e., whatever specific greater good that arises from that particular instance of evil. In Hasker's essay, he develops a robust general-policy theodicy that is well-worth considering.

Thomas Jay Oord offers what he calls the "Essential Kenosis View." Oord does not find most attempts at theodicy satisfying in the least. Theodicies always leave him thinking, 'God, you could have prevented this evil from happening.' In light of this, Oord develops a theodicy on which God could not have prevented evil from happening, thus getting God 'off the hook' for the existence of evil. On Oord's understanding of God, love is God's primary attribute. God's love is necessarily self-giving and uncontrolling. What this means is that God necessarily gives life and freedom to others, and this is not something that God can revoke. God essentially and eternally gives freedom, agency, self-organization, and law-like regularity to creation. It is not possible for God to ever override or revoke these gifts. What this

means is that God cannot intervene to prevent evil. Instead, God can only call all of creation to a life of righteousness.

In the final essay, Stephen Wykstra presents a “Skeptical Theist View.” Wykstra is personally responsible for starting this particular response to the evidential problem of evil in the 1980s. The evidential problem of evil tries to say that certain instances of evil give us good evidence for thinking that God does not exist. The Skeptical Theist response argues that we are not warranted in making an inference from some particular instance of evil to the conclusion that God does not exist. This essay shows a great deal of nuance, and would serve as an excellent source in any philosophy of religion syllabus.

When it is all said and done, *God and the Problem of Evil* offers a lucid, emotionally sensitive, and diverse set of essays on the problem of evil. It would serve well for pastors, students, and small groups who are looking for a place to start their journey into this issue, or for people who are wishing to go a bit deeper in their reflection on God and evil.

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Vance, Donald R., George Athas, Yael Avrahami, and Jonathan G. Kline. *Biblical Aramaic: A Reader & Handbook*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016, pp. 233, \$29.95, hardcover.

Biblical Aramaic: A Reader & Handbook is an excellent addition to the academic resources on Biblical Aramaic. As the authors relay, Biblical Aramaic is often neglected in seminary language studies due to the small percentage of the Old Testament written in Aramaic (ix). However, to fully understand and apply “the biblical languages,” one must surely include Aramaic in his/her studies. The authors include Donald Vance, Associate Professor of Biblical Languages and Literature at Oral Roberts University. Vance studied Northwest Semitic Philology at The Oriental Institute, and received his Ph.D. from the University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology. Second, George Athas is a lecturer in Old Testament Studies, Hebrew, and Church History at Moore College in Sydney, Australia. Third, Yael Avrahami received his Ph.D. from the University of Haifa and is the chair of the Department of Biblical Studies at Oranim Academic College in Haifa, Israel. Finally, Jonathan Kline received his Ph.D. from Harvard University and currently serves as the academic editor at Hendrickson Publishers. Kline’s contribution to the work includes the helpful vocabulary and morphology lists.

Biblical Aramaic begins with an Introduction to the Aramaic language (pp. ix–xix). This introduction includes a brief, but helpful, introduction to the history of Aramaic. The authors discuss the language branch of Aramaic as well as the various dialects that developed in the ancient world (Old Aramaic, Imperial Aramaic, Syriac,

and Late Aramaic) (pp. ix–x). In a more elaborate discussion of the Aramaic language, these broad designations could be further delineated into additional sub-categories. Following their discussion of the history of the Aramaic language, the authors discuss the Aramaic of the Bible. Since Biblical Aramaic is not a true dialect of Aramaic, but only designates the portions of the Bible written in Aramaic, the authors conclude that it is difficult to assign a stage of Aramaic history to each section of Biblical Aramaic. The authors conclude that all of the sections of Biblical Aramaic seem to be a mixture of ancient dialects (p. xii).

The next section of the Introduction provides the reader with a pathway from Hebrew to Aramaic morphologically. Many readers will be familiar with Biblical Hebrew, and so these general differences between Hebrew and Aramaic will allow the student or pastor to move rather easily from their knowledge of Biblical Hebrew to Biblical Aramaic. After rehearsing some differences (distinct vocabularies, pronunciation and spelling differences, and the Canaanite shift), the authors move to the similarities between the languages. On page xiv, the authors provide a helpful chart listing consonantal equivalents between the two languages. For example, a ט in Hebrew can often be a ט in Aramaic. Likewise, the צ in Hebrew may sometimes be an ע in Aramaic. Knowing these consonantal equivalents can help the Hebrew student move from the Hebrew זָהָב ('gold') to the Aramaic זְהָב ('gold'). Similarly, Hebrew אֶרֶץ ('land') is equivalent to Aramaic אַרְעָא ('land'). These consonantal equivalents are indispensable for obtaining a quick, but elementary, Aramaic vocabulary.

After the discussion of consonantal equivalents, the authors provide differences in the nominal system for Aramaic. The authors highlight differences in the determined (definite) state as well as differences to the distinguishing marks of masculine and feminine nouns.

Next, the authors discuss the Aramaic verbal system, particularly the different nomenclature for Aramaic *binyanim* versus Hebrew *binyanim* (pp. xv–xvi). This discussion will be required in order for one to make his/her way through this work. While Aramaic stems have similar nuances to Hebrew verbal stems, the nomenclature for these stems is rather different. To further the difficulty, various authors use different nomenclature depending on their system of learning Aramaic. Russell Fuller uses a shorthand numerical system with 1 being the base stems (active and passive/reflexive), 2 being the intensive stems, and 3 being the causative stems. Miles VanPelt (*Basics of Biblical Aramaic*, 2011), Alger Johns (*A Short Grammar of Biblical Aramaic*, 1972), and Franz Rosenthal (*A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic*, 2006) follow the standard naming of the stems (Peal, Peil, Hithpeel, Pael, Hithpaal, Haphel, and Hophal), while the authors of *Biblical Aramaic* follow the linguistics designation of the *Grundstamm*, or the language's base stem, the "G stem." Other linguistic designations in this volume are "D" for "doubling" (intensive dagesh forte in second radical), "H" for causative stems, and various other designations to highlight passive, middle, or reflexive voice nuances. While these designations are

at home in linguistics discussions, they may be foreign to some Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic students, and so the chart on page xv will be valuable for understanding the handbook/reader portion of the volume.

The final section of the book's Introduction provides helpful ways to use this volume. The discussion here primarily includes how to use the book's extensive vocabulary and morphology lists.

Being an Aramaic "Reader," the next fifty-six pages include the Aramaic portions of the Bible along with a detailed apparatus providing verb parsing, vocabulary helps and some minor grammatical comments to aid with translation. The Aramaic text is fully pointed, and the apparatus is keyed using superscripted letters tied to footnotes below the text. The reader will need to refer to the abbreviations list on pp. xxi–xxii to fully comprehend the apparatus. However, after using the "Reader" portion of the volume for a few minutes, the abbreviations will become normal and natural. Regarding vocabulary in the "Reader," words that occur twenty-five times or more are not analyzed below the Aramaic text. Rather, these frequent words are listed in a glossary in the back of the book. This feature allows for efficient translation while also removing the "crutch" of extensive vocabulary help.

To say that the "crutch" or vocabulary help has been removed refers only to the Aramaic textual apparatus in the "Reader" portion of the work. The remainder of the book, nearly 75% of the volume, contains an array of vocabulary and morphology lists. List 1 (pp. 61–78) provides all words that occur two times or more in Biblical Aramaic. The list contains not only vocabulary and definitions, but also the part of speech and the frequency of each word. List 2 (pp. 78–87) address all *hapax legomena* in Biblical Aramaic including a staggering (and depressing) 266 words. This list includes lexical forms, definitions, attested forms as they occur in the text, parsing, and the verse in which the word occurs. List 3 (pp. 88–94) begins the section of lists for parts of speech, beginning with verbs. List 3 provides all verbal roots with gloss definitions and the frequency that these verbs occur. Lists 4–15 (pp. 94–117) cover common nouns, proper nouns, adjectives, pronouns, prepositions, numbers, adverbs, conjunctions, disjunctives, interjections, particles, and collocations respectively. Lists 16–25 (pp. 118–147) cover all verbs by stem, and Lists 26–45 (pp. 148–198) includes all verbs by root type ('strong', I-ʕ, I-ʁ, II-ʔ, etc.). The lists of verbs by root type provide a remarkable benefit to observing morphological trends within Biblical Aramaic as well as confirming morphological trends among the "weak" verbs of Biblical Hebrew. Lists 46 and 47 (pp. 199–210) provide verbs by frequency of attested form and number of stems in which the verb occurs. Lists 48–55 (pp. 211–223) provide words with various pronominal suffixes. Lists 56–57 (pp. 224–228) address words that are easily confused, particularly homonyms and consonantal homonyms respectively. The final lists, Lists 58–63 (pp. 229–231), include various loanwords from Persia, Sumer, Akkad, Greek, and Hebrew.

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The value of this volume can be summarized in two categories. First, this volume provides an easy-to-read reproduction of the Aramaic portions of the Bible. Not only is the text itself visually appealing, but the apparatus provides helpful information for efficient translation and grammatical discussion of the Aramaic text. Secondly, the vocabulary and morphology lists in this volume provide a single location for lexical analysis of Biblical Aramaic. Rather than working with various Bible software searches, these lists provide a multi-faceted look at the vocabulary and morphology of Biblical Aramaic in one place.

With multiple resources in this single volume, this work will be most helpful to the seminary student or pastor who is seeking to read (with efficiency) the Aramaic portions of the Bible. While the introduction provides some (very) basic introductions to the Aramaic language, those without any knowledge of Biblical Aramaic may find it difficult to use this volume with ease. However, those with some background in Biblical Aramaic will find a great resource here. Those who have a background in Biblical Hebrew will also find an excellent resource here, but some additional study may be required in order to fully understand the differences between Hebrew and Aramaic. This volume accompanied by VanPelt's *Basics of Biblical Aramaic* would provide a strong baseline for any second semester seminary student who desires to study Biblical Aramaic.

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Boyce: The College at Southern

Poythress, Vern S. *The Miracles of Jesus: How the Savior's Mighty Acts Serve as Signs of Redemption*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016, pp. 271, \$19.99, paperback.

In *The Miracles of Jesus*, Vern S. Poythress, a long-tenured professor of New Testament interpretation at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, provides an interpretive grid that sees Jesus' miracles as "signs of redemption."

The Miracles of Jesus is structured in four parts: Part 1 introduces the topic of Jesus' miracles; Part 2 analyzes and illustrates some of Jesus' miracles in the Gospel of John; Part 3 provides a comprehensive examination of Jesus' miracles in the Gospel of Matthew; and Part 4 concludes with an examination of the miracle of Jesus' resurrection and its application to individuals. Parts 2 and 3 comprise the main section of the book, as the division of chapters attests (3–8 and 9–36, respectively). The focus on the Gospels of John and Matthew is intended to complement the work of Richard Phillips (*Mighty to Save: Discovering God's Grace in the Miracles of Jesus*), who in a 2001 volume published by P&R similarly analyzed Jesus' miracles in the Gospel of Luke (p. 30).

Even though the analysis of Jesus' miracles in Matthew comprises the longest section of the book, arguably the central section is located in Part 2, where the

thesis and hermeneutical method are developed. The thesis of *The Miracles of Jesus*, which is clear enough from the subtitle, is that Jesus' miracles are signs of redemption. As "redemptive analogies" (p. 30), they point beyond themselves to a greater act of redemption, namely, the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus' miracles are not random acts of kindness and compassion but are "organically related" (p. 64) to Jesus' accomplishment of redemption and his application of redemption's benefits to us. Hence, the reason why Jesus' miracles are linked to the kingdom of God is because the gospel of the kingdom concerns a doing away with sin: "Salvation, comprehensively viewed, includes more than healing diseases. At its heart, it is healing from sin. And so the miracles are signs of the kingdom" (p. 162). Specifically, Jesus' resurrection effected the dawn of the promised new creation; his miracles, therefore, testify to this greater reality of a new heaven and new earth in which righteousness dwells (pp. 232–35).

The method used to support this thesis follows Edmund Clowney's approach to typology (see Chapter 6). Especially where there is no explicit biblical teaching on the meaning of Jesus' miracles—as often is the case in the Synoptic Gospels—Poythress argues we should utilize a typological approach, which seeks to discern the original referent of any given symbol in Scripture, and then to discern how that referent is fulfilled in Jesus' death and resurrection. For example, the Old Testament sacrificial system symbolized or referred to Israel's need for forgiveness of sins through a substitute, a referent that found its final fulfillment in the substitutionary, sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross (pp. 66–67). Similarly, Jesus' own miracles are typological, for they each symbolize a specific truth of what Jesus has come to accomplish, which is ultimately grounded in his death and resurrection. For instance, Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 symbolizes his ability to provide spiritual food, which was accomplished definitively and finally on the cross. Hence, the feeding of the 5,000 is typological of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross by which he provides himself as our spiritual food (pp. 68–70). Indeed, all the miracles in the Bible—not only those found in the Gospels—point beyond themselves to Jesus' greater work of redemption through the cross and resurrection (pp. 247–51).

Poythress has provided the church with a much-needed guide to interpret the meaning and significance of Jesus' miracles, for they can be too easily divorced from his death and resurrection. The approaches to miracles by liberation theologians, "social gospel" adherents, and those associated with the "prosperity gospel" typically fail—in their own way—to see this organic connection, which leads to a misunderstanding and misapplication of the mission Jesus came to accomplish and the nature of the already-but-not-yet-consummated kingdom of God. Poythress rightly shows that the miracles must be interpreted in light of Jesus' climactic death and resurrection.

At the same time, I wonder if Poythress subtly undermines some of what Jesus accomplished through his death and resurrection when he suggests that

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Jesus' physical healing was never the greater good but only pointed to a greater spiritual reality. Concerning Matthew 8:16–17, which affirms that Jesus' healing and exorcisms fulfilled Isaiah 53:4, Poythress says, "The full passage in Isaiah 53 uses the language of disease metaphorically to indicate how the coming servant will suffer as a substitute for sin...Deliverance on the physical level symbolizes deliverance on the spiritual level" (p. 114). I don't disagree that Isaiah 53 emphasizes how the servant will be a substitute for his people so as to deal with their sin. However, Isaiah 53 says more than this, for it speaks holistically of what the servant will accomplish: his death for sin will bring us "peace" and "healing" (Isa 53:5). These terms describe *both* physical *and* spiritual realities, for they depict a world where all things have been made new. Jesus' healings and exorcisms in Matthew 8:16–17, therefore, do not merely point beyond themselves to the fact that Jesus has come to deal with our sin—though this is certainly included—but they suggest that Jesus is the servant of Isaiah 53 who has come to make all things new by means of his death and resurrection. Since his mission was to deal fundamentally with the root problem, namely, our sin, it is not surprising that at times the Scriptures indicate Jesus' mission *also* included the eradication of the results of sin, such as sickness, demon oppression, and death. To be clear, I am not saying that Poythress disagrees *in toto* with my concerns—rather, he notes his agreement with these points in various places (e.g., pp. 40–41, 115, 172). Nor do I disagree with Poythress' main point: that Jesus' miracles function typologically as signs of redemption. Rather, my concern is that we ascertain precisely the nature of that which the miracles typify. If we interpret Jesus' healings and exorcisms *merely* as metaphors or symbols for spiritual realities, we run the risk of minimizing the Gospel writers' holistic witness concerning the nature of the redemption Jesus accomplished through his death and resurrection.

The Miracles of Jesus is a valuable and much-needed contribution for the study of Jesus' miracles. It would prove useful for pastors, particularly when they are preparing to preach through one of the Gospels. Educated laity would also find this book useful for personal study, especially in Chapters 8 and 38 where Poythress provides specific examples for application in daily life. Finally, this book could be considered for use in an undergraduate class on the Gospels, for it introduces the hermeneutically-valuable notion of typology and seeks to apply it to Jesus' miracles.

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Thomas Schärfl, Christian Tapp, and Veronika Wegener, eds. *Rethinking the Concept of a Personal God: Classical Theism, Personal Theism, and Alternative Concepts of God*. Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2016, pp. 249, \$76.00.

In this collection of essays, a set of German and English speaking theologians and philosophers come together to discuss competing conceptions of God. To be honest, this collection of essays was a bit of a struggle for me. There are several reasons for this that are worth noting.

In several of the essays, it was not clear that the authors were using demarcations that I would use to distinguish between competing conceptions of God. To be sure, this is not necessarily a strike against the book. It just shows a particular disconnect that I felt with the authors. For example, in Oliver Wiertz's essay, "Classical Theism," Wiertz takes the reader through a carefully nuanced account of perfect being theology for the purposes of defending classical theism. This is a well-written and rigorously argued paper. However, Wiertz makes it clear that the classical theism that he is defending is the God of open theism. On open theism, God is temporal, passible, mutable in certain respects, and lacks exhaustive foreknowledge of the future. This is quite different from classical theism. On most standard accounts of classical theism, God is taken to be timeless, impassible, immutable in all respects, and possesses exhaustive foreknowledge of the future. So although I found Wiertz's essay to be a compelling defense of open theism, I did not find it to be a defense of *classical* theism. One might think that I am being nit-picky about terminology here, but there is a fairly widespread consensus that classical theism and open theism are distinct conceptions of God. (E.g., see the essays in Jeanine Diller and Asa Kasher, eds., *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities*, 2013.)

Another problem that I discovered with encountering this book is a lack of clear definitions in terminology. Several of the essays in this collection do not offer definitions of key terms, nor present easily identifiable arguments for their position. In Gunnar Hindrichs' "Proofs of God's Existence as Self-Determination of Thinking" I am told that God is the uprooting of thought. After reading the essay, I am still not certain what this means. Though this essay is written in English, it contains quite a bit of untranslated German and Latin. So it might be the case that Hindrichs offered definitions for his terms, and that I missed them due to my ignorance of the German language. In Hans-Joachim Höhn's "Divine Action in the World," a substance ontology is rejected, and a relational ontology is put in its place. Höhn's claims that relations and constellations are the fundamental categories in this ontology. However, there is no definition of 'constellations' to be found in the essay leaving me lost as to how to put the pieces of this ontology together.

Despite the theme of the book being about alternative concepts of God, several of the essays do not clearly present an alternative concept of God. Thomas Marschler's,

“Substantiality and Personality in the Scholastic Doctrine of God,” offers a useful history of the concept of substantiality and personality. However, it does not develop a robust concept of God. Hans Kraml’s, “The God of Philosophy—The God of the Qur’an: A Problem for Medieval Islamic Philosophy,” gives a bit of an overview of certain Islamic thinkers, but never goes into detail about what those thinkers believed about God. Howard Robinson’s, “Idealism and Orthodox Christian Theism,” offers a lucid articulation of idealism, but says very little about the nature of God.

That being said, there were several essays in this volume that stood out to me as developing clear and distinct conceptions of God that are worth considering. As I noted before, Wiertz’s essay offers a rigorous account of perfect being theology. I have already made it clear that I do not think that he has presented a defense of classical theism. However, it seems to me that he has offered a clear case for open theism on the basis of perfect being theology. Anyone who is interested in examining competing conceptions of God will want to consider this.

Peter Forrest’s, “God as a Person: A Defense of Anthropomorphic Theism,” develops his ideas on God as an embodied agent. I have been following Forrest’s work for several years. He is an entertaining thinker to read, and he always offers careful arguments for his views. In this essay, Forrest offers several arguments against Aristotelian and Thomistic conceptions of God, and then mounts a defense of his own version of personal pantheism. He considers issues related to religious language as well as the mind-body problem, and their relevance to the God-world relationship.

My main interest in this book is Benedikt Paul Göcke’s essay, “The Paraconsistent God.” In the introduction to this book, Göcke is referred to as “one of the most outspoken defenders of analytic panentheism in Germany” (p. 1). Over the years, Göcke has written several important essays articulating and defending panentheism as the most theologically adequate conception of God. In “The Paraconsistent God,” he develops his understanding of divine infinity in order to further develop his account of panentheism. Göcke distinguishes several different understandings of infinity before landing on the sense of infinity that he claims applies to God. God is infinite in that God possesses every property and its denial. As such, the law of non-contradiction does not apply to God. This is what Göcke means by God being paraconsistent—God possesses every property and its denial. Of course, this has a rather odd entailment that Göcke does not consider. If the paraconsistent God has every property and its denial, that means that the following statements are both true of God. It is true that <God is paraconsistent>. It is also true that <God is not paraconsistent>. Since the law of non-contradiction does not apply to the paraconsistent God, this may not be a problem for the view, but it certainly sounds odd to the say the least.

For readers of this journal, *Rethinking the Concept of a Personal God* may not be the most useful for delving deeper into competing conceptions of God. For some seminary students, a few of these essays may prove useful for your studies.

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Morales, L. Michael. *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 37 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic 2015). \$27.00.

Dr. L. Michael Morales is professor of biblical studies at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and a teaching elder in the PCA. He is also the author of a new book in the NSBT series edited by D.A. Carson, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*. The book of Leviticus is often referred to as the place where Bible reading plans go to die. That is because the content of the book is so unfamiliar that most Bible readers are stumped when they begin working through its content. Even biblical scholars find themselves in unfamiliar territory, looking instead to the NT interpretation of the Levitical legislation and sacrifices rather than working through the material in its original context.

But Morales intends to bring clarity to the confusion by offering a new biblical theology of the book of Leviticus. His main task is to answer the question posed in Psalm 24:3: “Who may ascend the mountain of YHWH?” Morales calls this question the “gate liturgy,” something the Israelites recite as they approach the tabernacle/temple, and which is an undercurrent running through the Pentateuch. In this new study, he provides the framework for answering this question chiefly from the book of Leviticus. The dominant concern of Leviticus, as well as the rest of the Bible, “is the way in which humanity may come to dwell in the house of God” (p. 20). Indeed, Morales states that the *primary theme* and theology of Leviticus (and the Pentateuch as a whole) is “YHWH’s opening a way for humanity to dwell in the divine presence” (p. 23). A biblical theology of Leviticus, then, is “the theme of dwelling with God in the house of God, and how that reality is finally made possible” (p. 20). This theme arises naturally in the creation narrative and subsequent fall of humanity in Genesis 1–3, reaching its apex in the book of Leviticus, and is clearly discerned in the rest of the Hebrew canon and later New Testament.

In terms of the structure of Leviticus, Morales posits that Leviticus is the center of a Pentateuchal chiasm (p. 29). Thus, the fivefold structure of the Pentateuch emphasizes its significance. Following the work of other Leviticus scholars such as R. Davidson, E. Zenger, and D. Luciani, Morales argues that chapter 16 (on the Day of Atonement) is the high point of the concentric structure of Leviticus, the “capstone of the sacrificial rituals,” which flows into the subject of holy living (p. 29).

Chapters 2–3 place Leviticus in the context of the Pentateuch as the third and central book, following on the heels of the Genesis account of human/Israelite origins and especially of Exodus and the filling of the tabernacle with God's presence. In chapter 4, Morales argues convincingly that the tabernacle of Exodus has a twofold theological meaning. It is both the dwelling of God (God's "house," as it were), and second as "the way to God's house, that is, the way to God himself, to engage with him in fellowship" (p. 109). The tabernacle, thus, is a microcosm of the cosmos, mirroring Eden-like characteristics in design and function. Moreover, there is correspondence between Genesis and Leviticus with the introduction of the High Priest in the Leviticus account, which Morales says is an Adam-like person (p. 118). Thus, the book of Leviticus shows how the inability for man to enter into God's presence and live—all due to Adam's sin in Genesis 3—is gradually abolished in Leviticus 1–10. Like Adam, the Levitical provisions allow for a High Priest realistically to enter God's presence, even if only once per year. Indeed, the central thesis of the book is eventually stated along these same lines in chapter 5. Who shall ascend the mountain of YHWH? "The one able to ascend is the Adam-like priest, with blood, on the Day of Atonement. This is the way YHWH has opened for humanity to dwell in his presence" (p. 177). In a biblical theological study as this one, the final answer to this question is explained later with the obvious typological connections in the book of Hebrews and the presentation of Jesus as High Priest.

Chapter 5 begins with the defilement of the house of God (Nadab and Abihu, Lev 10:1–3), the need to emphasize the cleansing of the house via laws of the clean and unclean (Lev 11–15), followed by the Day of Atonement ceremony (Lev 16). To be clean means to be fit for the presence of God, while to be holy means that one belongs to God (p. 155). Atonement and holiness are typical summary words in Levitical theology, and Morales agrees insofar as we see that atonement and holiness are the means to an end, that is, the means to Israel's fellowship and communion with YHWH (p. 125). Life in the presence of God is the key to unraveling the theology of Leviticus, not the themes of atonement and holiness per se. The house of God must be cleansed in order for the people to dwell in its vicinity and live. Thus, the Day of Atonement legislation is paramount since it "narrates the cleansing of God's house from the inside out" (p. 170). In other words, the Day of Atonement "reverses the presumed steady movement of uncleanness to the tabernacle throughout the year" (p. 171).

Chapter 6 is about Leviticus 17–27 and to a large extent has to do with life in God's presence. The people are being cleansed and consecrated through YHWH's presence in their midst, and thus there are implications for daily living (p. 185), the main subject of the latter section of Leviticus. Chapter 7 explores the relationship of the cultic legislation and theology of Leviticus in the rest of the Old Testament, especially the relationship of Sinai with Zion and the development of "mountain theology." The final chapter moves on to the NT, explaining how the Son of God, the

greater High Priest, makes possible the final entrance into the heavenly abode of God for all eternity (p. 259).

Before getting to the positive impact of *Who Shall Ascend to the Mountain of the Lord*, I will state here a few brief points of criticism. Morales has the tendency to overstate certain texts and themes within Leviticus, or simply the contribution of Leviticus within the Pentateuch. He stresses, for example, that the histories of Genesis and Exodus serve as something of an *introduction* to the book of Leviticus (pp. 112–13). This comment forces Leviticus up against the importance of other books in the Pentateuch. We might note that the use and reuse of the book of Deuteronomy in the prophets serves a dominant role in the rest of the Hebrew canon (and by NT authors) without diminishing the importance of Leviticus. Morales does not say that Leviticus is the most important book in the Pentateuch, but he comes close. I would rather emphasize the theology of the Pentateuch as programmatic for the theology of the rest of the Bible, not solely the book of Leviticus.

Morales also overemphasizes the Sabbath principle in biblical theology (p. 198), and later, that *every movement or prophetic expectation* in the Hebrew Bible is defined by the movement to or away from the divine presence (p. 238). On these two points, I find the arguments by Stephen Dempster in another book in the NSBT series more compelling (*Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, 2003).

These criticisms are minor, however. Many of the books in the NSBT series are robust studies in biblical theology by seasoned scholars. Having read most of these works, I can vouch for the credibility of the series as a whole, and *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord* is a solid addition. As I stated above, Leviticus is not a favorite among theologians, it seems. And even larger OT theological works (and especially systematic theologies) often neglect the book, opting to summarize it as mere “holiness legislation,” or a work of outdated laws about the clean and unclean that are no longer normative. But I suspect this kind of thinking is the result, at least in part, of widespread adherence in Reformed circles to the tripartite division of the law into moral, civil, and ceremonial. This division, while commendable, places greater weight on the moral aspects of the law but deemphasizes the civil and ceremonial since that is what has been fulfilled in Christ (even though there are moral dimensions to the civil and ceremonial laws, too). Morales, a professor at Presbyterian seminary, no doubt adheres to the tripartite division as stated in the Westminster Confession. But Morales also unlocks a theological golden treasure in the book of Leviticus that cannot be reduced to these three headings. In doing so, a grander and richer theology of the Pentateuch emerges, one that has long been neglected.

Morales frames his study around the quest for the presence of God, and perhaps that is why it is such an attractive way forward in approaching the book of Leviticus. Laws and legislation in the OT are so far removed from Christians today in a completely different cultural situation and under a different covenant administration. Morales makes clear what is obscure to most of us. What he provides is a biblical theology of

Leviticus in the fullest sense: within the narrative context of the Pentateuch, God has opened a Levitical way for humanity to dwell in his presence. Morales says that this theme is *the drama of the Bible* (p. 304). And even if one disagrees, we must accept that he has made a compelling case and brilliantly argued his point.

This book is an excellent contribution to biblical studies. Scholars and seminary students should plumb the depths of Leviticus with this book in hand. My main concern is that this book will go unnoticed or simply left unread by many pastors in evangelical circles since it is long (300 pages), in an academic series (NSBT), and published by an academic press (Apollos/IVP). More likely, if this book is neglected it will be because the word “Leviticus” is in the title, and that would be unfortunate. In his commentary on Leviticus in the *Continental Commentary* (Fortress, 2004), Jacob Milgrom lamented a similar trend outside of evangelicalism: “In Israel today, Leviticus is not in the school curriculum. Even in advanced schools of Torah studies, the *yeshivot*, Leviticus is not studied in its entirety, but only a verse here, a verse there” (p. xii).

We should be chided for our neglect of mastering a Pentateuchal book like Leviticus, not least of all reading it. Overstatements aside, one would be wrong to *understate* the potential of Morales’ book in reinvigorating scholars and pastors to examine its content closely. Morales’ fresh approach to Leviticus is welcome, and I cannot think of a better book on the theology of Leviticus than this one. I highly recommend it.

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Bartholomew, Craig G. *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2017, pp. 363, \$40.00, hardback.

In the United States, theologically conservative Christianity seems to stand at the edge of a major shift in political theology. The so-called Judeo-Christian consensus for public theology and ethics have eroded. Around the world, the epistemological foundations that have generally been assumed are frequently challenged. Especially in the United States, the culture is rebalancing toward a totalizing view of economics and politics. Since the vast majority of the Christian tradition of writing on cultural engagement occurred in situations of relative dominance of Christian consensus, there are too few examples of effective engagement in a pluralistic context. Among the limited list of positive examples Lesslie Newbigin, Francis Schaeffer, and Abraham Kuyper are near the top. Unfortunately, until recently, only a limited amount of material in the early Kuyperian tradition has been available in English. That is quickly changing, which makes Craig Bartholomew’s recent book, *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition*, a timely and valuable volume.

Bartholomew sets the table for the book in his introduction, where he outlines the basic Kuyperian program, which entails seeking the welfare of the city. The Kuyperian tradition is one that is primarily outward looking. Chapter One details Kuyper's conversion from liberal, cultural Christian to Reformed orthodoxy. In the second chapter, Bartholomew summarizes the ideas of creation and redemption in the Kuyperian tradition. These concepts are central in understanding that tradition's vision for the scope of what should be, what is, and what one day will be. Similarly foundational, Chapter Three surveys the high view of the authority and veracity of Scripture in the Kuyperian tradition. Bartholomew is careful to indicate that Kuyper rejected notions such as mechanical dictation, but held the Bible as received in high esteem and ascribed ultimate authority to it. The fourth chapter reflects upon the centrality of the idea of worldview among those that follow Kuyper. This chapter alone is worth the price of the book as Bartholomew deftly undermines the popular critiques of worldview as a tool for cultural understanding.

Chapter Five marks a shift in the discussion, as the chapter topics become less foundational and more topical. This chapter explains and critiques the idea of sphere sovereignty, which is the most often recognized but often least understood aspect of the Kuyperian tradition. In the sixth chapter, Bartholomew explains the importance of the concept of the universal and local church for Kuyper and his disciples. Chapter Seven engages with the robust and often ignored emphasis within the Kuyperian tradition on political engagement, concern for the poor, and efforts to live in a pluralistic society. The reader cannot help but wonder if much of the cultural warfare of the past half century might have been minimized if Kuyper's work had been more readily available. The eighth chapter touches on the center of Kuyperianism, which is an emphasis on holistic mission.

Chapter Nine surveys the significant contributions of Kuyperian philosophers ranging from Kuyper himself to contemporary giants like Alvin Plantinga. In the tenth chapter Bartholomew provides an overview of the major theological themes in the Kuyperian tradition, as well as the significant theological emphasis that undergirds the writing of those in the tradition. It is impossible to understand Kuyperianism without understanding the theology from which the practical applications sprang. Chapter Eleven summarizes a Kuyperian vision for education. This chapter is helpful and offers a strong apologetic for the value of the unified worldview of a truly Christian university. Some of Bartholomew's recommendations in this chapter, however, tend toward the speculative and Eurocentric, such as his plea for a three-year university track based on Jesus' three year equipping of his disciples. In the final chapter, Bartholomew notes the impossibility of fulfilling the Kuyperian social program without individual spiritual formation, which is sometimes a less developed element in contemporary expression of Kuyperian themes. The book closes with a postscript outlining resources available for studying the Kuyperian tradition.

Book Reviews

This volume is billed as a systematic introduction. It satisfies the claim of systematization quite well. The structure is logical and helpful for those reading through the volume for the first time and also for those seeking a focused explanation of the trajectory of the Kuyperian tradition on a particular topic. However, the volume will most significantly benefit those who have already have a moderate awareness of the major figures in the Kuyperian tradition. To be truly introductory, the volume would have needed an early chapter surveying the timeline of the whole tradition, especially those figures that are frequently mentioned in this text. This is an invaluable resource for understanding the Kuyperian tradition, but it does not serve as a primer for the field.

Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition is a very well-written and timely book that should be read widely. There is a major project afoot to get Kuyper's works translated into English and widely available. These efforts, facilitated by Lexham Press, Acton Institute, and the Abraham Kuyper Translation Society, are broadcasting a vision that promises to be helpful to Christians navigating sometimes hostile but indubitably broadly pluralistic cultural channels. Bartholomew's volume is indispensable as a chart for the Kuyperian tradition and should be read alongside the recent and forthcoming translations.

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G. Firth, David and Wilson, Lindsay. *Interpreting Old Testament Wisdom Literature*. IVP: Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2017, pp. 232, \$30, Paperback.

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Interpreting Old Testament Wisdom Literature presents a collection of essays on wisdom books and wisdom ideas. The essays interact with Old Testament wisdom literature and offer up-to-date evaluations on the current issues. Craig Bartholomew provides an introduction with a survey of the landscape of Old Testament wisdom literature. Section two covers the issues within the wisdom books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. The inclusion of Song of Songs and some Psalms as wisdom texts are considered. Section three subsequently covers major ideas within Old Testament wisdom literature.

These essays present a concise introduction to the field of Old Testament wisdom literature, which suits an introduction. The essays work harmoniously to present a wide range of materials. The contributors disagree at minor points, but the theological preferences do not take away from the harmony. For example, Ernest views Wisdom in Proverbs 8 as a literary figure (p. 48) while Christopher views Wisdom as the lexicon for Paul describing Jesus in Colossians 1 (p. 192). The reader gleans choice fruit from the contributors since they consist of scholars in wisdom literature across various disciplines. However, they do not present a unified perspective on wisdom literature and the solution of unity within the canon.

The focus of the book centers upon the individual books of wisdom literature and wisdom's theme. Ernest C. Lucas focuses primarily upon the issue of hermeneutics and textual difficulties within the unity of Proverbs (p. 39). Lucas shines light upon the supposed disunity within Proverbs and proposes a textual unity through word clusters (p. 41). He provides a way forward to the unity of Proverbs. Although scholars disagree about the units of clusters Lucas rightly indicates their existence (p. 39).

Ecclesiastes poses unique problems in the discussion within wisdom literature. Katharine J. Dell focuses upon several issues that have impacted the interpretation of Ecclesiastes and its place within wisdom literature. Dell focuses upon form-critical issues more than theological understanding (p. 80). Her essay would benefit more if in her essay she covered issues related to the place of Ecclesiastes within the canon, instead of showing the historical issues of Ecclesiastes. She provides a succinct summary of Ecclesiastes' place among scholars, but Walter Kaiser and Craig Bartholomew have already written on the interpretation of Ecclesiastes in 1986 and 1999. Her summary does not advance the discussion since others have covered the history of interpretation.

Rosalind Clarke demonstrates Song of Songs' place among the wisdom literature, even though modern scholars detached it from the wisdom corpus (p. 101). Clarke links Lady Wisdom and the Shulamite through the theme of pursuit of a woman and attaining wisdom (p. 112). She demonstrates the link between Proverbs and Song of Songs so that the reader sees the intentional link between the two women. Clarke briefly addresses the intertextuality between the books and provides a well-balanced addition to the field of Old Testament studies.

The third section focuses upon ideas within the Old Testament. The ideas cover a hermeneutical and theological discussion so that each chapter poises itself to contribute to the unity of wisdom literature within the canon. Gregory Goswell discusses whether Ruth belongs in the wisdom literature through post-compositional framing from the Hebrew tradition. The LXX and Leningrad Codex place different emphases through the ordering of the canonical books (p. 117). Goswell argues that the Hebrew tradition creates a post-compositional framework (p. 132). In this essay, Goswell presents a well-grounded argument for interpreting Ruth in a wisdom

framework considering the book's placement after Proverbs. Ruth models a wisdom ethic of Proverbs when positioned after Proverbs (132).

Scholars seek to find wisdom's place within biblical theology and wisdom's influence on the canon of scripture. The third section places wisdom's relation to biblical theology and the Psalms under the third section. Christopher Ansberry does not solve all issues within his chapter on biblical theology but gives insight to the pressing questions. Simon P. Stocks argues in his essay that the wisdom forms are divinely mandated expressions of reality (p. 203). Stocks cuts through form-critical appropriation of wisdom's influence into the Psalter. He resolves wisdom's influence from a macro level of God's mandated expression of reality (p. 203).

The final idea discusses God's absence in wisdom literature. Brittany N. Melton suggests that wisdom is the way to God but wisdom is not always attainable (p. 216). Wisdom literature presents a tension between divine presence and absence. Melton suggests that God is hidden behind wisdom and we cannot fully know God but only in part (p. 216). I would suggest that God is not hiding behind wisdom but in wisdom since wisdom is a revelation of God. Lady Wisdom calls out to all in the city but the foolish do not heed her call.

The students of biblical theology will benefit from these essays as they introduce the pressing topics within wisdom literature. The essays serve to orient the biblical theologian to the wide range of materials within the wisdom corpus. They serve to survey the issues and point to further study so that the student can navigate the literature. The essays provide a balanced approach to understanding wisdom literature in the modern world. The reader will benefit greatly from these essays.

Interpreting Old Testament Wisdom Literature provides a great introduction to the breadth of wisdom literature. The essays clarify the field of wisdom literature and give a tangible introduction. The essays present the unity of the wisdom corpus among diversity of the Old Testament literature. The scholars make genuine efforts to show uniting and disjunctive forces within the wisdom corpus. These essays benefit pastors and scholars. The pastor will benefit from the lucid brevity of the articles and scholars will benefit from the suggested topics of further study. *Interpreting Old Testament Wisdom Literature* suggests areas of study and dissertations awaiting to be written. The Ph.D. student should read with intrigue as considering his topic and thesis.

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Greenway, William. *Agape Ethics: Moral Realism and Love for All Life*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016, pp. 147, \$21, paperback.

William Greenway is Professor of Philosophical Theology at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and author of *The Challenge of Evil: Grace and the Problem*

of Suffering (Westminster John Knox, 2016), *For the Love of All Creatures: The Story of Grace in Genesis* (Eerdmans, 2015) and *A Reasonable Belief: Why God and Faith Make Sense* (Westminster John Knox, 2015).

Summary: William Greenway's *Agape Ethics: Moral Realism and Love for All Life* sets out to convince readers of an internal, primordial, universal morality, based primarily on the thought of philosopher Emmanuel Levinas concerning the concepts of "awakening" and being seized by the faces of others. The book contains an Introduction and 11 chapters organized into four Parts: (1) Awakening and Agape; (2) Science, Scientism, Morality; (3) Beyond Objectivity, Relativism, and Extremism: Moral Realism, Ethical Surety, and the Sanctity of Life; and (4) Perfect Love in an Imperfect World: Agape Ethics. A bibliography is included, but no Index.

Greenway's main concern is inspiring a "spiritual awakening to agape," longing to "reawaken a lost sense of spiritual belonging in this world, to retrieve a lost sense of communion with all creatures and all creation, and to return us to a morally realistic, ethically responsible, and truly spiritual living of life" (p. 142). The author contends for moral realism, eschewing moral relativism and moral absolutism (or even objectivism), affirming "a multitude of ethical convictions" that entails no basis for real doubt about them (e.g., the wrongness of torturing toddlers for fun) (p. 95).

Central features of Greenway's neo-Levinasian agape ethics may be summed as follows: First and foremost, "rehabilitation of the moral self." Second, "the inclusion of all life within the scope of moral concern." Third, treasuring all life as valuable. Fourth, affirmation of ethical judgments based on "distinctions among the faces of Faces" as part of every ethical conviction and when circumstance forces ethical comparison of moral incomparables. Fifth, variations of distinctions and stakes can appear in forms that contravene ethical surety making ethical reflection and analysis absolutely critical for wisdom and discernment. Sixth, all ethical conviction is "a product of both having been seized (the moral) and ethical judgment" (pp. 133–34).

The final chapter presents five different scenarios, each judged ethically, which leads to the following six-fold conclusion: (1) the reality of the moral can be affirmed *publicly*; (2) amoral or immoral persons can be judged publicly to be insensitive to a profound reality (agape); (3) only those awakened to agape are morally qualified to engage in ethical debate; (4) moral persons will remain fully faithful to every Face; (5) moral persons will sense the tragedy and awfulness of injuring any Face; and (6) no moral persons will decide to act violently against any Face unless they are compelled by force to compare incomparables (p. 141).

Evaluation: The book begins with controversial narratives and illustrations involves animals (e.g., deer, cats, crickets), including claims such as killing a cricket equals committing "murder" (5) and "reflexively killing crickets" alienates us from "moral reality and the meaningfulness of life" (p. 3). Assuming readers continue after the Introduction, there is much to glean from this thoughtful, creative work, and some aspects to question or perhaps purge.

Greenway demonstrates solid grasp concerning the importance of science, while rightly rejecting scientism. He asserts the “modern disenchantment of the world was neither enlightened nor enlightening” (p. 49). Furthermore, “Scientism itself is not a scientific conclusion. It is a philosophical contention” (p. 54) and cannot explain all reality, including “free will, moral realism, qualia, and consciousness” (p. 60).

Valuing both human and nonhuman sensitivities and feelings justifiably concerns Greenway, as does our (human) moral responsibility to treat nonhuman animals lovingly (p. 29). He boldly claims all life is sacred (p. 33), rightly naming wrongs that diminish the value of human and non-human life (e.g., abusive experimentation on orphans and horrendous factory farm practices (pp. 33–34). Nonetheless, the author bases his rationale not on biblical or theological bases (for instance, the *imago Dei* or the fair treatment of animals described in Proverbs), but rather on “having been seized by the love for every Face” (i.e., seized with concern for the other) moral grounding (p. 108), which makes a moral claim upon one seized (agape)—spiritual truth seizing us primordially that we subsequently reflect upon (pp. 42–43).

While most Christians may agree we humans must treat (other) animals respectfully, Greenway likely loses readers unwilling to grant his view of virtual *moral* equality of animals and human beings. For instance, his viewing crickets or cats or cows as equal partners with humans may strike a tone closer to pantheistic valuations; possibly envisioning instances of unnecessarily starving human beings owing to similar religious beliefs (e.g., sacredness of cows). Nonetheless, Greenway’s stories powerfully engage minds and heartstrings, perhaps none more than “First Deer” (pp. 34–35). Furthermore, he does suggest an *ethical* “gradation in our valuing” (life). For instance, while all life is to be valued, valuing a little boy, then a cat, then a sapling, then a stick is hierarchically in the right order; to do otherwise would be “ethical confusion” (p. 44). This is an important distinction drawn—without which it would be difficult to imagine his view being Christian. So, while Greenway’s distinction between pre-reflective morality (agape) and its relationship to ethical judgment and ethical convictions might seem reasonable (p. 91), it lacks any sense of imperfect or distorted morality, which is attributed *solely* to the ethical. Important theological insights and interpretations, though, would suggest imperfections and instabilities in such alleged universal “subjective indubitableness” (p. 93); it also could challenge Greenway’s neo-Levinasian model and his opposition to any alternative primordial “given” (which he claims is more certain than any other epistemological foundation “from which a moral argument could be constructed”) (p. 40). Apparently, then, divine revelation authority or plausibility is ruled out—particularly involving ethics and moral claims based in Christian Scripture.

Consequently, Greenway’s approach appears to represent “wishful morality”: hopeful-yet-implausible within fallen creation. “Awakening” for Greenway appears to be becoming aware of and embracing universal, subjective morality concerning other faces, serving as the “passion that fires commitment to goodness, justice,

and the struggle against injustice and evil” (p. 46). However, I would argue that more profoundly necessary is supremely dramatic awakening—transitioning from spiritual death to life, being rescued from the dominion of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ, actively living out moral qualities given by divine power, participating in the divine nature, and escaping (natural) evil desires for a better way, including knowing Christ and remembering the gift of spiritual sight and cleansing (Eph. 2:1–10, Col. 1:13, 1 Pet. 1:3–9). Only then will human heart darkness be illumined to true spirituality—new beings renewed in knowledge in the imago *Dei*, adding to faith goodness and other moral qualities—flowing from the Creator-Redeemer of all life (Col. 3:9–10, 1 Pet. 1:5–7).

Greenway strongly asserts there is “no dispassionate, objective, certain basis for ethics” and “no logical path leading to sure resolution of every ethical issue” (p. 108). Yet, he returns to the claim that “having been seized by the love for the Faces of all creatures” is the “most powerful brake against the historic and enduring dangers of ethical and religious prejudice and extremism” and “our most powerful stimulus toward the good and the just” (pp. 108–09). Such a move raises the question of why call this “agape” (or Christian) rather than simply internal or universal subjectivity? Even more radically he declares, “Awakening to having been seized by love for all Faces is the ultimate and authentic source of all love, goodness, and justice” (p. 109). One might better imagine Christian commitment to Godself being that ultimate and authentic source (1 John 4:16, 1 Tim. 4:4, 2 Thess. 1:5–7).

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Kaiser, Walter C., *Tough Questions about God and His Actions in the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2015, pp.176, \$16.99, paperback.

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The title of the book, “*Tough Questions about God and His Actions in the Old Testament*,” is an accurate summarization of the contents. The book contains ten chapters that deal with ten problems that some people have with the Old Testament. In the introduction, Kaiser provides a brief history of issues regarding the Old Testament. He states that the rise of New Atheism and attacks by Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*) and Christopher Hitchens (*God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*) demand an apologetic response which is based on an exegetical explanation of Old Testament Theology (pp. 9–16). This book appears to be a summarization and update of similar issues that he discussed in previous

publications (*Hard Sayings of the Old Testament*, 1986 and *More Hard Sayings of the Old Testament* 1992, Intervarsity Press).

The chapters address ten juxtaposed questions:

1. The God of Mercy or the God of Wrath?
2. The God of Peace or the God of Ethnic Cleansing?
3. The God of Truth or the God of Deception?
4. The God of Evolution or the God of Creation?
5. The God of Grace or the God of Law?
6. The God of Monogamy or the God of Polygamy?
7. The God Who Rules Satan or the God Who Battles Satan?
8. The God Who is Omniscient or the God Who Doesn't Know the Future?
9. The God Who Elevates Women or the God Who Devalues Women?
10. The God of Freedom with Food or the God of Forbidden Food?

The target audience is primarily high school, college, and graduate school students. Kaiser states that this group comprises “the largest segment of a new group of ‘Nons’—the non-attenders at church and the non-religious” in our society (p.10). In light of the misunderstanding and attacks on the Old Testament, Kaiser states that: “this book proposes to openly and honestly face these charges and to answer them with valid responses from the same biblical texts that are the basis of these challenges” (p.11).

A typical chapter is developed with six components. Each chapter begins with a question that juxtaposes a theological dilemma by which an attack has been charged against the God of the Old Testament. Secondly, a brief history of the attack is reviewed. The third component is a survey of current theological approaches to the issue based on ecclesiastical traditions. The fourth component, which is the largest, provides an evaluation of the misappropriation of Old Testament passages, and then an exegetical explanation by which Kaiser seeks to provide an apologetic in response to the attack on the God of the Old Testament. This component comprises three to five Scripture passages that require a proper understanding to answer the initial question of the chapter. In this section, Kaiser draws on his years of exegetical, cultural and historical studies. At times, the explanations are so technical, exegetical and/or linguistic that the “Nons” will probably not be able to critically evaluate the material because it will be beyond their ability. The fifth component is a conclusion that provides a summarization of the apologetic argument. The concluding section provides a series of questions that can be discussed by readers in a small group setting. Many of the expected responses are based on Kaiser's interpretation of the

Old Testament passages. Most of the discussion questions do not require critical thinking but rather a restatement of Kaiser's explanation contained in the chapter.

Of the ten chapter questions, evangelicals will probably have broad acceptance of seven of Kaiser's apologetic answers. There are three chapters (4, 5, and 9) that will probably be debated by evangelicals as to the acceptance of Kaiser's explanation.

In chapter 4, (The God of Evolution or the God of Creation?), Kaiser interprets the first clause of Genesis 1:1 as an independent clause ('In the beginning God created the heavens and earth') rather than a dependent clause ('When God began to create') so as to support a Big Bang Theory (p.59) and not a "Gap Theory" (p.63).

Kaiser argues for a Day-Age theory of creation rather than seven days that are based on twenty-four hour periods. He refers to St. Augustine for support as well as the classical argument of Psalm 90:4 that "A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has gone by." He argues that "evening and morning" are to be understood as night time rather than a solar-lunar day of twenty-four hours (pp. 64–65). Although he has widely opened the door for others to support a view of evolution based on the long Day-Age periods, he seeks to close the door in stating "The text does not allow for change to come about in other ways, such as evolutionary theories argue" (p. 70).

In chapter 5, (The God of Grace or the God of Law?), Kaiser provides a summary of three different methods of handling Old Testament laws. According to Kaiser, the first approach of Christian Reconstructionism takes a very literal interpretation and application of the Mosaic Code resulting in the enforcement of Old Testament penalties in our current society (pp. 74–75).

The second group is described as: "At the other end of the spectrum are those schools of thought called 'Dispensationalists,' that we are, for all intents and purposes, finished with the Law" (p. 76). As a dispensationalist, I am disappointed at his characterization. Dispensationalist generally agree that a New Covenant believer is not under obligation to the Mosaic Law, but affirm Romans 15:4, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (NASB). A dispensationalist affirms that the Mosaic Law leads the non-believer to Christ and is a basis for instruction through principled adaption to Christian living.

The third approach is Covenant Theology which creates a threefold division of the law into categories of moral, civil and ceremonial laws (p. 77–80). Covenant Theology believes that only the moral and civil laws are still relevant since the ceremonial law was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Kaiser embraces a "Paradigmatic Approach" as defined by Chris Wright (*Living as the People of God: The Relevance of Old Testament Ethics*). This approach seeks to understand the "principle" behind the scripture passage. The principle remains to be applied today rather than to be interpreted literally (pp. 82–83).

The difficulty for the reader is that there is no clear method provided to help the reader know how to discover the authorial principles and then apply it personally to today.

In chapter 9, (The God Who Elevates Women or the God Who Devalues Women?) Kaiser engages the longstanding debate of the equality of males and females. Kaiser's question is not representative of the historical debate or the contents of the chapter (Traditional versus Egalitarian). It is widely agreed that a view of distinct roles in life, family or church does not conclude that a woman is devalued (Complementarian: *Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*).

Kaiser begins with a discussion of "pre-understandings" that all readers bring to a text (pp.137–38). He provides a complex proposal for the translation/interpretation of Genesis 2:18 (The 'Nons' as well as most others will probably be lost in this discussion). The acceptance of his translation is dependent on a previous misunderstanding of the Hebrew/Canaanite root and the resulting meaning of "ezer" based on this correction (pp. 139–140). Kaiser concludes his egalitarian view by stating: "So rather than saying a woman is to be a 'helper corresponding to the man;' instead, the text teaches that the woman has been given 'authority, strength, or power' that is 'equal to [man's]'" (p. 140). He then argues from examples in the Old Testament of women in various circumstances of leadership and service. Kaiser argues that the exceptions should be viewed as the rule, rather than the exceptions confirming the rule.

Kaiser concludes by providing an egalitarian interpretation to seminal New Testament passages that comment on the role of women in the church (1 Tim. 2:8–15; 1 Cor. 14:34–38; 1 Cor. 11:2–16). He seems to conclude that women are repressed or demeaned if males and females have distinct roles in creative order.

I am not convinced that all the chapters of this book will benefit the "Nons": the non-attenders at church and the non-religious in our society. At times, the technical (and necessary) discussion of interpretations could be beyond their comprehension. An informed Christian or Bible student will probably benefit the most if they engage Kaiser's book with critical thinking. Those who already have his previous books about similar issues may not benefit significantly from this addition.

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Bird, Michael F. *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016, pp. 322, \$28.00, paperback.

Contemporary Pauline studies generally heeds the adage that Paul was Jewish, although much argument remains about exactly what this statement means. Such declarations follow Paul himself, who identifies as an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, and a Benjaminite (Rom 11:1). Michael Bird, Lecturer in Theology at

Ridley College, attempts to specify some of the ways that Paul must be viewed within Judaism as well as how Paul became such a controversial figure within first-century Judaism.

The introduction maps how others have identified Paul's relationship to Judaism around the coordinates of "former," "transformed," "faithful," "radical," and "anomalous" Jew. Bird sees the last qualifier as most apt but notes that much of what was unusual about Paul's thought did not necessitate the particularly unaccommodating relationship between Paul and Jewish authorities. He understands Paul's anomaly to be the revelation of Jesus Christ, "which discloses how faith in Christ without Torah was the instrument that brings Jews and Gentiles into reconciliation with God and into the renewal of all things" (p. 28). Other chapters test this hypothesis with regard to particular issues.

Chapter 1 summarizes perspectives regarding Paul's view of Jewish soteriology and explores degrees of continuity between Paul's soteriology and Second Temple Jewish texts. Bird views the chief difference in the two soteriological approaches as stemming from Paul's emphasis on Christ's revelation rather than Torah. Chapter 2 examines Paul's mission to Jews in his Asian and Aegean travels and proposes that, although there may have been differences in how Paul related to his Jewish counterparts over time, Paul was an apostle to both Jews and Gentiles. Chapters 3 and 4 take up issues in Galatians. Chapter 3 defends elements of apocalyptic readings of Galatians but insists that Paul's apocalyptic tendencies cannot be separated from salvation-history. Chapter 4 looks at the issue of table fellowship in Gal 2:11–14 where Bird sees a qualified Christ-Torah antithesis in Paul's letter. Finally, chapter 5 studies Paul's understanding of the Roman Empire with reference to the letter to Rome and finds challenges to Roman self-perceptions but neither unabating resistance nor passive quietism.

Bird's writing is engaging, his positions represent genuine attempts to move scholarly dialogue forward, and his footnotes appropriately reflect the scholarship with which he interacts. By way of illustration, Bird takes up apocalyptic interpretations of Paul in chapter 3. His choice to read Galatians alongside apocalyptic interpreters is salient, since Galatians is the Pauline letter that is used most often for such a reading. Galatians contains several Second Temple apocalyptic motifs, but Bird also notes an underlying Barthian presence in apocalyptic studies of Paul for which Second Temple apocalyptic language can serve as a veil. Bird highlights Second Temple apocalyptic themes and finds that Paul's apocalypticism is expressed most clearly in his interpretation of Jesus's death and resurrection. Where some divorce Paul's understanding of Jesus from Israel's history, Bird rightly reads Galatians as a fresh configuration of scriptural themes and stories in light of Jesus. Apocalypticism and salvation history must not be divided from one another in Pauline thinking. In Galatians, Gentiles are included as part of Abraham's family in Christ, but this does not nullify Torah. Rather, Torah also finds its climax in Christ.

One should hope that by following the lines of thought in this book, they may come to a better understanding of Paul's letters and be provoked to think further about how best to interpret them. For example, Bird seems to be on the right path regarding Paul's view of the Roman Empire. It is clear that there are significant consequences for following Jesus in Paul's understanding. It is likewise reasonable to expect that the cult of Caesar could be included in Paul's discussions of idolatry, although, as Bird's examples show, clearer evidence for clashes between Jesus-followers and Rome may be found in second-century texts. Moreover, it must be the case that by calling Jesus "Lord" the implication, from both the Christian and Roman perspective, is that Caesar is finally not Lord. By taking Romans as an example, Bird allows readers to glimpse how Paul's view of Rome may be understood in one letter. A fuller consideration of Paul's thought on this issue would need to take into account other letters. In addition, given Paul's immersion in Israel's scriptures, one might wonder what relationship obtains between scriptural and imperial language. By considering these matters more fully, one might take Bird's insightful remarks in further enlightening directions.

In light of Paul's popularity, or infamy, in the early Christian movement, one might also think alongside Bird in order to further his work beyond strictly Pauline studies. This may be done particularly well with regard to the partings of the ways. Such terminology has become a standard way of describing the process of separation between Judaism and Christianity in the first few centuries. When *parting* is used in the singular, it may imply a simple, one-track separation that struggles to make sense of the tangle of positions on early Christian and early Jewish relations which are reflected in the early centuries of the Jesus movement. Bird employs *parting* in the singular in chapter 4 while studying a single event, namely, the conflict with Peter in Gal 2:11–14. Since only one event is in view, *parting* is entirely appropriate. However, there is a more noteworthy observation to be made about Bird's terminology. He speaks not of a parting *of* the ways but rather a parting *in* the ways. The preposition is aptly chosen when describing the in-house conflict portrayed in Gal 2, but such terminology should give pause to those studying other early Christian documents. Should other texts that are employed in discussions of the partings of the ways be used instead to describe partings in the ways? If so, at what point, and on what basis, can a parting in the ways be differentiated from a parting of the ways? While studying an event in the middle of the first century, the language of chapter 4 may help readers to think further about the anomalous relationship of other Christians and Jews (to use potentially anachronistic terminology) throughout the first and second centuries.

An Anomalous Jew is not an introduction to Paul but provides a useful map of contemporary Pauline studies along with insightful explorations of issues relating to Paul and his social world. Along the way, Bird does not lose sight of the importance of Paul's theological, and particularly christological, convictions for framing Paul's

interaction with the surrounding world. Advanced undergraduate and postgraduate students, scholars, and interested pastors and lay readers with some background knowledge will find this volume exciting, enlightening, and edifying.

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Westfall, Cynthia Long. *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016, pp. 348, paperback, \$32.99.

Of all authors who write books and articles on the topic of Paul and gender, Cynthia Long Westfall is well-qualified to do so. She has published on this topic before in her article e.g., “The Meaning of ἀνθεντέω in 1 Timothy 2.12,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*, 10 (2014): 138–73. She has taught courses within Pauline studies at McMaster Divinity College since 2005. She has also served in the context of the local church; this matters especially as she comments on this part of Paul’s discussion of ministry in the local church as it pertains to gender roles in the church.

In this book, Westfall seeks to “explain the Pauline passages that concern gender and to move toward a canon-based Pauline theology of gender” (p. ix). Several scholars have published books on this topic, especially as it concerns gender roles in the church (e.g., Piper and Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*; Pierce and Groothuis, *Discovering Biblical Equality*). Her primary contribution is her methodology. The method of her study, as she claims, comes partly from modern linguistics. She explains: “I had acquired a new set of perspectives and methodological lenses with which to study the issues, not the least of which was modern linguistics” (p. x). Her audience for this work is primarily the next generation of students, pastors, and scholars (p. xi). She hopes to make what has been and still is a controversial topic easier to navigate. The scope of the contents of her study covers all the Pauline corpus; she accepts all the traditional letters as part of his corpus. She begins by considering the culture within which Paul wrote. She addresses male and female stereotypes as Paul explains them in a way that is counter-cultural. Given that Paul roots his discussions of gender in creation, Westfall considers that topic further also. Her interpretations of the creation account and Paul’s comments on them follow a traditional egalitarian approach. She continues her discussion by reflecting on Pauline eschatology; she feels that this topic is often overlooked in discussions on gender, primarily because she believes that Paul’s conclusions about how gender roles function in the church should mirror their roles in the *eschaton*. She explains Paul’s conception of the human body as it relates to gender. She discusses authority in Paul’s theology. She includes one chapter providing her exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:11–15, a text that many consider ground-zero in the discussion of gender roles in the

church. To conclude her study, she writes: “The conclusion of this study is to call for a thorough rereading of the Pauline passages on gender” (p. 313).

This book has several strengths, two of which will be considered here. First, it seeks to understand Paul’s writings using modern linguistic theory. Although James Barr encouraged scholars within theology to do so in 1961 with the publication of *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, few have followed in his footsteps. Westfall, however, attempts to do just that. Second, Westfall has highlighted several points throughout her book that both egalitarians and complementarians can agree with. Both sides can agree that Paul’s literature should be interpreted in accordance with its cultural context. Both sides agree that all Paul’s writings should be brought to bear on how his conception of gender is understood. Both sides hopefully agree that this discussion requires the application of newer methods from fields like modern linguistic theory that help interpreters study language in a way that accords with the current scientific standards of today. Writing a book on this topic that helps find any common ground is an achievement.

Nevertheless, this book has several weaknesses; this review will highlight only two. First, although she claims to employ modern linguistics as part of her approach, the results of her analysis seem to include very little of modern linguistic theory. She has a handful of discussions that concern the semantic range of certain key terms, but beyond that, there is precious little that helps the reader understand how modern linguistics is actually relevant to her study. She explains: “There has been a major problem with a lack of consistent methodology in the interpretation of the texts” (p. 3). She explains further: “Within the tradition of interpretation, the passages that concern gender have not been understood in the contexts of the discourses in which they occur, the biblical theology of the Pauline corpus as a whole, the narrative of Paul’s life, a linguistic understanding/analysis of the Greek language, or an understanding of the culture that is sociologically informed” (p. 3). Yet, her book does little in the way of explaining precisely what she means by fleshing out and applying her methods. What one might have expected is a chapter on methodology that elucidated all the elements more clearly. Similarly, I had expected her to use more linguistic terminology as she explains how texts mean and draws her theological conclusions. To make progress in this area, one would think that clearer methodology would be of prime of importance given that methods often determine results.

Second, some of her argumentation seems problematic. She writes: “In the Ephesians household code, Paul briefly indicates that wives should submit (in the context of mutual submission), and then, in great detail, he tells men to act just like women or slaves in their marital relationship” (p. 166). Further, she writes, “both wives and husbands are servants of each other, with only one Lord and master, who has full authority and power over them” (p. 166). This explanation seems unconvincing because it seems to struggle with Paul telling wives to submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22), and not just in the context of mutual submission (Eph 5:21). It is hard to

understand how any discourse analysis does not see some kind of break in Paul's discussion of 5:21 to the entire church to the more specific household codes in 5:22 and following. If one takes Westfall's same logic, then she would be telling parents and child to submit to one another; yet, Paul tells children to obey their parents (6:1).

In full disclosure, I read and reviewed this book as a complementarian; my prediction is that although most complementarians can respect this book as a clear and thoughtful explanation of the egalitarian position, complementarians will likely continue to hold their current position after reading this book. I had personally hoped that she would engage the complementarian arguments at a deeper-level, but her book seems to repeat the standard egalitarian arguments with only brief mention of more recent methods. Nevertheless, this book will be important for students and scholars to interact with because it is now one of the key sources for the egalitarian position on Paul and gender. Anyone wanting to study this larger debate will likely need to look to Westfall's book to understand the egalitarian position. But, it is hoped that future contributions to this larger discussion will learn from the shortcomings of this book to chart a better way forward.

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Bates, Matthew W. *Salvation by Allegiance Alone*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017, 234 pages, \$24.99, paper.

The author of what the back cover proclaims is a "bold, provocative book" has the Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame and is an assistant professor of theology at Quincy University, a Catholic institution. Bates is a Protestant who studied at Whitworth University and Regent College, Vancouver. He claims a broad denominational background and believes that this enables him to approach the issues in a fair way, going so far as to hope his work contributes to greater rapprochement between Catholics and Protestants. Scot McKnight writes the Forward to the book.

Of course, what has traditionally separated Protestants and Catholics on the issue of "salvation by grace through faith" centers on what happens when someone *believes* or has *faith*. Simplistically, is that one "declared" righteous, or "made" righteous? What role do "works" have in this transaction—for one side or the other? But especially crucial for Bates' concern, what is the nature of the "faith" that saves? And that question brings up Bates' provocative assertion: "... 'faith' and 'belief,' insofar as they serve as overarching terms to describe what brings about eternal salvation, should be excised from Christian discourse. That is, English-speaking leaders should entirely cease to speak of 'salvation by faith' or of 'faith in Jesus' or 'believing in Christ' when summarizing Christian salvation" (p. 3). Provocative indeed!

That raises crucial questions: how does the Bible define πίστις (*pistis*; usually translated "faith" or "belief") and its related terms; and what is the nature of the

“gospel” (good news) that one must “believe” to secure salvation? Since, according to Bates, “belief” or “faith,” or even “trust” are capable of such a bewildering (and fuzzy) array of definitions and uses among would-be evangelists, he argues it’s far better to employ a term that more adequately conveys what it really takes for a person to enter the Kingdom of God. The bulk of the book then proceeds to defend the view that “allegiance” far better expresses the New Testament view of what enables a person to apprehend salvation. In short, nothing less than allegiance or loyalty to Christ as King will secure salvation.

After showing what faith is *not* (an extremely important chapter), the author engages in several chapters to elaborate what constitutes the “gospel” that one must embrace to be saved—employing both Jesus and the Evangelists in the four Gospels, as well as the writings of Acts and Paul. The “gospel” must not be equated simply with “justification” but is much broader. As Bates sees things, the “gospel” as outlined in the New Testament includes *all* the following elements and no explanation of the gospel is complete without all of these: Jesus the King (1) preexisted with the Father; (2) took on human flesh, fulfilling God’s promises to David; (3) died for sins in accordance with the Scriptures; (4) was buried; (5) was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures; (6) appeared to many; (7) is seated at the right hand of God as Lord; and (8) will come again as judge.

Then Bates shows that *pistis* (when used as the requirement for salvation) means allegiance, drawing upon the evidence in the New Testament as well as contemporary extra-biblical sources. He concludes that “the gospel is purposed toward bringing about *the practical obedience characteristic of allegiance to a king*—what I have termed *enacted allegiance*” (86; his italics). It’s important to add here that he does not argue that “allegiance” best captures the sense of *pistis* in all its uses—only when the acquisition of salvation is at stake. When Bates synthesizes the biblical data, he arrives at this definition: “saving allegiance includes three basic dimensions: *mental affirmation* that the gospel [the eight points in the prior paragraph] is true, *professed fealty* to Jesus alone as the cosmic Lord, and *enacted loyalty* through obedience to Jesus as the king” (p. 92). No kind of disembodied “faith” will save a person (e.g., only mental assent or a vague trust in Jesus who died for our sins), one must “do” or “act” for faith to be genuine and truly salvific. The Bible emphasizes a believer’s obedience, not merely one’s intellectual or psychological state of “believing.” In support Bates points to the need for the “obedience of πίστις” (Rom 1:5; 16:26; cf. 15:18–19), and Jesus’ words that “only the one who *does* the will of my Father” will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 7:21–23). Don’t mistake what Bates says here to mean that our works or our righteousness is what saves. As will be clear below, he asserts that believers are saved by virtue of Christ’s righteousness which becomes our through our union or incorporation with him.

I think Bates might be hard-pressed to demonstrate that *all* uses of *pistis* when employed as the requirement for salvation mean allegiance. For example, when asked

by the Philippian jailor, “What must I do to be saved?” Paul’s and Silas’ answer was, “Believe [a form of the cognate verb *pisteuō*] on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31; NRSV). From this short narrative it would be difficult to prove that the apostles then explained to the jailor (and his household) all eight components of the gospel and then summoned them to allegiance. More likely in that context the jailor was urged to place his “trust” in Jesus. Nevertheless, Bates’ extended analyses convincingly show that in those places where one may tease out the implications of the uses of *pistis* and *pisteuō*, allegiance seems to be the likely meaning.

Bates anticipates that his proposal that salvation is by allegiance alone will engender a variety of objections, so he seeks to respond to various questions. For example, “If salvation is by grace (a gift), then how can it depend on allegiance to Jesus?” (p. 102). [As an aside, on the question of the nature of “grace,” Bates cites affirmingly John Barclay’s recent book, *Paul and the Gift* (Eerdmans, 2015). Barclay overturns some of the standard and simplistic understandings of the nature of grace. I highly recommend a careful reading of this book.] And Bates asks another controversial question: Can salvation be “lost”? Well, if allegiance is required for salvation, then, Bates concludes, one’s failure to continue to demonstrate loyalty to Jesus will result in the forfeiture of salvation. One can’t “lose” salvation, but one may jettison it.

Since allegiance to the King’s agenda is what salvation entails, then, Bates argues, embodied loyalty leads to the vocation that each believer embraces: the transformation of this world. The hope of the Christian is not to go to heaven when one dies (note echoes of N.T. Wright here), but to join in God’s grand narrative of salvation (my language) culminating in the resurrection and the renewal of all things in the new creation. Allegiance gives meaning to one’s life now as well as a glorious hope in the future.

As to the nature of “justification,” Bates addresses the issue that has historically divided Protestants and Catholics since the Reformation. Many Protestants espouse a kind of “imputed” righteousness while Catholics favor an “imparted” or “infused” righteousness. Seeking a better way, Bates locates an individual’s justification in his or her participation with or incorporation into Christ in the church. God vindicated (justified) Christ by raising him from the dead. Christians are then justified when they are incorporated into him. He questions whether the New Testament ever teaches that Christ’s righteousness is imputed to individuals. Works are the necessary component of saving faith, not merely the inevitable *results* of justification, which Protestants often relegate to sanctification as a separate and subsequent step in the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation). [On that point, Bates questions the validity of the *ordo salutis* so prominent in many Reformed formulations, claiming it owes more to systematic rather than biblical theology.] Nevertheless, he backs away from the Catholics’ idea of infused righteousness, preferring, as I have just indicated, what he

calls *incorporated righteousness*. Again, *embodied* allegiance is a requirement for salvation, not merely a result.

In keeping with the incorporation model of righteousness, then, Bates decidedly minimizes individual election to salvation and points to the Bible's emphasis on the corporate nature of election. He points out "... *the election story* the Bible wants to tell: God's election of the Messiah through Israel's election in order to save Jew and gentile alike within his elect church" (p. 171). People are saved by their incorporation into Christ's elect body, the church. The requirement for entrance into this body is a pledge of allegiance to their Lord (King).

The book ends with a chapter entitled "Practicing Allegiance." In it Bates offers a suggestion about a better way to invite people to salvation—to do evangelism. Unless people come to embrace the actual gospel (again, recall the eight points above), they can't be saved. He goes so far as to say, "We must stop asking others to invite Jesus into their hearts and start asking them to swear allegiance to Jesus the king" (199). He insists that we dare not give people "assurance" of salvation on the basis of their acceptance of a gospel invitation, but base it on the evidence of their loyalty to Jesus. Good works growing out of allegiance to Jesus secure genuine salvation; it is not secured by praying a prayer to "accept Christ" whether or not a person ever does good works.

At this point readers of this review will readily see why some of Bates' conclusions will cause considerable dis-ease among many descendants of the Reformation, particularly those of a Calvinist orientation. While Bates does not reject, e.g., the rallying cry "*Sola Fide*," he certainly challenges what *fide* (faith) has traditionally meant for them. That is, for Bates only one who lives a life in allegiance to the King possesses eternal salvation. While many might argue that genuine salvation leads to or results in good works (again separating justification and sanctification), Bates rejects that bifurcation. Only a "working faith" saves. Readers will see a strong correlation to the appeal in James' letter, and why Luther was so unhappy with James' formulation in contrast to Paul's. This is precisely Bates' point: James had it right all along, and we should understand him to mean precisely what he said! We must cease defining saving faith in any ways that strip works from its very essence. To put it starkly, one must work to be saved, and if one finds that statement heretical, Bates would ask readers to review the evidence in the NT that doers of the word will be saved, and that judgment will be based on what one does (cf. Rom 2:6–7, 13; Rev 20:12–13).

Bates also sides with a growing minority of scholars who find in the Bible an emphasis on the corporate nature of election and salvation—again in contrast to the Reformation's descendants who stress particular or individual election to salvation. I think this is one of the strengths of the book, though it's not a major point to be sure. Likewise, I applaud his emphasis on the overarching scope of salvation that puts an important emphasis on believers' efforts to effect God's agenda for the transformation

of all things in Christ—both now and in the eschaton. Allegiance to Christ matters *now* in bringing in the kingdom of God. That's the point of salvation (and hence the requirement of allegiance), not merely so that we can go to heaven when we die. This is a crucial message for Christians and the church today: as loyal citizens of the Kingdom of God we have a calling to promote Christ's agenda in the world. We see why good works are important and of the very essence of God's salvation.

Of course, Bates is not alone, nor is he the first to point out the anemic results of views of "faith" that may give people assurance of salvation (particularly when coupled with a view of "once saved always saved") but which produce little evidence of changed lives. Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously wrote about "cheap grace" in his *Cost of Discipleship*. But the value of Bates' book lies in the ground-breaking work of helping us see that we have misconstrued the nature of the πίστις required for salvation (as Barclay helps us see that we may also have misconstrued "grace"). Instead of insisting that people count the cost before they sign on as Jesus' disciples (as Jesus did, e.g., Luke 14:26–35; 18:17–25), in our eagerness to make converts we may be too prone to present an inadequate (and perhaps vacuous) way to enter the kingdom. We lower the bar of entry because we fail to grasp that Jesus requires allegiance. The sober implications may well be that many people who think they are saved might turn out not to be, and may find themselves among those Jesus identifies at the end of his Sermon on the Mount: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt 7:21; NIV). May we by our actions show our loyalty to King Jesus, and may we be eager to invite others to swear their allegiance to him as well.

Bottom line: I highly recommend this book. I don't expect that readers will endorse all of Bates' conclusions or be as enthusiastic as I am about it. Of course, one may take him to task at several points. But so much is at stake in these matters—from an individual's personal salvation to the church's mandate to make disciples. No doubt a careful interaction with this book will provoke fruitful discussions and no little self-examination.

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