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Eschatological Emphases in 1 Thessalonians and Galatians: Distinct Argumentative Strategies Related to External Conflict and Audience Response

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Introduction

1 Thessalonians is generally believed to be Paul’s earliest extant letter. Depending on the methodology employed for reconstructing a chronology of Paul’s life and letters, 1 Thessalonians is dated from the late 30s to the early 50s of the first century CE.¹

1. John Knox argued that the most methodologically sound way to approach Pauline chronology is to begin with Paul’s letters as primary sources, and, only after reconstructing a chronology on that basis alone, can Acts be brought in as corroborating evidence (see John Knox, *Chapters in a Life of Paul* [revised edition; London: SCM, 1989]). Some of the more well-known advocates of Knox’s approach include, e.g., Charles Buck and Greer Taylor, *Saint Paul: A Study of the Development of His Thought* (New York: Schribner, 1969); Gerd Lüdemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); Robert Jewett, *A Chronology of Paul’s Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979). Most recently, Douglas A. Campbell has provided a major contribution to Pauline chronology utilizing Knox’s methodology (see *Framing Paul: An Epistolary Biography* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014]). An intriguing distinctive of Knox’s approach is the possibility of dating 1 Thessalonians to the late 30s or early 40s (so, e.g., Karl Paul Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 69–117; D. Campbell, *Framing Paul*, 190–253; Lüdemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles*, 262), though Jewett is notable for not following this trend in giving the letter such an early date. Placing 1 Thessalonians in this early period provides a longer duration for Paul’s theology to develop than is usually thought, allowing for the letter to be an early expression of Paul’s eschatology. The way that 1 Thessalonians is able to be dated so early is through Paul’s record of his ministry in Gal. 1–2. In particular, the fourteen-year gap (cf. Gal. 2.1) prior to Paul’s second visit to Jerusalem recorded in Gal. 2.1–10 is understood to be the period in which the Aegean mission occurred. Although Paul does not mention this mission, the argument is that Paul passes quickly over the lengthy fourteen-year period without exhaustive detail, which allows for the possibility that it could have occurred during that time. Traditionally, given the witness of Acts, the Aegean mission is regarded as taking place later after the Jerusalem council (cf. Acts 15). Although a full assessment of Knox’s approach cannot be offered here, I simply want to call into question the idea that the Aegean mission could have taken place in the fourteen-year period noted in Gal. 2.1. If Paul had indeed conducted the Aegean mission during that time, it would have helped his argument tremendously to mention it. In Gal. 1–2 Paul is eager to demonstrate that he is a slave of the Messiah (cf. Gal. 1.10) who resists any tampering with the authenticity of his Gentile mission, even when such comes from those who seemingly have the most authority—the Jerusalem church. Paul defends the fact that his gospel is not derivative but rather was directly received from the Messiah (Gal. 1.1, 11–12; cf. 1.15–16), and that he did not spend much time in Jerusalem: only fifteen days, and this occurred three years after his original conversion/call (Gal. 1.18). In fact, outside of that fifteen-day period he was far away from the city. Paul states that he went up to Syria and Cilicia

Regardless of where 1 Thessalonians is dated within this decade-plus time period, scholars tend to uphold the priority of 1 Thessalonians. There are many reasons for this assessment, and I do not wish to reevaluate the consensus in full. Rather, my present aim is to contend that one of the common reasons put forth for the priority of 1 Thessalonians, namely its alleged “primitive” eschatology, should not be viewed as determinative. Thus, what I want to call into question is the idea that we can date 1 Thessalonians relative to the other Pauline letters along a spectrum of development in Paul’s eschatology.² This spectrum is usually plotted from imminent expectation of the Parousia to a waning expectation accompanied by more “realized” expressions.³ I am suspicious of claims that Paul’s eschatology developed (or perhaps, *digressed*),⁴ either in a progressive or drastic manner,⁵ but my concern in this paper is not to

(Gal. 1.21), meaning that he went even further away from Jerusalem. Surely, an Aegean mission would have been something for Paul to mention if he in fact went that far beyond Cilicia. The fact that Paul does not mention these travels seriously mitigates the proposal. It should be noted that this is more than an “argument from silence” because there are important rhetorical reasons for Paul to include this information. Furthermore, the gravity with which Paul takes his account of his travels can be seen in the oath he swears “before God” that he is not lying (Gal. 1.20; ἅ δὲ γράφω ὑμῖν, ἰδοὺ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι). We do not know exactly what Paul was doing during that period (cf. Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* [London: SCM, 1997]), but if Paul was doing ministry in Corinth and Thessalonica, why would he fail to mention such a strong argument in favor of his distance and independence from Jerusalem? The irony here is that although advocates of Knox’s approach contend that they are doing their reconstruction from Paul’s letters for methodological purity, they do not follow Paul when he is most explicit on the topic.

2. For the sake of this study, when I refer to Paul’s letters and thought I have in mind the seven undisputed letters without implying the non-Pauline authorship of the other six.

3. It also goes without saying that this rules out the opposite trajectory, from realized eschatology to futuristic eschatology, though this suggestion is rare (not to mention much less persuasive). For this perspective, see Christopher L. Mearns, “Early Eschatological Development in Paul: The Evidence of I and II Thessalonians,” *New Testament Studies* 27.2 (1981): 137–57; *idem*, “Early Eschatological Development in Paul: The Evidence of 1 Corinthians,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 22 (1984): 19–35.

4. Albert Schweitzer (*The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, [Translated by William Montgomery; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998 (1931)], 52) affirmed strongly, “From his first letter to his last Paul’s thought is always uniformly dominated by the expectation of the immediate return of Jesus, of the Judgment, and the Messianic glory.” He then goes on to conclude after a brief survey, “If then Paul’s thought underwent a development it certainly did not consist in the slacking of his eschatological expectation as time went on” (Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 54). Similarly, James D. G. Dunn (*The Theology of Paul the Apostle* [reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 311) notes that “there is a striking consistency in imminence of expectation throughout the undisputed letters of Paul.” In fact, he is able to conclude, “Paul’s conviction that the [P]arousia was imminent and becoming ever closer also seems to have remained remarkably untroubled by the progress of events and passing of time” (*Theology of Paul*, 313). Cf. also E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 441–42; J. W. Drane, “Theological Diversity in the Letters of St. Paul,” *Tyndale Bulletin* (1975): 25; Paul J. Achtemeier, “An Apocalyptic Shift in Early Christian Tradition: Reflections on Some Canonical Evidence,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45.2 (1983): 237.

5. In his two-part study on “The Mind of Paul” (in *New Testament Studies* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1953], 67–128), C. H. Dodd argued that the development of Paul’s eschatology was not progressive, but abrupt, coming as the result of the near-death experience recorded in 2 Cor.

challenge the notion of development *per se*. I simply intend to provide reasons for thinking that the eschatology of 1 Thessalonians is not as primitive as is often thought. To explore this, I will compare 1 Thessalonians with another contender for the earliest extant Pauline letter—Galatians. The priority of Galatians is a minority view, and I do not intend to argue for it (nor even to argue for a particular provenance).⁶ Rather, I wish to show simply that eschatology should not be the basis for the relative dating of these two letters. Instead, my thesis is that the eschatological language in each letter, while containing distinct emphases, is not substantively different, and, furthermore, that the distinct emphases are not the result of a development in Paul’s thought, but instead are tailored to meet the specific needs of the situation that Paul is addressing.⁷ In fact, this provides another helpful means of comparison because, as we will see, both letters were occasioned by external conflict. I will argue that one of the main reasons for the distinct eschatological emphases is precisely the *differing responses to external conflict* among the Thessalonians and Galatians. The following study will therefore proceed by surveying the situation and eschatological rhetoric of each letter in turn, before offering points to compare and points to contrast regarding the two letters and their unique circumstances.

Conflict in 1 Thessalonians

When Paul originally preached the gospel to the Thessalonians it came on the heels of ill-treatment in Philippi (1 Thess. 2.2; προπαθόντες καὶ ὑβρισθέντες) and was itself occasioned by conflict (1 Thess. 2.2; ἐν πολλῷ ἁγῶνι).⁸ The Thessalonians demonstrated the genuineness of their faith by enduring affliction themselves during their initial reception of the gospel (1 Thess. 1.6; ἐν θλίψει πολλῇ). Due to their sufferings, the Thessalonians became imitators of Paul, his entourage, and even the Lord (1 Thess. 1.6; ὑμεῖς μιμηταὶ ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε καὶ τοῦ κυρίου). This seems to point to the fact that from the very beginning of their reception of the gospel they had faced opposition for their conversion, turning from idols to the living God (1

1.8. Dodd (“Mind of Paul,” 81) refers to the impact of this event as a sort of “second conversion.” In the aftermath of this experience the Parousia wanes in Paul’s thinking as he comes to grips with the fact that he will most likely die beforehand (Dodd, “Mind of Paul,” 111–13). For this perspective, see also the study by A. E. Harvey, who built upon this proposal in his *Renewal Through Suffering: A Study of 2 Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

6. The North Galatia v. South Galatia debate is well-known and well-worn. My arguments here do not depend upon a particular reconstruction. It is often assumed that a relatively early date for Galatians necessitates a South Galatian destination, but Paul could just as easily have written to newly founded churches in North Galatia as he could have written late to South Galatia.

7. As Dunn (*Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 311) states, the proposal regarding a development away from imminence due to the so-called delay of the Parousia “is probably giving too little weight to the circumstantial factors which determined the emphases of the different letters.” Cf. also C. F. D. Moule, “The Influence of Circumstances on the use of Eschatological Terms,” in *Essays in New Testament Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 184–99.

8. All Greek references are taken from the NA28.

Thess. 1.9).⁹ They had demonstrated that the gospel really took hold within their communities (1 Thess. 1.5; 2.13), which led to a complete rejection of their former manner of life. In fact, Paul could see in their robust appropriation of the gospel that they were chosen by God (1 Thess. 1.4),¹⁰ having been destined to receive salvation (cf. 1 Thess. 5.9) as they waited for the return of Christ (1 Thess. 1.10).

For some reason, Paul and his entourage were “torn” from Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2.17; ἀπορφανισθέντες) and were hindered by Satan from returning (1 Thess. 2.18; καὶ ἐνέκοπεν ἡμᾶς ὁ σατανᾶς). Because of the continued conflict that the Thessalonians were experiencing (1 Thess. 2.14),¹¹ Paul was deeply concerned to know if the Thessalonians were persisting in their faith or if they had faltered under the pressure. So he decided to wait in Athens and to send Timothy back to Thessalonica to discern how the Thessalonians were responding (1 Thess. 3.1–2, 5). Paul was afraid that perhaps his labor among them had been in vain (1 Thess. 3.5; καὶ εἰς κενὸν γένηται ὁ κόπος ἡμῶν), but when Timothy returned with positive word (1 Thess. 3.6–7), Paul was relieved to hear that the Thessalonians did not give in to the pressure to drop their commitment to Christ due to the conflict with outsiders.¹² Paul reminded them that they were destined for such opposition (1 Thess. 3.3; εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα), and that he had told them that this would happen in advance (1 Thess. 3.4). Their experience serves to provide certainty of their election, rather than to call it into question (cf. 1 Thess. 1.4; 5.9). Because they were standing fast (1 Thess. 3.8; ἐὰν ὑμεῖς στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ), it was as if Paul had life again (1 Thess. 3.8; νῦν ζῶμεν), highlighting just how concerned Paul was. At the time of writing of 1 Thessalonians, Paul wishes to return to them (3.11–12), and sends the letter in his absence.

9. On 1 Thess. 1.6 referring to external conflict, see Gerd Lüdemann, *The Earliest Christian Text: 1 Thessalonians* (revised ed.; Salem, OR: Polebridge, 2013), 31; F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (WBC 45; Waco, TX: Waco, 1982), 16; Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 72–73; Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (BNTC; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 77; M. Eugene Boring, *I & II Thessalonians: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 65–66; Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 98.

10. Cf. Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 80; Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 37; Lüdemann, *Earliest Christian Text*, 32.

11. Paul says that the Thessalonians became ‘imitators’ (μιμηταί) of the Judean Christians because of the way they were mistreated by their own people too (1 Thess. 2.14–15). As in 1 Thessalonians 1.6–7, the imitation spoken of here is imitation of the right way to endure suffering and maintain firmness of faith. 1 Thess. 2.15 also similarly brings in the illtreatment of Jesus (τὸν κύριον) as in 1 Thess. 1.6–7, pointing to the fact that the same conflict is being referenced with the same assessment of their response.

12. Rightly Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 62; Witherington, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 93–94; Best, *First and Second Epistles*, 135–36; Green, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 161–64; Robert Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 93–94; Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1–2 Thessalonians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 101; D. Campbell, *Framing Paul*, 194–95.

Although we cannot determine with precision what the conflict in Thessalonica was like, most scholars agree that it was external (cf. 2 Cor. 8.1–2; Acts 17.1–9).¹³ Todd Still has provided the most sustained treatment on the theme of conflict in 1 Thessalonians, concluding that it may have included physical abuse.¹⁴ Karl Donfried is perhaps the most outspoken interpreter who understands the conflict to include physical harm, locating the persecution within the realm of the imperial cult.¹⁵ However, some scholars are less inclined to refer to this conflict as “persecution,” favoring less loaded terms such as “social harassment.”¹⁶ Regardless of what the conflict entailed, such as verbal abuse, physical abuse, etc., the conflict originated from outside the community and came as a result of the Thessalonians accepting the gospel. As far as Paul was concerned, the conflict was significant enough to possibly undermine their faith altogether (1 Thess. 3.5).

Although Paul was deeply worried about how the Thessalonians would respond in the midst of these struggles, there is no indication, as Barclay and Still have noted separately, that the Thessalonians were on the verge of committing apostasy in their predicament (cf. 1 Thess. 3.6).¹⁷ Rather they remained faithful to the message they had received. The positive response of the Thessalonians in the midst of suffering had a direct effect on the nature of Paul’s rhetorical strategy in this letter. The first three chapters of 1 Thessalonians are essentially Paul’s expression of thanksgiving for the positive response of the church to the external conflict.¹⁸ We can be certain that 1 Thessalonians would have been a very different letter if Timothy had told Paul that the Thessalonians were abandoning his message. In the midst of the suffering they had experienced, Paul reminds them of their *hope*—the glorious future that awaits them when Christ returns. With this understanding of the conflict, we now

13. The only significant pushback from this assessment comes from Abraham J. Malherbe, who argued that the sufferings of the Thessalonians were more internal, being related to the anxiety, stress, and feelings of isolation that resulted from their new foray into a brand new movement and Paul’s sudden departure from the community. See, e.g., Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible 32B; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 126–31, 193; *idem*, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 47–48, 51. However, it is not very likely that Paul would speak of internal distress as ‘imitation’ (μιμηταί in 1 Thess. 1.6 and 2.14), as an example for others who believe (τύπον in 1 Thess. 1.7), or as something the Thessalonians were appointed to experience (1 Thess. 3.3; εἰς τοῦτο κείμεθα).

14. Todd D. Still, *Conflict in Thessalonica: A Pauline Church and Its Neighbours* (JSNTSup 183; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

15. Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity*, 38, 41–46.

16. John M. G. Barclay, “Conflict in 1 Thessalonica,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55.3 (1993): 514; *idem*, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 184–85. Cf. Wayne A. Meeks, *First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (2nd ed.; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 174; E. P. Sanders, *Paul: The Apostle’s Life, Letters, and Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 194–95.

17. Barclay, “Conflict in Thessalonica,” 517; Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica*, 271.

18. So Frank J. Matera, *God’s Saving Grace: A Pauline Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 190.

turn to address the themes of eschatology in the letter and how these themes were tailored for the situation in Thessalonica.

Eschatology in 1 Thessalonians

The return of Christ is certainly a major theme in 1 Thessalonians (cf. 1 Thess. 1.10; 2.19; 3.13; 4.13—5.11; 5.23). Depending on one's allegiance to Christ, his return is either a positive or negative event. Those who turn to the living God are delivered from the coming wrath by Jesus (1 Thess. 1.10; Ἰησοῦν τὸν ῥυόμενον ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς ἐρχομένης), and will obtain salvation instead of wrath (1 Thess. 5.9; ὅτι οὐκ ἔθετο ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ὀργὴν ἀλλ' εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας). This wrath, however, will be meted out on those who do not belong to Christ, leading to destruction (1 Thess. 5.3; cf. 2 Thess. 1.4–10). Although its authenticity has been contested,¹⁹ it is possible that 1 Thess. 2.16 and the reference to wrath coming upon Paul's Jewish opponents should be understood in relation to this (ἔφθασεν δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ εἰς τέλος). Of course, the passage is notoriously difficult to interpret. In particular, scholars have debated: (a) the meaning of the verb φθάνω here,²⁰ (b) the function of the aorist tense (ἔφθασεν), and (c) the meaning of the prepositional phrase εἰς τέλος.²¹ Deciding how best to interpret 1 Thess. 2.16 is not necessary here. For our purposes, the verse either expresses that wrath has already arrived,²² or that it will arrive in the

19. 1 Thess. 2.13–16 has a notorious track record, not least because of suspicions of latent anti-Semitism (and incompatibility with what Paul says in Rom. 9–11), but also because of the accusation of anachronism. Originally, F. C. Baur considered the whole letter to be dubious as a result (*Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings* [reprint; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003], 87–88), whereas subsequent scholars, convinced of the authenticity of 1 Thessalonians, contended that the passage, in part or in whole, was a later interpolation added to the text after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. So, e.g., Birger A. Pearson, “1 Thessalonians 2:13–16: A Deutero-Pauline Interpolation,” *Harvard Theological Review* 64.1 (1971): 79–94. However, at present there are very few scholars who dismiss the text as an interpolation. On the authenticity of 1 Thess. 2.13–16, see Lüdemann, *Earliest Christian Text*, 38–44, 113–15; Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity*, 195–208; Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 164–79; Witherington, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 82–89; Best, *First and Second Epistles*, 109–23; Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 91–92; Green, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 143–50; Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 36–41.

20. BDAG, 1053, lists three types of glosses for φθάνω, (1) “come before, precede,” (2) “have just arrived,” or “arrive, reach,” and (3) “attain,” placing 1 Thess. 2.16 under the second option. James Hope Moulton and George Milligan (*The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* [reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976], 666–67) note that φθάνω in the New Testament usually means “to come” or “to arrive,” though the word originally had more of a temporal nuance of preceding, as in 1 Thess. 4.15 (φθάσωμεν).

21. The phrase εἰς τέλος is an adverbial modifier, with the sense being that the wrath of God has come (or will come) “at last,” “finally,” “forever,” “until the end,” or “in full.” David Luckensmeyer (*The Eschatology of First Thessalonians* [NTOA 71; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009], 158–59) interprets εἰς τέλος to mean “finally” or “at last.” C. F. D. Moule (*An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* [Second ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959], 70), glosses the prepositional phrase as “completely.”

22. Udo Schnelle (*Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology* [Translated by M. Eugene Boring; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012], 180) argues that 1 Thess. 2.16, in the light of the election language in the letter,

future.²³ Perhaps the best way forward is to understand that the wrath has arrived in some sense, but will come in full in the future (in keeping with the future orientation of wrath in 1 Thessalonians).²⁴ However we understand 1 Thess. 2.16, the Parousia is clearly associated elsewhere with wrath and judgment in 1 Thessalonians.

The return of Christ is therefore called “the Day of the Lord” (1 Thess. 5.2; ἡμέρα κυρίου), drawing together the OT themes and associations of that terrible day. Those who belong to the day need not fear it (1 Thess. 5.4), but it will come like a thief upon those who do not belong to the day. The return of Christ is therefore not strictly about salvation, but is part of a larger network of eschatological events, including the judgment.²⁵ In fact, this draws together the interconnected themes of eschatology and ethics in the letter; believers are to walk worthily, be blameless, and be holy for the Lord's return because he is coming to judge before bringing he brings his people into his kingdom (1 Thess. 2.12, 19–20; 3.13; 4.3–8; 5.23–24).²⁶

Yet 1 Thessalonians is not entirely futuristic; it also looks to the arrival, death, and resurrection of the Messiah (1 Thess. 1.10; 4.14; 5.10) as well as the outpouring of the Spirit (1 Thess. 4.8; 5.19) as key eschatological realities. In fact, the very Gentile mission itself is connected to this reality (cf. 1 Thess. 1.9–10).²⁷ To speak of these Gentile Thessalonians, who were formerly idolatrous pagans, *as the elect* (1 Thess. 1.4; 3.3; 5.9), speaks to “the present reality of salvation.”²⁸ In fact, these Gentiles are united to Israel's Messiah, which roots the futuristic nature of salvation in a present eschatological reality: participation and union with Christ. God's people will be

refers to the fact that God has withdrawn his election of Israel. However, most scholars who argue for a past referent for the coming of God's wrath point to an event (or series of events) that demonstrate the truthfulness of Paul's words. Green, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 149, argues that Paul is not speaking prophetically, but is referring to something perceptible by the readers. He links this to events in 49 CE, such as, the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius (cf. Suetonius, *Claud.*, 25) and the massacre of thousands of Jews at the Passover celebration from that year (cf. Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.224–27). However, Green also points to the inauguration of wrath that had not yet reached its fulfillment. Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 37, lists several other possible events that Paul may have referred to, such as, “the death of Agrippa in C.E. 44, the insurrection of Theudas in 44–46, the famine in Judea in 46–47[, and] the Jerusalem riot between 48–51.”

23. Luckensmeyer (*Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, 155) contends that the aorist is a proleptic aorist, drawing upon verbal aspect theory, since all other references to wrath in 1 Thessalonians point to a future manifestation rather than something already realized. He contends that part of the weight for this reading is that there is no obvious candidate for a historical event, and Paul does not make reference to one (*Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, 152). Fee, *First and Second Letters*, 102, notes that the aorist points to the certainty of the future judgment (not the timing).

24. G. K. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians* (IVPNTC; Downer's Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 86–87, argues for an inaugurated experience of wrath through the hardening of Israel's hearts (cf. Rom 9) with future culminations in the destruction of Jerusalem and then finally at the Day of Judgment.

25. Cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 1.8; 4.4–5; 5.5. On the relationship between the Parousia and the Judgment in Paul, see Joseph Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 221–243.

26. Rightly Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 221.

27. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 441–42.

28. Schnelle, *Apostle Paul*, 176.

resurrected (1 Thess. 4.16–17; 5.10), because they are united to Christ. The language of being “dead in Christ” (1 Thess. 4.16; οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ) implies a participatory logic.²⁹ The dead in Christ will be raised even as Christ was raised, and they will be σὺν αὐτῷ (cf. 1 Thess. 5.9–10).³⁰ As Plevnik states, “Those who have shared in the Easter event will also share in its completion.”³¹

However, this perspective on the hope that Christians can have in Christ is precisely something that the Thessalonians did not fully grasp. Paul’s words were intended to console those who feared that their recently deceased loved ones were somehow going to miss out on the Parousia and were grieving as if there was no hope for them (1 Thess. 4.13; ἵνα μὴ λυπηθῇτε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα). Donfried has made the intriguing observation that the famous triad of faith, hope, and love, which occurs together in the beginning (1 Thess. 1.3)³² and the end of the letter (1 Thess. 5.8),³³ appears again in the middle with the report from Timothy, but without “hope” (1 Thess. 3.6; τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην).³⁴ The implication is that when Timothy returned with positive word about the Thessalonian response to their suffering, he could attest to their abiding love for one another, for Paul, and for the Lord, as well as their firm faith, but they had been rattled to a degree that their hope was shaken. Thus, the Thessalonians needed to be encouraged in this way.³⁵

What we see then is that the eschatology is geared towards a community that needs to have their hope renewed. In particular, their hope in the face of death. Thus, when we address whether or not 1 Thessalonians reflects a primitive eschatology, we need to account for the relevance of what Paul says about eschatology for his readers. As Pieter G. R. de Villiers notes, “All these eschatological pronouncements in 1 Thessalonians are closely linked with the particular situation of the church in 1 Thessalonians.”³⁶ Luckensmeyer concludes as well that the motifs chosen for Paul’s eschatological discourse are due to “their applicability to the Thessalonian situation” and that Paul’s “systematic concern” in 1 Thessalonians “is to address a

community in conflict.”³⁷ Though it is probably best not to think of Paul choosing these themes since, as Paul Foster notes, Paul was responding to specific questions and misunderstandings in a pastorally sensitive way.³⁸ I suggest, therefore, that if we take this seriously, it suggests that the eschatology of 1 Thessalonians need not be interpreted as an expression of the earliest Pauline eschatology.

It has been argued, however, that the chief way that 1 Thessalonians expresses primitivity is not through imminence *per se*, but through the possibility that early Christians believed they would not die.³⁹ Perhaps the Thessalonians were shocked by the deaths of fellow Christians because they believed that Christ’s return was so imminent that they would all survive until his return. Or perhaps they believed that through baptism and the reception of the Spirit they had already crossed from death into new life, never to taste physical death.⁴⁰ Against these possibilities, Paul’s response in 1 Thess. 4.13–18 does not address who will or will not survive, but whether the dead have any part at all in the Parousia. In fact, Paul speaks about living and dying freely in 1 Thess. 5.10 without any concern to provide a caveat, which is telling. This suggests that the Thessalonians believed that the dead would either be disadvantaged or would miss out entirely on the Parousia. The latter is more likely, though Schweitzer famously suggested the former.⁴¹ Although we might not be able to decide precisely why,⁴² the Thessalonians do seem to have believed that those who had passed away would not be able to participate in the Parousia at all. As Barclay notes, this makes sense of why their grief could lead to hopelessness (cf. 1 Thess. 4.13).⁴³

For our purposes, the crucial point is that this passage need not be understood as an indication of Paul’s earliest eschatological perspective within a developmental trajectory. If the Thessalonians themselves thought that they would not die before the Parousia, that does not mean that Paul thought the same thing. There is a crucial distinction there. If the Thessalonians believed they would survive, that would reflect

37. Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, 327.

38. Paul Foster, “The Eschatology of the Thessalonian Correspondence: An Exercise in Pastoral Pedagogy and Constructive Theology,” *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 1.1 (2011): 57–81.

39. Lüdemann, *Earliest Christian Text*, 93; *idem*, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles*, 202, 209.

40. W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 291. Cf. Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 93–100.

41. Schweitzer (*Mysticism*, 90–100) argues that the Thessalonians believed that the deceased would miss out on the interim Messianic kingdom and would not be resurrected until the end of the millennial reign. However, against this view is the fact that Paul does not appear to have believed in an interim period beyond the current interadvental age (cf. 1 Cor. 15.20–28). Though more importantly, why would the Thessalonians grieve like there was no hope if they were still destined to be resurrected in the future?

42. For example, did Paul fail to teach on the resurrection, or did they misunderstand him? 1 Thess. 3.10 and the quick withdrawal from Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2.17) could suggest an incompleteness to Paul’s original teaching, but we cannot know for sure.

43. Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 220. Cf. Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 95.

29. See Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 119–20.

30. Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 114–16; C. Campbell, *Paul and Union*, 227–28.

31. Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 77.

32. 1 Thess. 1.3a: μνημονεύοντες ὑμῶν τοῦ ἔργου τῆς πίστεως καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς ὑπομονῆς τῆς ἐλπίδος ...

33. 1 Thess. 5.8: ἡμεῖς δὲ ἡμέρας ὄντες νήφωμεν ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας.

34. Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity*, 39–41.

35. Colin R. Nicholl (*From Hope to Despair in Thessalonica: Situating 1 and 2 Thessalonians* [SNTSMS 126; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008]) makes the intriguing argument for the authenticity of 2 Thessalonians based on a similar observation that the two letters provide evidence of a community moving on a trajectory from hope to despair.

36. Pieter G. R. de Villiers, “In the Presence of God: The Eschatology of 1 Thessalonians,” in *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents* (edited by Jan G. van der Watt; WUNT II/315; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 325, cf. pages 326–27.

an early Thessalonian view rather than an early Pauline view. No matter when we date 1 Thessalonians, it is unthinkable that no Christians had died up to that point. This is not necessarily something the Thessalonians would have known. Paul would certainly have had to think through this issue before the Thessalonians did. Thus, reconciling death was new *for them*, not *for him*. Paul founded the church and wrote the letter sometime soon afterwards. In that brief interval, some members of the Thessalonian community died. We are not sure how they died, though it was probably not directly related to the external conflict they were experiencing.⁴⁴ The key point is that not a lot of time had passed and yet some Christians had died. Why would we suspect that this phenomenon of Christians dying was a new experience or was somehow difficult for Paul to account for? A Pharisee like Paul would have believed in the resurrection.⁴⁵ 1 Corinthians 15, for example, shows that the resurrection *per se* was an issue in Corinth, not that Paul had just come to believe in it. The conflict regarding the relationship between the Parousia and the death of Christians in 1 Thessalonians is therefore not reflective of an early-Pauline issue, but an early-Thessalonian issue.⁴⁶

So the more crucial question for our purposes is whether *Paul* believed that they would survive until the Parousia. Many scholars contend that he did.⁴⁷ There are two important things to recognize here, however. First, Paul never says explicitly that he will survive until the Parousia, and neither does he say that other Christians will survive. He has in mind two groups: the survivors and the deceased. Some contend that Paul believed that he would be part of the former category because he uses the first person plural in 1 Thess. 4.15 and 4.17 to refer to the survivors (e.g. ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι). However, against this interpretation is the fact that Paul did not know if or when he would die, and so he identifies with those who are living since to identify with the dead would mean he knew that he would die beforehand.⁴⁸

44. The question of how they died is of less concern for our purposes. Some suggest that it was the result of the persecution they were experiencing. This is certainly a possibility that would fit nicely with the references to suffering and conflict. See, esp., Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity*, 41–46, 78, 120, 132–34. However, it seems odd that Paul would fail to mention that these people died as “martyrs.” So Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 158; Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 185, 219; *idem*, “Conflict in Thessalonica,” 514. Regardless of how they died, the key point is that they died soon after Paul founded the church in Thessalonica and this created further turmoil in the community.

45. N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (COQG 3; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 215, notes the consistency of 1 Thess. 4.13–18 with belief in resurrection for a Pharisee, and that it is “functionally equivalent” to the similar language found in 1 Cor. 15.51–52.

46. Similarly, Matera, *God’s Saving Grace*, 190–91, f.n. 12.

47. So, e.g., R. H. Charles, *Eschatology: The Doctrine of A Future Life in Israel, Judaism, and Christianity, A Critical History* (New York: Schocken, 1963), 441; Malherbe, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 270–71; Bruce, *1–2 Thessalonians*, xxxviii, 99; Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 159; Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 81, 96.

48. Witherington, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 134; *idem*, “Transcending Imminence: The Gordian Knot of Pauline Eschatology,” in *Eschatology in Bible & Theology: Evangelical Essays at the Dawn of a New Millennium* (ed. Kent E. Brower and Mark W. Elliott; Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 174.

Second, if Paul believed that he would survive, why did he refrain from picking a time or setting a date? In 1 Thess. 5.1 he refers to the times and seasons but never makes a prediction.⁴⁹ He simply calls for the church to be ready. What’s more, in this time of waiting for the return of Christ, Paul expressly points to the fact that he does not know if he or the Thessalonians will in fact survive until the coming of Christ in 1 Thessalonians 5.10b, utilizing the first person plural again (ἵνα εἴτε γρηγορῶμεν εἴτε καθεύδωμεν ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ζήσωμεν).⁵⁰

It is important to reiterate again that the purpose of 1 Thess. 4.13–18 is to console a suffering community who have stayed firm in their faith despite their circumstances.⁵¹ Note for example the refrain at the end of the two most sustained eschatological sections (1 Thess. 4.13–18 and 5.1–11) with the exhortation to encourage one another (cf. 1 Thess. 4.18; 5.11; παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους).

That Paul’s primary intent is to console, even in 1 Thess. 4.13–18, can be seen in the elliptical way that Paul addresses the Parousia (i.e. several key events in the eschatological timeline that we might expect to find are missing). As Plevnik has pointed out, the absence of other relevant eschatological images is not because those things were rejected by Paul. The reason, he rightly affirms, is because of the role of this passage to console.⁵² Paul is not addressing an eschatological timeline *per se*, or listing all relevant eschatological events. His elliptical approach demonstrates that his primary goal is not to inform them about eschatological matters in any sort of comprehensive manner, but to utilize the imagery for the purposes of consolation.

Part of Paul’s message of consolation in 1 Thess. 4.13–18 is the belief that when the Lord returns the survivors will meet the Lord in the air on the clouds (1 Thess. 4.17). Again, given the elliptical nature of the passage, he does not spell out what occurs after that. Yet this language of meeting the Lord in the air, whether it refers to translation or to resurrection, is rooted in Daniel 7 and the vision of the Son of Man coming on the clouds, as suggested by N. T. Wright. Just as in Daniel, so here in 1 Thessalonians in keeping with the emphasis on conflict, the image conveys the vindication of God’s suffering people.⁵³

Because of their positive response to the conflict, the suffering of the Thessalonians will not render Paul’s labor and ministry among them in vain (1 Thess. 3.5; εἰς κενόν). He is confident and pleased with their positive response to suffering (1 Thess. 3.8). The eschatological result of their positive response will be realized at the

49. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, 140.

50. Here Paul is building off of the euphemism of sleeping for death as in Dan. 12.2 (cf. 1 Thess. 4.13; περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων). For the position that Paul held out both possibilities of surviving or dying before the Parousia, see Best, *First and Second Epistles*, 195–96; Witherington, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 134; Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, 140; Fee, *First and Second Letters*, 175–76; Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, 233–36.

51. Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity*, 119–20.

52. Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 72–73.

53. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 215.

Lord's coming, when they will be Paul's hope, joy, and crown of boasting (1 Thess. 2.19; ἡμῶν ἐλπίς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος καύχησης). In the meantime, they are to wait for the Lord's return (1 Thess. 1.10; ἀναμένειν). As Luckensmeyer rightly affirms, "the motif of waiting implies nearness."⁵⁴ They are to wait with renewed hope in the glory that is to come, pursuing holiness and sanctification until he returns (1 Thess. 5.23), knowing that they belong to God and that he is at work in them (1 Thess. 5.24).

Conflict in Galatians

The external threat in Galatians was different from what we just surveyed in 1 Thessalonians in a few important respects, and so too was the response to that external threat.⁵⁵ The main difference is that in Galatians the external threat came from a group of hostile "trouble-makers" or "agitators" who were advocating that the Gentiles appropriate Jewish customs, including the reception of circumcision (cf. Gal. 5.2–6), which Paul regarded as a false gospel (Gal. 1.8–9). Thus, the conflict included opposition as well as ideology, which is not paralleled in 1 Thessalonians. According to most accounts of Galatians, the opponents in Galatia were simply *promoting* their theology and nothing more. However, this does not really do justice to the way that Paul portrays the conflict. The agitators are depicted as hostile and divisive.⁵⁶ Because of their illegitimate advocacy of circumcision, Paul associates them with the flesh. Having begun with the Spirit, Paul asks his audience in Gal. 3.3, are you now being perfected in the flesh (νῦν σαρκὶ ἐπιτελεῖσθε)? Paul says that the agitators want to have a good showing in the flesh (Gal. 6.12; εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκὶ) and want to boast in the flesh of the Galatians (Gal. 6.13; ἵνα ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ σαρκὶ καυχῶνται). The works of the flesh (τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός) in Gal. 5.19–21, importantly for this association, include in the core of the list a series of divisive and community-destroying activities (ἔχθραι, ἔρις, ζῆλος, θυμοί, ἐριθεῖαι, διχοστασίαι, αἰρέσεις, φθόνοι).⁵⁷ Those who are

advocating circumcision, and those among the Galatians who are inclined to follow them, are promoting these works of the flesh in the community (cf. Gal. 5.15). As well, in the allegory of Gal. 4, Paul speaks of the Galatians as Isaac-children who are caught up in a conflict with Ishmael-children. These Ishmael children, born according to the flesh (ὁ κατὰ σάρκα γεννηθείς), are best understood as including the agitators, those whom Paul says are persecuting (ἐδίωκεν) the children of the Spirit *now* (Gal. 4.29; οὕτως καὶ νῦν). The portrait appears to be that the agitators were not simply advocating or promoting circumcision, but they were aggressively doing so. As Paul says it, they were *compelling* or *forcing* the Galatians to be circumcised in order to avoid persecution (Gal. 6.12; οὗτοι ἀναγκάζουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμεσθαι, μόνον ἵνα τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μὴ διώκωνται). Thus, because of pressure upon the agitators, as Paul sees it, they in turn were pressuring the Galatians.⁵⁸

The Galatians, therefore, need the message of the cross in the midst of this particular conflict, and this is evident by the fact that the overwhelming christological emphasis in Galatians is that Christ died (cf. Gal. 1.1, 4; 2.19–21; 3.1, 13; 4.5; 5.24; 6.12, 14, 17). In Galatians Jesus is the crucified Christ, and this is the message that Paul thought his audience needed to receive in this situation. This is not only the case because the message of what the cross accomplished counters the ideology of the agitators (i.e., believers have died to the law with Christ and if righteousness came through the law then Christ died in vain; Gal. 2.18–21), but also because, I suggest, this emphasis was tailored for a community on the verge of committing apostasy by receiving circumcision. As Paul sees it, receiving circumcision in the midst of the present conflict would be for the purpose of alleviating the social tension.⁵⁹ The

the works of the flesh in Gal. 5.19–21 are tailored as a critique of those promoting the flesh through circumcision. That the vice list functions in this way can also be seen through the inclusion of ζῆλος in the list, which might be connected to the critique of the zealous behavior of the agitators towards the Galatians (cf. Gal. 4.17–18; ζηλοῦσιν...ζηλοῦσθαι).

58. Determining whether the pressure upon the agitators came from local Jewish (recently Peter Oakes, *Galatians*, [Paideia; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015], 187) or imperial authorities (Bruce Winter, "The Imperial Cult and Early Christians in Pisidian Antioch [Acts XIII 13–50 and Gal VI 11–18]," in *Actes du Ier Congrès International sur Antioche de Pisidie* [ed. T. Drew-Bear, Mehmet Tashalan, and Christine M. Thomas; Lyon: Kocaeli, 2002], 65–75), or perhaps a mix of the two (Hardin, *Galatians and The Imperial Cult*, 85–115), is not necessary. Some sort of pressure exacerbated the need for the agitators to promote circumcision among the Galatians. The idea that the pressure stems from Jerusalem has been suggested (see esp. Robert Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation," in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* [ed. Mark D. Nanos; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002], 324–47), though this position is too dependent upon the idea that the agitators were from Jerusalem, which is not clear.

59. On the suffering of Galatians, note the persecution of the children of the Spirit in Gal. 4.29, but see especially Paul's question in Gal. 3.4: τοσαῦτα ἐπάθετε εἰκῇ? The interpretation of this verse is split between scholars who interpret πάσχω as a reference to the suffering of the Galatians that could end up being in vain, and those who understand the verb, in the light of the context about the Galatians' reception of the Spirit, to refer to certain positive spiritual experiences that could be in vain. For a defense of the position that Paul asks the Galatians about their suffering, see John Anthony Dunne, "Suffering in Vain: A Study of the Interpretation of ΠΑΣΧΩ in Galatians 3.4," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36.1 (2013): 3–16.

54. Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology of First Thessalonians*, 235.

55. When I say external threat I do not mean to reject the case that the opponents were possibly locals (as argued by, e.g., Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002]; Justin K. Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult: A Critical Analysis of the First-Century Social Context of Paul's Letter* [WUNT II/237; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008]). In Galatians, there is a clear us-them distinction, which means, at the very least, they were considered "outsiders" by Paul. The alternative proposal, that the agitators were from Jerusalem, lacks clear evidence. But however we understand the provenance of the agitators there is no escaping the us-them dichotomy. Therefore, we can speak of them as an external threat regardless of whether we are certain about their origin or not.

56. For an extended defense of this, see John Anthony Dunne, "Cast Out of the Aggressive Agitators (Gal 4:29–30): Suffering, Identity, and the Ethics of Expulsion in Paul's Mission to the Galatians," in *Sensitivity Towards Outsiders: Exploring the Dynamic Relationship between Mission and Ethos in the New Testament and Early Christianity* (ed. Jacobus [Kobus] Kok, Tobias Nicklas, Dieter T. Roth, and Christopher M. Hays; WUNT II; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 246–69.

57. Just before the string central vices is φαρμακεία, which may recall the imagery of the "evil eye" and bewitching in Gal. 3.1 (τίς ὑμᾶς ἐβάσκανεν), further demonstrating the way that the list of

question for the Galatians is this: are they actually willing to follow Christ *even* to the cross? In Galatians Paul's relationship has become strained (Gal. 4.16), and he is not sure how things will pan out. He fears that he may have labored over them in vain (Gal. 4.11; φοβοῦμαι ὑμᾶς μή πως εἰκῇ κεκοπίακα εἰς ὑμᾶς). If the Galatians go down the path they are on, there will be consequences, and hence the eschatological focus in Galatians is on the realities that they are turning away from and the threat of future judgment. It is to the eschatology of Galatians that we now turn.

Eschatology in Galatians

Galatians is often thought to reflect a later period in Paul's thought, particularly when imminent eschatology had begun to wane. However, Galatians has not always been an easy letter to fit into a chronological grid on the basis of eschatology alone. Some scholars who contend that Paul's eschatology did in fact develop over time, appear to struggle with discerning where Galatians fits exactly. R. H. Charles famously contended that Paul's eschatology developed in four stages in the following sequence. The first period is found in 1–2 Thessalonians,⁶⁰ the second period is 1 Corinthians,⁶¹ the third period is 2 Corinthians and Romans,⁶² and the fourth period is Philippians, Colossians, and Ephesians.⁶³ For some reason, Galatians is missing from the proposal. In Smalley's account he contends that the Pauline letters contain "a homogenous eschatological outlook, in which Paul's own background and intellect, as well as the differing milieu and problems of his readers, cause more or less the same thing to be said in different ways."⁶⁴ Yet, the intriguing point for our purposes is that he does not try to situate Galatians into this scheme. Both Charles and Smalley seem to be tacitly pointing to the fact that Galatians is hard to peg down.

A great scholarly example of how anomalous Galatians is can be seen with the work of J. C. Beker. In his study, *Paul the Apostle*, Beker was concerned to uncover the *coherence* of Paul's thought once the *contingency* of expression was properly taken into account. For Beker, that coherent gospel was the imminent triumph of God. Somewhat famously, Beker lamented that Galatians nearly undermined his whole project: "Galatians threatens to undo what I have posited as the coherent core of Pauline thought, the apocalyptic coordinates of the Christ-event that focus on the imminent, cosmic triumph of God."⁶⁵ The reason Galatians does this, he explains,

is because "the eschatological present dominates the letter."⁶⁶ Due to his grid of coherence/contingency, Beker accounts for this by attributing the uniqueness of Galatians to its exigency, stating, "the crisis situation demands the either/or of bondage under the law or freedom in Christ."⁶⁷ While I think Beker is right to point to the crisis in Galatia as coloring the eschatological rhetoric, I disagree with him that this should be connected to the dating of Galatians.⁶⁸

Recent studies on the eschatology of Galatians have tended to focus on whether it is an expression of an "apocalyptic" perspective, though this is noticeably different from the project of Beker who regarded the apocalyptic nature of Paul's eschatology to be primarily the degree to which it expresses imminence. The so-called "apocalyptic" reading of Paul cannot be addressed at length here, and I have offered my assessment elsewhere,⁶⁹ but for our purposes it is worth noting that, by and large, the approach to Galatians advocated by scholars such as Beverly Gaventa, Susan Eastman, J. Louis Martyn, Martinus de Boer, and Douglas Campbell, among others, still understands the letter to be predominantly "realized" in its eschatology. J. Louis Martyn's magisterial Anchor Bible commentary is regarded as the best articulation of this approach.⁷⁰ Martyn famously says that the key question for the Galatians is "what time is it?" If they really understood the nature of the *present time*, the issue of circumcision would be resolved. This is a helpful way to get to the heart of the problem in Galatian, but one thing is missing: the fact that the present time is leading to an imminent future. The most extensive study to shift the balance towards futurism is the work of Yon-Gyong Kwon. In his *Eschatology in Galatians*, Kwon provides a much-needed and helpful corrective to the neglect of the letter's futuristic orientation.⁷¹ However, in his effort to establish his proposal, Kwon goes too far. A more balanced proposal that recognizes that the futuristic and "realized" elements go hand-in-hand is needed, especially one that recognizes how the eschatology is

66. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 58. Cf. *idem*, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 72.

67. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 58. In his study on eschatology in Galatians, Moisés Silva ("Eschatological Structures in Galatians," in *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry* [ed. Thomas E. Schmidt and Moisés Silva; Sheffield: JSOT, 1994], 161) critiques Beker for failing to recognize that Paul "grounds the future triumph of God's righteousness in a carefully developed view of realized eschatology" (emphasis mine). With this critique, Silva attempts to show that Galatians is, in fact, a representation of Paul's coherent gospel. However, Silva does not question whether the focus on "realized eschatology" is an accurate representation of Galatians.

68. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 42.

69. John Anthony Dunne, "Suffering and Covenantal Hope in Galatians: A Critique of the Apocalyptic Reading and Its Proponents," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 68.1 (2015): 1–15.

70. J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

71. Yon-Gyong Kwon, *Eschatology in Galatians: Rethinking Paul's Response to the Crisis in Galatia* (WUNT II/183; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

60. Charles, *Eschatology*, 438–45.

61. Charles, *Eschatology*, 445–54.

62. Charles, *Eschatology*, 455–61.

63. Charles, *Eschatology*, 461–63.

64. Stephen S. Smalley, "The Delay of Parousia," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83.1 (1964): 50.

65. J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 58.

tailored to the situation at hand. As we will see, Galatians is far more futuristic than is often assumed, and it also communicates imminent expectation as well.⁷²

A recent study by Francois Tolmie divides the temporal references in Galatians to *before the fullness of time* and *in the fullness of time* on the basis of Gal. 4.4.⁷³ This helpfully categorizes the contrast in the letter between the former slavery that characterized the world (to the law, the στοιχεῖα, etc) and the new liberty found in Christ. However, Tolmie rightly notes that before the fullness of time there was also hope—God’s promises (cf. Gal. 3.8–9, 18). The present reality of salvation includes the coming of faith (Gal. 3.23; τὴν μέλλουσάν πιστίν), a metonymy for the whole Christ-event. The promised Spirit has been poured out on the newly redefined people of God inclusive of Gentiles (Gal. 3.2, 5, 14; 4.6–7),⁷⁴ demonstrating that Israel has been restored (cf. Gal 6.16),⁷⁵ and that the age of the new creation has dawned (Gal. 6.15).

I do not intend to provide a full account of the eschatology in Galatians, but simply want to provide some evidence that Galatians contains far more futuristic elements than is often recognized (elements that are still no less conditioned by the occasion). To start, consider the nature of justification. Those who profess faith are justified in the present as a proleptic announcement of the future verdict on the final day. That justification is future-oriented is clear from Gal. 2.16c, where Paul can say that no flesh *will be justified* (δικαιωθήσεται) *by works of the law*,⁷⁶ and in Gal.

72. *Contra* most. Cf. Meeks (*First Urban Christians*, 176), “The emphasis throughout Galatians is on present fulfillment of eschatological hopes.”

73. Francois Tolmie, “Living in Hope ‘in the Fullness of Time’: The Eschatology of Galatians,” in *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents* (edited by Jan G. van der Watt; WUNT II/315; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

74. For the restoration of Israel, see especially Rodrigo J. Morales, *The Spirit and the Restoration of Israel: New Exodus and New Creation Motifs in Galatians* (WUNT II/282; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

75. Gal. 6.16 is highly contentious. Recently, Susan G. Eastman (“Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-reading of Galatians 6.16 and Romans 9–11,” *New Testament Studies* 56.3 [2010]: 367–95) has made a substantial defense of the position that the Israel of God refers to the ethnic people of Israel by pointing to the verse as a prayer for them to find mercy from God. Against this interpretation, however, is the emphasis in Galatians on Paul’s Gentile audience being drawn into the family of Abraham by faith and through their union with Christ (cf. Gal. 3.7, 9; 29; 4.28), and the impact of the full appellation, the Israel of God, since in the new creation there is neither Jew nor Greek (Gal. 3.28) and circumcision is no longer of any value (cf. Gal. 5.6; 6.15). Thus, the Israel of God is interpreted by most to be a reference to the newly constituted people of God comprised of both Jews and Gentiles by virtue of their union with Christ, the true see of Abraham (Gal. 3.16). So, e.g., Marie-Joseph Lagrange, *Saint Paul: Épître aux Galates* (Études Bibliques; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1950), 166; Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament 7; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951), 209; Pierre Bonnard, *L’Épître de Saint Paul aux Galates* (Neuchâtel; Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1953), 131; Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 320–23; Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word, 1990), 296–99; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 380–83; Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 398–403.

76. On Gal. 2.16 referring to the final judgment, see, e.g., Silva, “Eschatological Structures,”

5.5, where Paul speaks of awaiting the hope of righteousness (ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα).⁷⁷

This understanding of justification coheres with the multiple allusions to the final judgment throughout the last few chapters of Galatians, allusions that are often missed. In Gal. 5.2, for example, Paul tells the Galatians that if they receive circumcision Christ will not benefit them (Gal. 5.2; Χριστὸς ὑμᾶς οὐδὲν ὠφελήσει).⁷⁸ After announcing the works of the flesh in Gal. 5.19–21, Paul says those who perform these works will not inherit the kingdom of God (βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν). This is noted just before listing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5.22–23), which suggests that those who produce these fruit will inherit the kingdom. It is significant to point out as well that Paul says that he telling the Galatians about the works of the flesh in Gal. 5.21 *beforehand* (ἄ προλέγω ὑμῖν), which points further to the futuristic connotations of the passage.⁷⁹ In the light of these points here, I would also suggest that the use of the word φανερά in Gal. 5.19, just before recounting the works of flesh, should not be rendered as “evident, visible, or obvious” as most English translations and commentators do, but rather as “revealed” or “manifested.” Thus, Paul is not saying that the works of the flesh are “obvious,” but rather he is saying that they are revealed in advance as those things which will lead a person away from inheriting the Kingdom of God. This understanding of φανερά here is similar to Paul’s use of φανερός in 1 Cor. 3.13. There, in a similar judgment context, Paul writes that “each one’s work will become manifest (φανερὸν), for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done” (cf. also 1 Cor. 4.5). Thus, the whole dynamic of the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit is inherently futuristic.

More examples of future judgment in Galatians can be illustrated. Referring to “the one troubling you” in Gal. 5.10 (ὁ δὲ ταρασσὼν ὑμᾶς), Paul says that “he will bear the judgment” (βαστάσει τὸ κρίμα). The reference to an individual is probably not a reference to a leader but is probably in keeping with the final judgment image since final judgment texts often focus upon individuals.⁸⁰ In Gal. 6.4–5 a final judgment

77. On Gal. 5.5 and waiting for the hope of righteousness as an allusion to the final judgment, see, e.g., Bonnard, *L’Épître de Saint Paul aux Galates*, 104; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Exeter: Paternoster, 1982), 231–32.

78. For Gal. 5.2 being a reference to the final judgment, see, e.g., Bonnard, *L’Épître de Saint Paul aux Galates*, 103; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 313.

79. In fact, Paul says that he has told them this already (Gal. 5.21; προεῖπον). This provides an intriguing insight into some of the futuristic elements in Paul’s original preaching. We do not have much information about Paul’s initial proclamation in Galatia, though we know that the Galatians received the Spirit through his preaching (Gal. 3.1–2). Although his ministry was occasioned by a ‘weakness of the flesh,’ he was well received by the Galatians (Gal. 4.13–14). Paul makes reference to the fact that the agitators have twisted what Paul and his entourage originally preached (Gal. 1.7–8), and that they originally told them to watch out for false teaching (Gal. 1.9; προειρήκαμεν).

80. For Gal. 5.10 as a final judgment image, see Tolmie, “Living in Hope,” 248; Bonnard, *L’Épître de Saint Paul aux Galates*, 106; Moo, *Galatians*, 336.

allusion with an individual focus appears again. Paul calls *each person* (ἐκαστος) to test their own work, and then each one will have (ἔξει) a boast in themselves and not in another. Then, with a γάρ, Paul explains in v.5 that each one (ἐκαστος) will bear (βαστάσει) his own load (φορτίον).⁸¹ The pattern of boasting and bearing in Gal. 6.4–5 as eschatological boasting and eschatological bearing on the Day of Judgment leads to the possibility that, in Gal. 6.14–17, Paul’s eschatological boast in the cross (Gal. 6.14; Ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) and present bearing of the marks of Jesus (Gal. 6.17; ἐγὼ γὰρ τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματί μου βαστάζω) are to be interpreted in a similar eschatological light.⁸² The marks of Jesus therefore are the marks that count on the final day in distinction to circumcision. In Gal. 6.7–9 there is an eschatological harvest metaphor for reaping what is sowed; if one sows to the flesh, he will reap corruption (Gal. 6.8; θερίσει φθοράν), but if one sows to the Spirit, he will reap eternal life (Gal. 6.8; θερίσει ζωὴν αἰώνιον). We will reap (θερίσομεν), Paul writes, if we do not give up (Gal. 6.9; μὴ ἐκλυόμενοι). This eschatological harvest language further underscores the futuristic implications of the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5.22–23, and points to the need to persevere to the end.

Thus, in alluding to the Day of Judgment in Galatians, the Parousia is alluded to by implication because it is part of a nexus of accompanying events. In other words, the part can refer to the whole. Dunn rightly notes this point, yet he concludes in regard to an imminent Parousia that “of all Paul’s major letters, Galatians seems least interested in the theme.”⁸³ He reiterates this by arguing, “In Galatians the failure to refer at all to Christ’s coming and judgment is also surprising, given, not least, the apocalyptic character of the opening reference to rescue ‘from the present evil age’ (1.4), the talk of ‘new creation’ (6.15), and the final warnings of eschatological retribution (6.7–9).”⁸⁴ In his commentary, Dunn also shies away from recognizing allusions to final judgment in, among other places, Gal. 5.10 and 6.4–5.⁸⁵ As we have seen, however, there are good reasons to find allusions to the final judgment in Galatians, and if they are genuinely intended by Paul, this ought to be interpreted as related to his Parousia expectation.

81. Cf. 4 Ezra 7.104–105. For 6.4–5 as final judgment allusions, see Tolmie, “Living in Hope,” 249; Bonnard, *L’Épître de Saint Paul aux Galates*, 124–25; Franz Mußner, *Der Galaterbrief* (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament; Freiburg: Herder, 1974), 401–2; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 361–63; David W. Kuck, *Judgment and Community Conflict: Paul’s Use of Apocalyptic Judgment Language in 1 Corinthians 3:5–4:5* (NovTSup 66; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 227; *idem*, “‘Each Will Bear His Own Burden’: Paul’s Creative Use of An Apocalyptic Motif,” *New Testament Studies* 40.2 (1994): 289–97.

82. For a defense of this interpretation, see John Anthony Dunne, *Persecution and Participation in Galatians* (WUNT II/454; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 93–110.

83. Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 302.

84. Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 309.

85. *Contra* James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 277, 326.

If Paul’s allusions to the final judgment in Galatians are to be understood as part of an anticipation of the Parousia, we can see how the return of Christ functions very differently in Galatians than in 1 Thessalonians. In Galatians it is part of Paul’s attempt to warn his readers about their current course of action. Paul’s concern for the potential apostasy of his converts is further suggestive of the fact that they could potentially forfeit some future blessing. When recounting their initial reception of the Spirit in Gal. 3.1–5, Paul asks the Galatians, *τοσαῦτα ἐπάθετε εἰκῇ*, which should either be rendered *did you suffer so many things in vain*, or, *did you experience so many things in vain*. I argue for the former,⁸⁶ but the more important point here is that “in vain” suggests that a future reality could be compromised. This is expressed again in Gal. 4.11 when Paul admits that he fears that he may have labored in vain (*μή πως εἰκῇ κεκοπίακα εἰς ὑμᾶς*). Thus, in the light of the present conflict, it is clear that the entire letter is oriented towards the future course of action for Paul’s readers, and the desire for their future Christological formation (Gal. 4.19).⁸⁷ Paul wants the Galatians to resist circumcision, and to endure opposition for the sake of the cross just as he has (Gal. 5.11; 6.17).

The future blessing that they will forfeit if they do not endure the present conflict is the inheritance (cf. Gal. 3.18). In Gal. 3.26–29, as a result of belonging to Christ and being united to him in baptism, the Galatians are said to be part of the seed of Abraham and heirs according to the promise. In Gal. 4.7, those who have received the Spirit are made sons instead of slaves, and become an heir through God. In Gal. 4.30, as part of a scriptural citation from Genesis 21 that parallels the situation in Galatia, the text reads that the son of the slave girl will not inherit (*οὐ γὰρ μὴ κληρονομήσει*) alongside the son of the free woman, which directly applies the promise of inheritance to the Galatians. These texts point forward to a future inheritance rather than to the Galatians being heirs who already have their inheritance, such as the Spirit. Rather, the best answer from Galatians for the content of the inheritance comes in Gal. 5.21 where the kingdom of God is explicitly the referent of the inheritance.

In addition to the fact that there are multiple futuristic elements in Galatians, as we have seen, there are a few important places where I would suggest that imminence is also in view. As noted already, in Galatians 5.5, Paul speaks of the hope of righteousness (*ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης*), which suggests that righteousness is in some sense a future reality (even as it is also a present reality). Just as in 1 Thess. 1.10, so also in Galatians 5.5 *waiting* (*ἀπεκδεχόμεθα*) for the hope of righteousness implies imminence. This is made more compelling in the light of the language regarding the fullness of time in Gal. 4.4 (*ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου*). As Tolmie has noted, the fullness of time needs to be understood in the light of the evil powers present in the letter. He rightly affirms, “*Theologically, the nature of the ‘fullness of time’ implies*

86. Dunne, “Suffering in Vain,” 3–16.

87. Rightly noted by Tolmie, but with a different understanding of the conflict (see Tolmie, “Living in Hope,” 245–46).

that something still has to happen in the future.”⁸⁸ The overlap of the fullness of time with the present evil age suggests a tension which inherently points to a future eradication of these powers (cf. Gal. 1.4).⁸⁹ As well, I would add that the presence of suffering and conflict in the letter from the children of the flesh (cf. Gal. 4.29) adds additional fuel to this futuristic fire. But the key point to keep in mind is that if the fullness of time has come (Gal. 4.4), this suggests that time is almost up. In fact, the lack of time is suggested in Gal. 6.10. Paul says that Christians should do good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of faith, and he introduces this idea by saying “as we have time” (ὡς καιρὸν ἔχομεν). Seen in the light of Gal. 4.4 and the fullness of time, this reference in Gal. 6.10 is suggestive of the fact that Paul might not have thought that there was very much time left at all.⁹⁰ This is bolstered further by one final text. In Gal. 6.17 Paul says that no one should cause him trouble because he bears on his body the marks of Jesus. The verse begins with τοῦ λοιποῦ, which should not be translated as “finally,” as if it should be understood as signaling the final section of the letter like the accusative τὸ λοιπόν.⁹¹ Rather τοῦ λοιποῦ is best understood as a genitive of time.⁹² Essentially then the construction would mean “with the time that is left” or “with the remaining time,” which reinforces the imminence suggested in Gal. 6.10. Thus, in Galatians, the eschatology is more futuristic than is often assumed, and even contains imminent expression alongside references to present eschatological realities. Together, the imminent expression suggests that the present eschatological realities are like links in a potentially short chain of events.

Comparing & Contrasting

This survey of 1 Thessalonians and Galatians should dissuade interpreters from assigning a relative date between the two letters on the basis of eschatology. In 1 Thessalonians, due to the positive response to external conflict, Paul consoles the Thessalonian community with the future hope of Christ’s return. In Galatians, however, the jury is still out as to how they will respond to the threat of the agitators, and so Paul must warn the Galatians about the consequences of their future course of action: judgment and apostasy. With this uncertainty Paul believes that if the Galatians make the wrong choice they will not be vindicated at the final judgment and will miss out on future blessing, including the inheritance. Although the Parousia is not mentioned in Galatians this should not be viewed as being less of a concern

88. Tolmie, “Living in Hope,” 253.

89. Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 52. Contra Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 176, who argues that the focus is squarely on what has already been done.

90. Similarly, Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 52.

91. Rightly Jeff Hubing, *Crucifixion and New Creation: The Strategic Purpose of Galatians 6:11–17* (LNTS 508; London/New York: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2015), 70.

92. Cf. David A. deSilva, *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 146.

for Paul. If the Judgment is part of a network of eschatological events accompanying the Parousia, as attested even in 1 Thessalonians, then Galatians can be viewed as focusing more on one feature of Christ’s return, namely the Judgment, as a way to keep his audience from committing apostasy. Thus, the Parousia has not waned in importance in Galatians. In 1 Thessalonians, the emphasis is different because the situation and the response is different. As de Villiers states regarding 1 Thessalonians, “Other than in letters like Galatians, where certain views also seriously threatened the gospel, Paul responded to the dire situation in a special way. He does not focus in a polemical manner on exposing falsehoods or teaching ‘truths.’ He is the spiritual director of believers who need to be supported in their ongoing spiritual journey.”⁹³ Indeed, but the reason why Paul does not critique a false teaching in 1 Thessalonians is because Paul is not combating the ideology of people who oppose his gospel (or that he perceives to oppose his gospel). The conflict in 1 Thessalonians did not entail concerns about the law, or the precise implications of Gentile inclusion.⁹⁴ It was due to their complete break with their former manner of life (cf. 1 Thess. 1.9–10), which was evidently somewhat unique in Paul’s missionary experience.⁹⁵

The distinct emphases were therefore tailored to each situation and do not undermine the substantive agreements between 1 Thessalonians and Galatians. Both letters refer to present eschatological realities and to future eschatological realities, and both contain anticipation of imminence. The imminent expectation itself has a decidedly different tone between the two letters. For the Galatians, the imminent eschatology serves as a warning that they need to stay on the path they are on and not abandon it for circumcision, whereas in 1 Thessalonians Paul consoles his readers with hope. The same events are spoken of from different angles (depending on whether Paul is consoling or warning). Thus, I contend that what better explains the distinct emphases is not development, but exigence.

The christological portraits are similarly consistent, though again there is a striking difference in emphasis. In 1 Thessalonians Jesus is the returning Messiah, whereas in Galatians he is the crucified Messiah. This is likewise part of Paul’s

93. de Villiers, “In the Presence of God,” 328.

94. Jewett, *Thessalonian Correspondence*, 53–54, sees this as proof that 1 Thessalonians was not written near the time of Galatians. Cf. also Schnelle, *Apostle Paul*, 188–89. Yet the lack of reference to these themes is not an indication of the letter’s date, but rather the relevance of those issues to the circumstances in Thessalonica. The very nature of the Gentile mission itself demonstrates that Paul had thought through the implications of the law for Gentiles from the time of his conversion. See Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (WUNT II/4; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981); Dodd, “Mind of Christ,” 78–79; Ernst Käsemann, “On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic,” in *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 117–18. Thus, the absence of references to the law in 1 Thessalonians does not demonstrate that conflict over the law had not occurred yet, but only that it was not relevant for the churches in Thessalonica.

95. Barclay compares the Thessalonians with the Corinthians in this regard, noting that the Corinthians added their Christian faith to their preexisting lifestyles and networks, leading to a comfortable position vis-à-vis “outsiders,” whereas the Thessalonians made a sharp break with the past, leading to social ostracization and harassment. See Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 181–203.

tailored rhetoric to two different communities that have responded differently to external conflict. The Galatians need to be reminded of their solidarity with the crucified Messiah because of their attempts to alleviate their social tension, and the Thessalonians need to be encouraged in the midst of suffering with the hope of Christ's return.

The distinct eschatological emphases show, therefore, that Paul was not the proverbial handyman who only has a hammer and therefore is only able to see nails. Rather, as a good pastor and a good missionary, Paul's letters show us that he had a multi-faceted toolbox, so to speak, allowing him to address distinct problems with the appropriate tool for the job.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to demonstrate that both 1 Thessalonians and Galatians contain distinct eschatological emphases to suit Paul's argumentative strategy, and that the eschatology of the two letters should not be seen to be evidence for a particular reconstruction of the chronology of these letters or for a waning hope in the Parousia from one to the next (whichever one was written first). This study is not a defense of the priority of Galatians, but it does remove one of the common objections to Galatian priority.⁹⁶ I have deliberately left that issue to the side because I also wished to show that the certainty with which scholars assume that Paul's eschatology developed away from imminent expectation by the time Paul wrote Galatians needed to be challenged without requiring any conclusion about dating or provenance. Overall, this study calls into question that 1 Thessalonians reflects the most primitive form of eschatology and that Galatians can be seen as evidence of a development away from an imminent and futuristic eschatology. When exactly we date these two letters remains an open question, but eschatology should not be used for the purposes of relative dating between them, or for postulating development.

96. The present study opens the door for the possibility of Galatian priority to be determined on other grounds.

Christocentric Letters: Christology in the Greetings of Ignatius's *Romans*

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Abstract: This article examines the role of Jesus in the greetings of Ignatius of Antioch's *Letter to the Romans* and the ways in which the Christology of the greeting foreshadows the presentation of Jesus in the letter body. After observing a trend in New Testament scholarship that sees lengthy greetings as precursors for what follows and a call in Ignatian scholarship to read Ignatius's letters as individual compositions, the essay highlights the extraordinary length of Ignatius's prescript. It argues that Jesus is depicted as Son, God, and law-giver. In each case, these terms prepare the way for how Jesus is portrayed in the body of the letter where he is described in relation to the Father, as the God who models faith and love, and as the one who speaks and teaches truly. These observations about Ignatius's greeting to the Roman church suggest that the promising avenues of research noted in New Testament and Ignatian studies deserve further research in Ignatius's letters and in relation to broader early Christian epistolary practice.

Key Words: Ignatius of Antioch, *Romans*, Christology, letter greetings, epistolary studies

Starting Points

This essay begins at the intersection of two observations about early Christian letters. First, I follow recent scholarship which argues that at least some early Christian letters expand the greeting formula in order to introduce significant themes that are discussed in more detail in the letter body. Such observations have been noted with particular care in New Testament letters.¹ For example, the Elder in 2 John expands the typical epistolary greeting, *χαίρειν* (*chairein*; greetings), to "Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the

1. Franz Schnider and Werner Stenger, *Studien zum neutestamentlichen Briefformular*; New Testament Tools and Studies 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 3–41; John L. White, "Ancient Greek Letters," in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres*, ed. David E. Aune, Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study 21 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 85–105, at 98; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 20; Philip L. Tite, "How to Begin and Why? Diverse Functions of the Pauline Prescript within a Greco-Roman Context," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams, Pauline Studies 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 57–99, at 98.

Father, in truth and love” (2 John 3).² Truth is later described as the source of the author’s joy when the recipients are found to have remained in truth (2 John 4), while love provides the central reason for the letter (2 John 5–6).³ Likewise, the reference to God’s foreknowledge in 1 Peter 1:2 foreshadows the revelation in Christ that has come at the end of time in 1 Peter 1:20. In Philippians 1:1, Paul refers to Timothy as a co-sender and notes that they are both slaves. Timothy is then mentioned in Philippians 2:19–24, and Paul specifically recalls Timothy’s enslavement to the gospel in Philippians 2:22. This tendency among certain early Christian letter-writers to expand introductory formulas can indicate what will come later in the letter.

The second observation that serves as a starting point comes from Ignatian studies. I follow a line of thinking which argues that each of the letters by Ignatius of Antioch was composed as an individual text to be sent to distinct Christian communities.⁴ This statement entails a decision on two further matters regarding Ignatius’s letters. First, the letters must be authentically Ignatian and not, as some have argued, forgeries from the second half of the second century.⁵ For the purposes of this article, a date any time in the first half of the second century is suitable. This broad range of dates is widely, although not universally, regarded as acceptable.⁶ Second, the letters should be understood as separate compositions

2. ἔσται μεθ’ ἡμῶν χάρις ἔλεος εἰρήνη παρὰ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ παρὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ; *estai meth’ hēmōn charis eleos eirēnē para theou patros kai para Iēsou Christou tou huiou tou patros en alētheia kai agapē*.

3. See the helpful analysis of epistolary features found in 2–3 John in Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament*, 27–40.

4. See especially the attempt to come to “a differentiated understanding” of Ignatius’s letters in Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series 42 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2004), 18–20, 180–218.

5. Recent examples of arguments for an inauthentic Ignatian corpus can be found in Robert Joly, *Le Dossier d’Ignace d’Antioche*, Université libre de Bruxelles: Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres 69 (Brussels: Éditions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 1979); Reinhard M. Hübner, “Thesen zur Echtheit und Datierung der sieben Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochien,” *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 1 (1997): 44–72; Hübner, *Der paradox Eine: Antignostischer Monarchianismus im zweiten Jahrhundert*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 50 (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Thomas Lechner, *Ignatius adversus Valentinianos? Chronologische und theologiegeschichtliche Studien zu den Briefen des Ignatius von Antiochien*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 47 (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Walter Schmithals, “Zu Ignatius von Antiochien,” *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 13 (2009): 181–203; Otto Zwierlein, *Petrus in Rom*, 2nd ed., Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 96 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 183–237. For a helpful discussion of the particularly unusual preservation of Ignatius’s *Romans*, see Candida R. Moss, “Riddle Wrapped in an Enigma: Pauline Reception in the Antiochene Acts of Ignatius,” in *Intertextuality in the Second Century*, ed. D. Jeffrey Bingham and Clayton N. Jefford, BAC 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 87–97, at 87–90.

6. Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 29 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1992), 3–9; Mark J. Edwards, “Ignatius and the Second Century: A Response to R. Hübner,” *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 2 (1998): 214–226; Hermann Josef Vogt, “Bemerkungen zur Echtheit der Ignatiusbriefe,” *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 3 (1999): 50–63; Étienne Decreet, “La persécution oubliée des chrétiens d’Antioche sous Trajan et la martyre d’Ignace d’Antioche,” *Revue des études augustiniennes* 52 (2006): 1–29; Paul Foster, “The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch,” in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster

written for communities that are distinct from one another, even if composed over a short period of time.⁷ Although reading Ignatian letters together can be beneficial in reconstructing Ignatius’s thought, the letters can be profitably read individually since that is how they were first sent. However, despite increased attention to reading Ignatius’s letters as individual compositions, little attention has been given to how his lengthy greetings relate to the contents of the letter bodies.

Taking these observations from New Testament and Ignatian studies as points of departure, this article begins to fill a lacuna by exploring the greeting of one of Ignatius’s letters, *Romans*, and its relation to the letter body. I pay particular attention to the role of Jesus to see how the salutation previews christological themes that recur elsewhere. Although Ignatius devotes much of his attention to describing the Roman Christians, this article will focus on the place ascribed to Jesus in the greeting and will examine the way in which these reports interact with Ignatius’s characterization of Jesus in the body of the letter. Jesus is the Father’s Son and the God whom Ignatius and the Romans serve. Accordingly, he models faith and love for the Romans and instructs them as a law-giver. This presentation of Jesus is expanded in the body and enhances Ignatius’s request that the Romans not act to stop his death, since he is Jesus’s emissary who seeks to follow Jesus’s model as the Romans are doing. Ignatius tailors his depiction of Jesus to the request that he is making of the Romans.

The Prescript of Ignatius’s *Letter to the Romans*

Since much of the article takes up Ign. *Rom.* inscr., it will be useful to have the text and a translation in mind before continuing further.

Ἰγνάτιος, ὁ καὶ Θεοφόρος, τῇ ἡλεημένη ἐν μεγαλειότητι πατρὸς ὑψίστου καὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ μόνου υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, ἐκκλησίᾳ ἡγαπημένη καὶ πεφωτισμένη ἐν θελήματι τοῦ θελήσαντος τὰ πάντα ᾧ ἔστιν, κατὰ πίστιν καὶ ἀγάπην Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν, ἦτις καὶ προκάθηται ἐν τόπῳ χωρίου Ῥωμαίων, ἀξιόθεος, ἀξιοπρεπής, ἀξιομακάριστος, ἀξιέπαινος, ἀξιοεπίτευκτος, ἀξίαγνος, καὶ προκαθημένη τῆς ἀγάπης, χριστόνομος, πατρώνυμος, ἣν καὶ ἀσπάζομαι ἐν ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, υἱοῦ πατρὸς, κατὰ σάρκα καὶ πνεῦμα ἡνωμένοις πάσῃ ἐντολῇ αὐτοῦ, πεπληρωμένοις

(London: T&T Clark, 2007), 81–107, at 89. Timothy D. Barnes, “The Date of Ignatius,” *Expository Times* 120 (2008): 119–130; Alistair C. Stewart, *The Original Bishops: Office and Order in the First Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 238–240. For sustained critique of cases for the inauthenticity of Ignatius’s letters, see Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of Episcopacy* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 95–143.

7. See further the studies of Ignatius’s letters in epistolary terms in Hermann Josef Sieben, “Die Ignatianen als Briefe: Einige formkritische Bemerkungen,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 32 (1978): 1–18; Pablo Cavallero, “La retórica en la Epístola a los romanos de San Ignacio de Antioquia,” *Helmantica* 48 (1997): 269–321; Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter*, 18–20, 31–179; Isacson, “Follow Your Bishop! Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch,” in *The Formation of the Early Church*, ed. Josein Ådna, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 183 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 317–340.

χάριτος θεοῦ ἀδιακρίτως καὶ ἀποδιῦλισμένοις ἀπὸ παντὸς ἀλλοτρίου χρώματος, πλεῖστα ἐν Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν ἀμώμως χαίρειν.

Ignatius, who is also Theophorus. To the church that has been shown mercy by the greatness of the Father Most High and Jesus Christ his only Son, loved and enlightened by the will of the One who willed all things that are in accordance with the faith and love of Jesus Christ our God, which also presides in the place of the district of the Romans, worthy of God, worthy of honor, worthy of blessing, worthy of praise, worthy of success, worthy of sanctification, and presiding over love, observing Christ's law, bearing the Father's name, whom I also greet in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father. To those who are unified in flesh and spirit in every commandment of his, having been filled without wavering by the grace of God and filtered clear of every foreign color, warmest greetings blamelessly in Jesus Christ our God.

At 93 words, Ignatius's greeting in *Romans* is the longest found in any of his seven letters and equals the length of Paul's salutation when he wrote to the Romans (Rom 1:1–7).⁸ The expansion from the simple opening formula, "X to Y, Greetings," is clear merely by noting the length of Ignatius's prescript.⁹ His self-identification is consistent with the other letters that he composed: he is also known as Theophorus.¹⁰ The majority of the length comes in Ignatius's description of the addressee. This may be because Ignatius has not previously met the Romans and sends an elevated address to curry favor in preparation for his request. The Roman church has been shown mercy, loved, enlightened, united with Jesus's commandments, filled with God's grace, and filtered from every foreign stain. Ignatius's formal greeting surrounds these three final descriptions of the Romans. It begins with a first-person greeting in the name of Jesus Christ and is completed with the third-person wish of "warmest greetings" (πλεῖστα...χαίρειν; *pleista...chairein*) in Jesus Christ. Adverbs such as πλεῖστα (*pleista*; most) and πολλά (*polla*; many) are used in correspondence

8. David E. Aune claims that Paul's prescript is the longest in extant Greco-Roman letters ("Romans, Paul's Letter to the," in *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, ed. David E. Aune [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003], 429). Whether or not it is the longest extant prescript, the significant point is that both Paul and Ignatius write equally, extraordinarily long prescripts to the church in Rome.

9. On the typical Greco-Roman prescript, see Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament*, 17–21. On Ignatius's greetings, see Sieben, "Die Ignatianen als Briefe," 3–5.

10. William R. Schoedel concisely summarizes a long-standing debate about whether an active or passive nuance should be preferred for "Theophorus" (*Ignatius of Antioch*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 36). Should "the God-bearer" be understood as "the one who bears God" or "the one who is borne by God?" Schoedel follows J. B. Lightfoot in pointing to the rise of the passive nuance of the adverb in the ninth century. However, this did not make the passive nuance the exclusive interpretation in the medieval period. Lightfoot notes that Bernard of Clairvaux says with regard to Ignatius, "to carry him [i.e. Jesus] is not onerous but honorable" (*gestare hunc, non onerari est, sed honorari*; text in Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp. Revised Texts with Introductions, Notes, Dissertations, and Translations*, 2nd ed., 5 vols. [London: Macmillan, 1889–1891], 2.1.236 n.1).

between family members as well as close friends,¹¹ and Ignatius's use of the adverb may represent an attempt to mark out a more intimate relationship with the Romans. In any case, Ignatius's extended introduction gives way to a letter body in which he asks the Romans not to interfere with his impending death and expounds the reasons for his request while emphasizing his imitation of Jesus's passion.

The Sonship of Jesus

With this overview of Ign. *Rom.* inscr. in place, the remainder of the article can explore Ignatius's understanding of Jesus in the greeting and the letter body. Within the prescript, Ignatius twice identifies Jesus as υἱός (*huios*; Son).¹² In both instances, he is referred to as the Son of the Father and not with other early Christian filial attributions, such as Son of God or Son of Man. In the first instance, the description of the Father as "Most High" (ὑψιστος; *hupsistos*) appears to indicate the Father's superiority and the Son's corresponding subordination,¹³ but their cooperation in giving mercy mitigates against such a reading.¹⁴ Ignatius describes Jesus the Son working collaboratively with his Father to give mercy to the Romans.

When Ignatius begins to turn from his description of the Romans to the formal greeting, he again refers to Jesus as Son by greeting the church "in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father." The first-person greeting is likely employed to heighten the level of friendship between Ignatius and the Romans.¹⁵ First-person greetings are also found in Ign. *Trall.* inscr. and *Phld.* inscr., but Jesus's name and relationship to the Father are only highlighted in *Rom.* inscr. Ignatius does not write to Rome for his own sake but because he has been led to write in his attempt to follow the Son. He can greet the Romans in Jesus's name on account of this leading.

By referring to Jesus as Son, Ignatius identifies him with respect to the Father. Jesus is likewise identified in relation to his Father in Ign. *Rom.* 3.3. As Ignatius outlines his desire to prove that he is a genuine Christian through martyrdom, he claims that he will best be able to do this when he is no longer visible to the world (Ign. *Rom.* 3.2). He then declares that nothing which is visible is good. Ignatius paradoxically points to Jesus to solidify his argument, because Jesus has become more visible "since he

11. Sean A. Adams, "Paul's Letter Opening and Greek Epistolography: A Matter of Relationship," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams, *Pauline Studies* 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 33–55, at 45n.40.

12. Ignatius does not often emphasize Jesus's sonship by using filial language. Jesus is described as "Son" only four times in the six other letters (Ign. *Eph.* 4.2; 20.2; *Magn.* 8.2; 13.1).

13. For example, Alonzo Rosecrans Stark writes about Ignatius's letters, "However little subordination of Christ to God is emphasized, it is not altogether absent" ("The Christology in the Apostolic Fathers," [PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 1912], 29).

14. Gregory Vall, *Learning Christ: Ignatius of Antioch and the Mystery of Redemption* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 98.

15. Terrence Y. Mullins, "Greeting as a New Testament Form," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 87 (1968): 418–426, at 419–420.

is with the Father” (ἐν πατρὶ ὄν; *en patri ōn*; Ign. *Rom.* 3.3). In light of the double insistence on Jesus’s sonship in the prescript, Ignatius’s depiction of Jesus’s close relation to the Father may be understood with filial overtones. Moreover, Jesus’s identity as Son is seen most clearly in his return to the Father after his death and resurrection. It is from this point that Jesus becomes more visible and offers mercy to the Romans. The cryptic play between Jesus’s visibility and invisibility indicates that the Romans are better able to perceive Jesus’s relation to the Father since he has been exalted.¹⁶ By twice appealing to Jesus as Son in the prescript, Ignatius prepares the way for Jesus’s relation to the Father to carry kinship overtones.

Jesus as God

Ignatius’s understanding of Jesus’s position as Son is not incompatible with designating Jesus as God. Indeed, there are similarities between the terms as applied to Jesus. Alongside the two references to Jesus as Son, there are two corresponding mentions of Jesus as God in Ign. *Rom.* inscr. The second of these comes as Ignatius completes his formal greetings, just as the second reference to Jesus as Son was placed at the beginning of the salutation proper. Drawing the prescript to a conclusion, Ignatius bids the Romans “warmest greetings in Jesus Christ our God.” This mirrors the greeting “in the name of” the Son and sets Jesus’s role as God and Son parallel to one another.

In the prescript’s first reference to Jesus as God, Ignatius declares that all things “are in accordance with the faith and love of Jesus Christ our God.”¹⁷ If the genitives in this phrase are taken as objective, then Ignatius speaks here of the Romans’ faith and love toward Jesus Christ, who is identified as God.¹⁸ Such a description would be appropriate in a prescript that expands the presentation of the letter recipient. However, faith and love modify a neuter relative pronoun whose antecedent is τὰ πάντα (*ta panta*; all things) and denotes all things that were created by the Father’s will.¹⁹ “All things” includes the Roman church, but it seems unlikely to say that

16. Similarly, Paul Foster “Christ and the Apostles in the Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch,” in *Early Christian Communities between Ideal and Reality*, ed. Mark Grundeken and Joseph Verheyden, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 342 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 109–126, at 118.

17. Although Theodor Zahn argues for the omission of πίστιν καί (*pistin kai*; faith and; *Ignatius von Antiochien* [Gotah: Perthes, 1873], 557), Schoedel rightly points that the reading of πίστιν καί in T, A, Am, C, g, and Arabic manuscripts is stronger evidence for the inclusion of these words than its absence in G, H, K, L, and Sm (*Ignatius*, 167). Interior evidence may be found in that the omission of these words focuses the prescript on love: the beloved church, the love of Jesus Christ, and the Roman precedence in love. If the prescript is focused on love when the words are omitted, the inclusion of faith is marginally the more difficult reading in Ign. *Rom.* inscr.

18. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, 2.2.189–190; Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 167.

19. The same word is used to describe the cosmos in Jos. Asen. 8.2; Philo, *Spec.* 1.208; *Somn.* 1.241; Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; 15:28; Eph 1:10; 3:9; Col 1:16, 17, 20; Heb 1:3; Rev 4:11; 1 Clem. 34.2; Justin, *1 Apol.* 67.2.

everything that was made was willed in accordance with the faith and love that the Romans showed toward Jesus. The genitives are therefore better understood as subjective so that all things were made according to the faith and love displayed by Jesus himself.²⁰ As God, Jesus is faithful and loving toward all creation, and his faith and love in the greeting are part of a phrase that designates how the Roman church has been loved and enlightened.

Ignatius develops his description of Jesus as God and the themes of faith and love along imitative lines in the body at Ign. *Rom.* 3 and 6–7. Ignatius wants not only to be called a Christian but also to be found one. He will “then be faithful” (τότε πιστὸς εἶναι; *tote pistos einai*; Ign. *Rom.* 3.2). Ignatius next describes Jesus’s faithfulness in terms of his ability to be seen when he is present with the Father.²¹ This close relationship with the Father identifies Jesus as “our God Jesus Christ” (ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός; *ho theos hēmōn Iēsous Christos*; Ign. *Rom.* 3.3). Two things follow from reading Ign. *Rom.* 3.2–3 in light of what Ignatius says about Jesus in the prescript. First, Jesus’s faith, having already been mentioned in the greeting, is exhibited in his suffering and death that Ignatius now desires to imitate.²² It is for this reason that he asks the Romans not to intervene to stop the proceedings. Second, Jesus’s unique relationship to the Father identifies him both as the Father’s Son and as God. As Son, Jesus is obedient to the Father. As God, he is distinct from the Father, but he cannot be separated from the Father. In the prescript, Ignatius introduces a tension into the Father-Son relationship that must be kept throughout the letter.

Ignatius’s desire to imitate Jesus’s suffering comes through even more clearly in the next reference to Jesus as God. He paradoxically asks the Romans to allow his affairs to proceed unhindered so that he may thus become a human being (Ign. *Rom.* 6.2). At its most basic, this request is for the Romans to allow him to be an imitator of the passion of his God (Ign. *Rom.* 6.3).²³ For Ignatius, Jesus’s suffering as God occurs in Jesus’s incarnation.²⁴ Ignatius desires to mimic this element of what Jesus did as God so that he could enjoy the life that Jesus’s passion achieved.²⁵ A

20. Zahn, *Ignatius von Antiochien*, 557; Ferdinando Bergamelli, “‘Fede di Gesù Cristo’ nelle lettere di Ignazio di Antiochia,” *Salesianum* 66 (2004): 649–664, at 661–662.

21. While Ign. *Rom.* 3.2–3 depends on a visual analogy, Ign. *Rom.* 2.1 offers a similar line of reasoning with an auditory juxtaposition of word and silence, on which, see Carl B. Smith, “Ministry, Martyrdom, and Other Mysteries: Pauline Influence on Ignatius of Antioch,” in *Paul and the Second Century*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Joseph R. Dodson, Library of New Testament Studies 412 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 37–56, at 54–55.

22. Cavallero, “La retórica,” 290.

23. “Allow me to be an imitator of the passion of my God” (ἐπιτρέψατέ μου μιμητὴν εἶναι τοῦ πάθους τοῦ θεοῦ μου; *epitrepsate mou mimētēn einai tou pathous tou theou mou*; Ign. *Rom.* 6.3).

24. Thomas G. Weinandy, “The Apostolic Christology of Ignatius of Antioch: The Road to Chalcedon,” in *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 71–84, at 82.

25. On imitation, see Candida R. Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 43; H. H. Drake Williams, “‘Imitate Me’: Interpreting Imitation in 1 Corinthians in Relation to Ignatius of Antioch,” *Perichoresis* 11

little later, he uses modified eucharistic language to describe his desire for death. The bread that he longs for is Christ's flesh, while the drink is his blood (Ign. *Rom.* 7.3). Ignatius describes Jesus's blood as incorruptible love (ἀγάπη ἄφθαρτος; *agapē aphthartos*) and develops the description of Jesus's love that was mentioned in the greeting. As Jesus's love is made known in his death, so Ignatius's discussion of death should illustrate to the Romans that he follows Jesus in his own suffering and death.²⁶ As Jesus was faithful and showed love to the Romans because he is God, so Ignatius wants to be faithful and to share in Jesus' love by going to his death in Rome. Although the prescript does not elaborate on Ignatius's christological imitation ethic, the brief references to Jesus as God allow Ignatius to unfold in the body of the letter a more developed understanding of Jesus's divinity and a desire that he and the Romans will follow Jesus's example of faith and love. The God-language attributed to Jesus in the greeting forms a preview of what is to come while likewise balancing divine and filial discourse.

Jesus's Laws and Commands

Yet the portrayal of Jesus as Son and God does not exhaust what the greeting has to say about Jesus. Following a series of descriptions in which the Romans are described as "worthy" (ἄξιο-; *axio-*), Ignatius refers to the church as χριστόνομος (*christonomos*; Ign. *Rom.* inscr.).²⁷ In the context of praising the Roman church, this unusual compound word means something like "observing Christ's law."²⁸ Ignatius highlights the Romans' obedience to the regulations set forth by Jesus. The case for

(2013): 75–93, at 81–83.

26. Olavi Tarvainen, *Faith and Love in Ignatius of Antioch*, trans. Jonathon Lookadoo (Eugene: Pickwick, 2016), 59–60; trans. of *Glaube und Liebe bei Ignatius von Antiochien*, Schriften der Luther-Agricola Gesellschaft 14 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft, 1967), 72.

27. On the textual problems surrounding this word, see the readings listed in Joseph A. Fischer, *Die apostolischen Väter: Griechisch und Deutsch*, Schriften des Urchristentums 1 (Munich: Kösel, 1956), 182; Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2 vols., Loeb Classical Library 24–25 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1.269n.59; Michael Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 224. Lightfoot is likely correct that the manuscript difficulties arise as a result of attempts to conform χριστόνομος (*christonomos*; observing Christ's law) to πατρώνομος (*patrōnumos*; bearing the Father's name). See Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, 2.2.193.

28. Translations include "walking in the law of Christ" (Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, 2.2.558), "Christi Gesetz haltend" (Walter Bauer, *Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Polykarpbrief*, Die apostolischen Väter 2 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1920], 243), "Beobachterin des Gesetzes Christi" (Fischer, *Die apostolischen Väter*, 183), "qui porte la loi du Christ" (Pierre-Thomas Camelot, *Ignace d'Antioche, Polycarpe de Smyrne: Lettres. Martyre de Polycarpe*, 4th ed., Sources Chrétiennes 10 [Paris: Cerf, 1969], 107), "Christi Gesetz haltend" (Henning Paulsen, *Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Polykarpbrief*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 18, Die apostolischen Väter 2, [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985], 68), "a church that keeps the law of Christ" (Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, 1.269), "observing the law of Christ" (Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 225), "keeping the law of Christ" (Alistair C. Stewart, *Ignatius of Antioch: The Letters*, Popular Patristics Series 49 [Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2013], 67).

understanding the word in this way is strengthened by the observation that Ignatius commends the Romans for being united in flesh and spirit to every commandment of Jesus later in the prescript. The commandments by which the Romans are united belong to Jesus. Although he is not the subject of a verb depicting him as a lawgiver or teacher in the prescript, these phrases suggest that the Romans have obeyed commandments that Jesus has given. Ignatius's greeting intimates that Jesus gives commands and that the Romans are to be commended for their unity around them.

Later in the letter, Ignatius asks the Romans not to interfere but actually to urge the beasts to devour him. When the world no longer sees his body, then he will be "truly a disciple of Jesus Christ" (μαθητῆς ἀληθῶς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; *mathētēs alēthōs Iēsou Christou*; Ign. *Rom.* 4.2).²⁹ For Ignatius to be Jesus's disciple, Jesus must implicitly be portrayed as a teacher, even if the teaching in Ign. *Rom.* 4.2 seems to come from Jesus's action rather than his commandments. This is confirmed in Ign. *Rom.* 4.3, where following Jesus's example in death will redeem Ignatius from a slave to be Jesus's freedman. For now, he "is learning to desire nothing while bound" (νῦν μανθάνω δεδεμένος μηδὲν ἐπιθυμεῖν; *nun manthanō dedemenos mēden epithumein*).³⁰ By imitating Jesus in death, Ignatius understands himself to follow Jesus's didactic example.

Jesus's speech plays a more obvious role as Ignatius begins to close his letter. After noting the brevity with which he has made his request,³¹ Ignatius claims that Jesus himself will clarify that he is speaking truly (Ign. *Rom.* 8.2). The description of Jesus continues as Ignatius recalls that he is "the unerring mouth by which the Father has truly spoken" (τὸ ἀψευδὲς στόμα ἐν ᾧ ὁ πατὴρ ἐλάλησεν ἀληθῶς; *to apseudes stoma en hō ho patēr elalēsen alēthōs*; Ign. *Rom.* 8.2). Jesus's speech is true because the Father speaks through him.³² The laws and commands that Jesus sets out must likewise be true, and the Romans, who are unified around them in the greeting, may be commended for their harmony. The fullest justification for Ignatius's commendation in the prescript thus comes near the end of the letter. In addition, Jesus's true commandments and the Romans' obedience to them strengthen Ignatius's rhetorical position in the letter.³³ His words receive added authority because he writes as someone who wants to imitate Jesus. Although this is stated

29. Walter Rebell, "Das Leidensverständnis bei Paulus und Ignatius von Antiochien," *NTS* 32 (1986): 457–465, at 458.

30. Alexander N. Kirk raises the intriguing possibility of an allusion to Phil 4:11 in Ign. *Rom.* 4.3 on the grounds that there is a conceptual parallel between the learning of Paul and Ignatius (*The Departure of an Apostle: Paul's Death Anticipated and Remembered*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.406 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015], 82–83).

31. Schoedel notes that this is a regular epistolary formula (*Ignatius*, 188). See Heb 13:22; 1 Pet 5:12.

32. Ferdinando Bergamelli, "Gesù Cristo Porta del Padre (*Filadelfesi* 9,1): Il Cristo Mediatore e Rivelatore del Padre in Ignazio di Antiochia," in "*In Lui ci ha scelti*" (*Ef. 1,4*): *Studi in onore del Prof. Giorgio Gozzelino*, ed. Sabino Frigato (Rome: LAS 2001), 33–43, at 41–42.

33. Robert M. Grant, *Ignatius*, Apostolic Fathers 4 (Camden: Thomas Nelson, 1966), 90.

most clearly as Ignatius makes his request in the body of the letter, the allusion to Jesus's laws in the prescript enables hearers and readers to understand more clearly that the Romans' obedience of Jesus's commands and Ignatius's desire for a death that imitates his exemplary model stem from Jesus's role as a law-giver.

Conclusion

I have explored three ways in which Ignatius's references to Jesus in the prescript of *Romans* foreshadow statements about him found elsewhere in the letter. Ignatius refers to Jesus as the Father's Son in the greeting. This deepens the kinship overtones later in the letter when Ignatius mentions that Jesus is present with the Father. Likewise, his two references in the prescript to Jesus as God not only balance the references to Jesus as Son but prepare readers for Ignatius's discussion of Jesus's suffering and appearance with the Father after he disappeared in death. In all this, Jesus models faith and love for Ignatius and the Romans, who are to follow his example. Finally, Jesus is portrayed as a law-giver whose commands the Romans should follow. Ignatius previews important christological themes in the greeting so that these themes are familiar when they recur in the letter. This epistolary practice allows christological motifs to be known from the beginning and more easily recognized in the letter body.

By paying attention to what Ignatius says about Jesus as he greets the Romans, Jesus's role in relation to both Ignatius's death and the request that he asks of the Romans becomes clearer. Ignatius's understanding of Jesus grounds much of what follows in the remainder of the letter. His reason for desiring death so earnestly in his circumstances is that he is seeking to follow Jesus's example. Although the martyr acts and a homily by John Chrysostom would look back to Ignatius himself as a model who was worthy of emulation,³⁴ Ignatius perceives that he is imitating Jesus in his upcoming death. Indeed, he is constrained by his reflection on Jesus's suffering (Ign. *Rom.* 6.3). In addition to seeking to follow after the passion of his God, Ignatius urges the Romans to learn from Christ's example so that they might do what is right in this situation. The crucial place of Jesus within Ignatius's greeting includes a place for Jesus as law-giver and teacher. This motif reappears when Ignatius writes that Jesus will show the Roman church that he is telling the truth (Ign. *Rom.* 8.2). Accordingly, they should be silent, that is, not to speak or act in such a way as to interfere with Ignatius's execution (Ign. *Rom.* 2.1). In their silence, Ignatius claims that they will show that they are Jesus's disciples, who recognize the work of their teacher, the Son of God.

Two areas may be proposed for future research. First, in light of the christological connections between the prescript and letter body in *Romans*, future scholarship might examine whether connections exist in Ignatius's other letters between the prescripts and the letter bodies. Is there any significance in the cooperation of the Father and

34. See John Chrysostom, *In sanctum Ignatium martyrem*. Texts and translations of Ignatius's martyr acts may be found in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, 2.2.472–540, 2.2.573–588.

Jesus as Polycarp's bishop other than the simple connection of Polycarp, the Father, and the Son as bishops (Ign. *Pol.* inscr.)? Does the link between Polycarp, the Father, and Jesus influence how one should understand Ignatius's instruction to pay attention to the bishop so that God will pay attention to the Smyrnaeans (Ign. *Pol.* 6.1)? Or what is to be made of Ignatius's greeting to the Philadelphians "in Jesus Christ's blood?" His blood is eternal and abiding joy in the salutation (Ign. *Phld.* inscr.), while it is later mentioned as part of Ignatius's repetition of singular objects that form the basis of Philadelphian unity (Ign. *Phld.* 4). What relations exist between Jesus's blood, joy, and unity in the letter? Moreover, is it possible that there is a connection between Jesus's blood in the prescript and the temple and high priestly metaphors in Ign. *Phld.* 7.2 and 9.1?

Second, future studies could explore how Ignatius's way of connecting the greeting and letter body compares to other early Christian letters. To briefly take up another letter written to Rome, Paul's greeting foreshadows the Christology expanded in the body of the letter with two mentions of Jesus's Sonship and a reference to Jesus's Davidic lineage (Rom 1:3–4). Sonship plays a prominent role as Paul depicts Jesus as the first-born Son among many adopted Roman brothers (Rom 8:29; cf. 8:12–17).³⁵ Likewise, Paul closes a significant portion of his letter with a catena in Romans 15:7–13 which validates that Jesus came to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles could praise God.³⁶ Paul substantiates this by referring to Jesus as a Davidic messiah, namely, as the root of Jesse (Rom 15:12; Isa 11:10).³⁷

This article has brought together trends in New Testament and Ignatian studies in order to show that Ignatius introduces christological themes in Ign. *Rom.* inscr. that recur and are developed in the body of the letter. By setting the prescript of this Ignatian letter in the context of other Ignatian letters and Ignatius's letters in the context of early Christian epistolary practice, this focused epistolary and christological study may be more fully understood within its early Christian literary and theological environment. For now, it must suffice to say that, in Ign. *Rom.* inscr., Jesus is the Father's Son, God, and law-giver and that Ignatius expands the concise references to Jesus in the greetings in order to show in the body of the letter that he imitates Jesus and that the Romans should obey Jesus's command in allowing Ignatius to proceed to his death.

35. On the adoption metaphors in Rom 8:12–25, see Michael Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World: Divine Sonship in Its Social and Political Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 135–140; Erin Heim, "Light through a Prism: New Avenues of Inquiry for the Pauline Ὑιοθεσία Metaphors" (PhD diss., University of Otago, 2014), 189–240; Robert Brian Lewis, *Paul's 'Spirit of Adoption' in its Roman Imperial Context*, Library of New Testament Studies 545 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 153–196.

36. Stanley E. Porter, *The Letter to the Romans: A Linguistic and Literary Commentary*, New Testament Monographs 37 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2015), 272–273.

37. Matthew V. Novenson, "The Jewish Messiahs, the Pauline Christ, and the Gentile Question," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128 (2009): 357–373, at 367–372; Novenson, *Christ among the Messiahs: Christ Language in Paul and Messiah Language in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 156–160.

An Armored Household: Isaiah 59 as the Key to Ephesians 5:21-6:9 and 6:10-17

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Abstract: The household codes of Ephesians 5:21-6:9 and the following “Armor of God” passage in Ephesians 6:10-17 have long been regarded as self-contained. Scholars have seen practically no relationship between these two portions of the letter, reading the latter as a new train of thought for the author. In this study, I argue that, contrary to these scholars, there is indeed a relationship of the household codes to Ephesians 6:10-17. It is demonstrated that this crucial connection is found in the author’s use of Isaiah 59. With sensitivity to this intertext present in the passage, it will be argued that (1) the original context of the Isaianic passage illuminates the meaning of the Divine Warrior motif in Ephesians, (2) the image of the clothing of the Christian in God’s armor is significant precisely because it transfers the work of the Divine Warrior to the follower of Christ, and (3) the message of justice in Isaiah 59 helps to account for and make sense of the redefined roles of the household codes, and particularly in the Pauline understanding of ideal relationships among the family of God.

Key Words: Household codes, Isaiah 59, Armor, Divine Warrior, justice, family

Introduction

The latter part of the letter to the Ephesians is jammed-packed with memorable passages. Two of these have been the passionate focus of students, pastors, and scholars in their study, preaching, teaching, and writing. The household codes of Ephesians 5:21-6:9 constitute a clearly defined section of the letter, addressing directly members of the Christian household concerning their relationships with each other. On the heels of the household codes comes a pericope that has been familiar and deeply personal for a great number of Christians through the centuries, the “armor of God” passage of Ephesians 6:10-17. Distinguished from the previous passage by a significant section break and even a separate sub-heading in virtually all modern translations of the letter, this passage has most often been interpreted as one that introduces an entirely new and distinct train of thought for Paul.¹ Moreover, in the

1. The Pauline authorship of Ephesians has long been disputed. For the purposes of this paper, I

scholarly literature on the armor of God in Ephesians 6:10-17, little is said about the surrounding context of the passage and how the context of the letter might affect its meaning. In fact, although most scholars do not word it in quite so stark a manner, at least one scholar has suggested that the two have nothing to do with each other:

With v. 10 the subject changes abruptly and one of the most original sections of the letter begins. No clear connection exists between the behavior of members of a household, all of whom are believers and who are not depicted as in conflict with one another, and a struggle between every believer and the superhuman powers.²

As one can tell, this commonly-held view – that the household codes of Ephesians 5:21-6:9 and the passage that immediately follows have practically no relationship to each other – is based primarily on how one interprets the latter portion. In the case of Ernest Best, whom I have cited above, his sharp distinction between earthly relationships and supernatural powers necessarily leads him to see virtually no connection between these two passages.³

Although the household codes of Ephesians 5:21-6:9 and the armor of God passage in Ephesians 6:10-17 have previously been regarded as unrelated, in this paper I will challenge that view by examining the primary intertext used by Paul in 6:10-17 – Isaiah 59 – and then discussing how that intertext should inform our understanding of just what Paul is calling for when he “rallies the troops” in the Ephesian church. I will show that there is a crucial connection between the household codes and the “armor of God” passage, and that the interpretive key is found in the author’s use and application of the imagery of the Divine Warrior. With a sensitivity to these intertexts present in the passage, it will be argued that (1) the original context of the Isaianic passage illuminates the meaning of the Divine Warrior motif in Ephesians, (2) the message of justice in Isaiah 59 helps to account for and make sense of the redefined roles of the household codes, particularly in the Pauline understanding of ideal relationships among members of the family of God, and (3) the image of the clothing of the Christian in God’s armor is significant precisely because it transfers the work of the Divine Warrior to the follower of Christ within the social context of family.⁴

will refer to the author as “Paul,” without affirming or denying whether the apostle Paul penned the letter (Eph 1:1). For a thorough discussion concerning the authorship of Ephesians, see Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC 42; Dallas: Word Books, 1990), lix-lxxiii.

2. Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 585.

3. I will revisit this issue of the relationship between the earthly and the supernatural in Ephesians later in the paper.

4. As the discussion of non-resistance and pacifism has resurfaced with a vengeance in the last few decades, so has a reading of Eph 6:10-17 with this lens become a rather influential way of interpreting the passage. Although interesting and helpful, this is simply not the avenue that I will be pursuing in this paper. Rather than focusing on exactly *how* a Christian should interact with earthly and supernatural enemies, this paper will concentrate on exactly *who* should be the ones reflecting the attributes that Paul calls for in this passage and *who* should be the recipients of the benefits of those

Isaiah 59

The motif of the Divine Warrior in the Old Testament is a fairly pervasive one, which makes sense in light of the history of the Israelites and their belief in a God who championed them against their enemies.⁵ Not only is God presented as the Warrior who fights on their behalf, but there are also passages which describe how God functions metaphorically as the armor of his people.⁶ Perhaps nowhere is this Divine Warrior motif more present than in Isaiah, where God reminds his people that (a) he is strong enough to not only withstand, but to control their enemies, and (b) he has not abandoned them and chosen another group through which to work.⁷

These emphases are particularly acute in Isaiah 59, where God answers the accusation (or lament) that he is too weak to save his people by arming and clothing himself for battle. The first part of the chapter describes the very bleak scenario that God's people have created for themselves. The appearance of God's absence can be explained by their continual insistence to commit atrocities that are selfishly motivated (59:1-2). Isaiah goes into a detailed account of just how desperate things have become: there is murder, lying, cheating, and violence (59:3-6). In a particularly vivid verse, Isaiah describes the enthusiasm with which the people are pursuing injustice, contrasting it with the way of peace that God has prepared for his people mentioned previously in Isaiah:⁸

Their feet run to evil,
and they rush to shed innocent blood;
their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity,
desolation and destruction are in their highways.
The way of peace they do not know,
and there is no justice in their paths.
Their roads they have made crooked;
no one who walks in them knows peace (59:7-8).⁹

In typical Isaianic fashion, the perpetrators of these crimes appear to be both insiders and outsiders (he switches personal pronouns throughout the chapter), resulting in

attributes. See Gerald Janzen, "Divine Warfare and Nonresistance" *Direction* 32/1 (2003): 21-31, for discussion on this passage and nonresistance. This is his ultimate concern, and thus his thesis statement: "It is the thesis of this article that Paul proclaimed the divine Warrior of the Isaianic texts to be contending against enemies on behalf of his people, the Church, in the NT setting just as Isaiah so proclaimed for Israel. If that is the case, then the victory won by Jesus at the cross and in the resurrection has closed the era in which God's people engage in secular warfare" (22).

5. See Exod 15; Deut 32-33; Judges 5; 2 Sam 22/Ps 18; Ps 35, 68, 77, and Hab 3.

6. See Gen 15:1; Ps 3:3; 18:2; 2 Sam 22:3, 31.

7. Isa 1:24-26; 5:25; 9:8-10:11; 13:3-5; 19:1-5; 29:3-10; 30:27-28; 40:15; 41:1, 5; 42:13; 51.

8. See Isa 40:3-5.

9. All citations of scripture will come from the NRSV unless otherwise stated.

a sense of overwhelming injustice from both within and without.¹⁰ (Note that God punishes both the community as well as those outside of it. There is a seeming paradox in Isaiah 59 in terms of the location of the injustice. On the one hand, it is depicted in Israel (Isa 59:9-59:15a). On the other hand, God responds with punishment upon the nations.) In other words, some members of God's own people are abusing those within their community, and these make up part of Isaiah's audience.¹¹ Thus, Isaiah can talk about those kinds of traits that are expected of God's people being absent from life as they know it – *Justice* is rejected, *Righteousness* can't come near, *Truth* can't stand in the public square and is therefore lacking, and *Uprightness* is outlawed¹² (59:14-15).

As God witnesses these atrocities, he looks around for someone to stand up and take action, but no one does, so he himself intervenes on behalf of the oppressed (56:16).¹³ Remember, Zion was meant to be a place of refuge for the marginalized and disenfranchised – a setting which is clearly absent from report of Isaiah 59! He dons the very characteristics that are expected of his people and are absent as clothing – *Righteousness* as a breastplate and *Salvation* as a helmet (59:17a). He also adds some "clothing" that is his to wear as deity – *Vengeance* for garments and *Fury* as a mantle (59:17b).¹⁴ It is with these that he "repays" the oppressors, resulting in the expansion

10. What is the relationship between the two? Matthew J. Lynch, "Zion's Warrior and the Nations: Isaiah 59:15b-63:6 in Isaiah's Zion Traditions" (*CBQ* 70, 2008): 244-63, argues that, "... Israel's display of, or inability to display, justice is intrinsically related to whether or not there is justice in the world (cf. Isa 10:12)" (250). Thus, implicitly involved in the restoration of his people (a particular concern of Isaiah's in this section of his book) is the confrontation of injustice among the nations before redemption is offered to Israel (251). Note also that this restoration comes to those who repent, rather than to the whole of Zion (Isa 59:20). So, "The implicit suggestion of 59:20, then, is that the divine warrior campaigns not only against the distant nations, as 59:18 and 63:6 indicate, but also against Zion, which offers no refuge for 'the wicked' (57:21)" (253). This is consistent with the first part of Isa 59.

11. Thomas Yoder Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God: The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians* (LNTS 140; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 22. On the other hand, he argues that throughout these verses, there is an allegory where these characteristics are Yahweh's messengers who are being persecuted (32). According to Neufeld, then, these *traits* are the victims, not primarily humans, although humans feel the absence of judgment and salvation. Thus, he sees in this passage the motif of the persecuted messenger of God, which includes such other figures as Wisdom, Jesus, *Sophia*, and *Logos*: "Indeed, it appears that the author of Isaiah 59 has adapted the scenario of the faithful servant who is abused by faithless people to the fate of Yahweh's virtues at the hands of those who have turned against their God" (35). Ultimately, he argues that the humans in Isa 59 are not primarily the victims, but the victimizers. This may, however, be more abstract than is typical of Isaiah. Yes, God is interested in justice, but not for Justice's sake. Rather, it is on behalf of the people, as evidenced by the larger context of restoration in Isa 40-66.

12. See the NLT, which is more vivid than the NRSV's "cannot enter." The emphasis of the phrase is on the active banning of this characteristic (*lō'-tūkal lābō'*; אֵין כָּלֵל לַבֹּיֹזָאֵל).

13. Lynch, "Zion's Warrior," 248-250, argues that Zion had a role as a "symbol of Yhwh's world-ordering justice." If that is the case, then Jerusalem's failure (particularly by its leadership) to function in this way regarding its internal oppressors and to even to join them in their injustice is even more condemning.

14. Neufeld, *Armour*, 27-28, notes that the only other place where God might be seen to clothe himself in armor in order to go into battle is Isa 11:5. In that text, it is a kinglier reference, rather

of his reputation and glory to the west and the east and the redemption and renewal of the covenant for his people (59:18-21).¹⁵

Ephesians 5-6

Scholars of Ephesians agree that the author is writing to a group of Christians who have been carried away by their social context, conflating a first-century Greco-Roman view of wisdom and knowledge with that of knowledge in Christ.¹⁶ Although he does use the familiar terminology of that time, Paul takes great care to redefine what it means to truly be wise in Christ. Thus, a Christian is indeed involved in experiencing heavenly knowledge, but it is not an exclusive right of passage that should result in a higher social status than others in the community.¹⁷ Since the Ephesians (both Christians and non-Christians) seem to have been interested in the relationship between what happens down on earth and what happens in the realm of the supernatural, so also does Paul want to connect the Christian experience in Christ with both the earthly and supernatural.¹⁸ Key to this argument is the place of groups within the community, first Jewish and Gentile Christians, and then later, the members of families, discussed specifically in the household codes of Ephesians 5-6. Paul's household codes is a Christian adaptation of the kind that were circulating in the Greco-Roman world at the time, and thus is not an entirely new creation of his own. Aristotle, Epictetus, the writer of 4 Maccabees, Philo, and even Josephus each included household codes in their work.¹⁹ Not only that, but these codes seem

than a warrior image, but does demonstrate the correlation between judgment (king) and warfare (warrior). The distinction between this passage and Isa 59 is that the one being clothed in Isa 11 is actually the king who *represents* Yahweh. Neufeld sees Isa 59 as an allusion to Isa 11, indicating that because there was "no man" (i.e., "king" as in Isa 11), Yahweh steps in to save. If this connection can be made, it serves as a comment on the lack of royal leadership. It is difficult, however, to determine for certain that this is the case, since there are no other royal references in Isa 59.

15. According to Neufeld, *Armour*, 28, Yahweh's action in equipping himself for battle is like *Enuma Elish*, where Marduk clothes himself for battle against Tiamat. The difference is that the weapons Marduk uses do not represent virtues as do the ones in Isa 59 or Eph 6. This is therefore an important innovation of Isa 59 which Paul follows in Ephesians.

How does the armor function in this passage? It is clearly is used by God to right previous wrongs (he replaces the very traits that were missing before he intervenes), as well as to defend those who are oppressed within the community. Thus, there is both an offensive and defensive (but defensive on behalf of *others*) function taking place here. I agree here with Neufeld, *Armour*, 28. Underscoring the offensive dynamic of the Divine Warrior is the function of armor in its historical context, as it was used not only to physically protect the person who wore it, but to impress and intimidate in order to give that warrior an advantage on the battlefield (Neufeld, *Armour*, 29). He uses the example of Marduk's clothing to illustrate his point. "It represented the character and strength of the warrior, and symbolized his past and present actions."

16. Although scholars tend to agree on this basic premise, consensus is lacking on more specific issues such as provenance, historical situation, etc.

17. See the inclusive language of Paul's prayer in Eph 1:15-23, for example.

18. Eph 2:3-10.

19. See Aristotle, *Pol.*, 1.1253, 1259; Epictetus, *Diatr.*, 17.31; 4 Macc 2:10-3; Philo, *Hypoth.*, 7.3;

to have been regarded as a reflection of what this important social unit should look like. Although each differs in small ways on the details, all emphasize a hierarchical structure that begins with the father, or *paterfamilias*, and works its way down the social ladder to the less important members of the household.²⁰ The hierarchical nature and function of the household code genre is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in Augustus' use of the *paterfamilias* rhetoric to describe his role in the Empire and the "inclusion" of foreign "children" to justify Roman invasion and oppression of other nations.²¹

A study of Paul's own household codes in their social context with an eye toward comparison and contrast is extremely important for understanding what he is doing (and not doing) in his letter to the Ephesians. For instance, like Philo, Paul seems to be influenced by the Decalogue, particularly in the use of imperatives, rather than writing a description of "what is," which is more akin to the Stoics.²² Whereas the Stoics emphasized the duty of the individual to act rightly (a more internal focus on responsibility), the household codes in Ephesians encourages certain behaviors because of their effect on others (reciprocal). Of great importance is the fact that Paul addresses both partners of a social pairing (rather than just one), and addresses the socially inferior partner first. His words to the children and *fathers* can be contrasted with Philo and Josephus' emphasis on the parental rights of the father rather than on any obligations he might have in his behavior toward his children.²³ Note too that Paul devotes the most space to instructions for the head of the household, implying that he has certain obligations to his wife and is held to a standard that is not socially expected in the first century.

Immediately after the household codes comes the "armor of God" passage.²⁴ Paul calls his readers to don certain character traits and spiritual tools as if they

and Josephus, *C. Ap.*, 2.24.199. See Thorsten Moritz, *A Profound Mystery: The Use of the Old Testament in Ephesians* (Novum Testamentum Supp 85; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 159-161 for a more detailed comparison of Philo's household codes with others.

20. Moritz, *Profound Mystery*, 165, argues that, because Augustus made use of the concept of the household code in his propaganda (particularly by applying paternal language to himself as the *paterfamilias* of the people), it "presupposes that by the time Christianity arrived, the household concept had long reached paramount importance as a foundational social unit of society."

21. See Beth Severy, *Augustus and the Family at the Birth of the Roman Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003), for a detailed study on the family and family language in the Roman Empire under Augustus.

22. See Moritz, *Profound Mystery*, 159-161.

23. Moritz, *Profound Mystery*, 167, deems this to be the most important difference.

24. There has been some discussion of function of this section for the letter as a whole – is it a summary of the entire letter, or is it rounding out the ethical section that begins in Ephesians 4? Donna R. Reinhard, "Ephesians 6:10-18: A Call to Personal Piety or Another Way of Describing Union with Christ?" *JETS* 48/3 (Sept 2005): 521-32, argues that this section is a summary of the entire letter by underscoring overlapping themes and emphases between this pericope and rest of Ephesians. Moritz, *Profound Mystery*, 178-181, also makes much of the relationship between 6:10-17 and rest of Ephesian, but does not, ironically, include any discussion of the relationship between this section and the immediately preceding material!

were clothing themselves for battle – Truth and Righteousness (6:14), Peaceful Proclamation of the gospel (6:15), Faith (6:16), and Salvation and the Word (6:18).²⁵ Two of these come directly from Isaiah 59 – the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation. As the opening line of this section makes clear, Paul sees this armor as a tool that will enable his readers to be empowered with the type of strength that God possesses (6:10). The Ephesians are elsewhere called to imitate God (5:1). Paul also uses the language of power to describe both God’s actions in Christ (1:19) and to petition for the ability of his followers to comprehend those actions (3:16-20).²⁶ This also has echoes of Isaiah 59, which describes God’s possession of these tools and his application of them in defense of the oppressed in the community.

With Isaiah 59 having such a significant influence on Paul’s armor metaphor here in Ephesians 6, it’s a wonder that so many scholars have failed to move beyond a casual observation of its use here to a more in-depth consideration of the *significance* of it for the meaning of its new context. Paul is urging his audience to be, in essence, the Divine Warrior – to take on those characteristics and to use them as God would use them.²⁷ However, it is crucial to be clear on which elements of Isaiah 59 are adopted in Paul’s imagery here and which are not. Completely absent from the Christian armory are the garments of vengeance and the mantle of fury, which God wears along with the breastplate and helmet (59:17b).²⁸ Thus, the Ephesians are called to don God’s characteristics of righteousness and salvation, but not to clothe themselves in vengeance or fury.

So, against whom are the Ephesians supposed to be preparing for battle? This passage has traditionally been read as a reflection of Paul’s concern for his individual readers to make sure they are protected from “the devil” (6:11), and this has surely been the predominant message in our contemporary faith communities. In other words, Ephesians 6:10-17 is most often read as scripture that can help a believer to battle the supernatural forces that oppose God on his/her *own behalf* – a purely self-interested enterprise. It is commonly taught that, by having the right Godly traits

25. I would argue that the shift from direct address in the household codes to the genitive in 6:10 (*Tou loipou*) is due the change in genre (v. 10 is not part of the household code proper), rather than indicating a wholly new subject matter.

26. Neufeld, *Armour*, 117, argues, “The combination of power terminology in 6:10 is thus not unique to Ephesians...Its matrix is the attribution of power to God. Even in such texts where the people are depicted as participants in warfare, this vocabulary is reserved for the purpose of ascribing power to God alone... (the) power is God’s, and God’s to exercise.” Reinhard, “Personal Piety,” 530, concludes that Paul’s similar language of “putting on Christ” and putting on spiritual armor suggests that this is the primary exhortation in Ephesians 6:10-17 – to put on Christ. Although I imagine that Paul would not see this armoring for battle as antithetical to the putting on of Christ, the presence of Isaiah 59 suggests that Reinhard’s conclusion is too general. What does it mean to put on Christ, and how must these characteristics be displayed in order to do battle? This seems to me to be the thrust of Paul’s exhortations here.

27. See also Neufeld, *Armour*, 117.

28. This is different than the way Wisdom 5:17-20 incorporates the material, where “creation will join with him to fight against his frenzied foes.”

(much like possessing the “Fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22-23), the Christian can make sure that he/she is well-guarded from the influences of Satan/sin. I argue, however, that the influence of Isaiah 59 and its juxtaposition with the household codes suggests something else entirely.

A Contextual Reading of Isaiah 59 in Ephesians 6

The key to understanding what Paul is calling for in the armor of God passage is found, I would argue, in the relationship between the audience’s function as “Divine Warriors” in Ephesians 6:10-17 and the redefinition of social expectations within the community that is communicated in the household codes of Ephesians 5:21-6:9. We have seen that God’s function as Divine Warrior in Isaiah 59 only comes about when there is no other human who would stand against the injustice that is taking place within the community, both from insiders and outsiders (59:16). So, he arms himself with certain characteristics that allow him to function in a way that provides restoration and redemption.

If we take seriously the influence of the context of the intertext (the old context) in its new context, and we recognize that the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation found in Isaiah 59 have now been transferred to the Ephesian Christians in Ephesians 6, then the question becomes: What injustice has occurred or is occurring that needs to be addressed, and who are the recipients of that injustice? For that, we need look no further than the previous passage, the household codes. We’ve already noted how Paul has challenged the social expectations of family dynamics and the roles that each member of the household should fill, by addressing both members of each major pair of relationships (wife/husband, children/father, slave/master), and by making demands on the “superior” members of the household who were accustomed to treating their “inferiors” in any manner they deemed appropriate. Paul argues that, within the community, those members who have the power to oppress should love, avoid provocation, and devote their actions toward their “inferiors” to the Lord, rather than do what society allows them to do.²⁹ Thus, in an environment where oppression and selfishness is expected, justified, and encouraged, Paul calls the Ephesian Christians to stand against the norm and pursue justice in their relationships. He is looking for someone to stand up (Isaiah 59:16; Ephesians 6:11), and that “standing up” starts within the family.³⁰

How does this relate to Paul’s assertion that the armor enables Christians to “stand against” the devil (Ephesians 6:11)? Doesn’t he say that the struggle isn’t

29. Note Paul’s preference to use character traits in his household codes as well, such as submissiveness, love, and obedience.

30. Moritz, *Profound Mystery*, 191, also points out the parallel situations of the communities of Isaiah and the Ephesian church, where both are communities of disorder, and where God desires to restore peace through righteousness (Eph 2:13-17).

against “enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic power of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (6:12)? Is it really human behavior that is the problem, or is it a supernatural one?

This seems to me to be a false dichotomy, particularly in Ephesians. Paul addresses the relationship between human life and supernatural powers several times in Ephesians, and he doesn’t see them as unrelated at all. In fact, for Paul, the two are inherently intertwined. In several chapters, Paul uses both human and supernatural language to describe the opposition against Christians (Ephesians 2:1-3; 3:10; 4:27). In Eph 6:12, the supernatural powers use *human* agents as well as cosmic ones (“rulers” [ἄρχαί,³¹ *archas*] and “authorities” (ἐξουσία,³² *exousias*)). It seems that Paul is intentionally drawing a contrast between these human agents of the devil (6:11) with God’s own human agents who should display his godly characteristics (6:10).

Moreover, he spends quite a bit of energy throughout the letter trying to correct Ephesian misunderstandings about the relationship between the physical and the spiritual – where they are apt to see a dichotomy between the two, he underscores their impact on each other. This is especially evident in his discussion of “the heavnlies” (for example, see 1:3 and 2:6). τας want to compartmentalize the physical and the spiritual, Paul states that Christians are somehow interacting with both in their present circumstances.

Similarly, Isaiah 59 – the primary intertext that Paul uses in this passage – has a human and cosmic element to it – God looks for humans to function as they should in restoring justice, but he finds none, so he does it himself. The two worlds (human and cosmic) interact here, and it is no different in Paul’s letter.³³ And it is not coincidental that, in perhaps his strongest language of reconciliation among believers (Ephesians 2:11-22), Paul reminds his audience that their inclusion in God’s household has been accomplished through Christ’s death, which has “broken down the dividing wall” of “hostility” among believers, and that this rebuilding of God’s people results in a spiritual Temple.

Paul is not calling for Christians to arm themselves against each other, but to clothe themselves with the very characteristics of God that will result in the kind of community that he desires for his people – a community free from oppression and defined by selfless behavior.³⁴ Behavior that goes against this expectation has behind it God’s opposition, which has cosmic and supernatural implications, but also has

31. Luke is particularly fond of using the term to refer to Jewish and Gentile leaders and officials (for example: Luke 8:41; 18:18; 23:13, 35; 24:20; Acts 14:2; 23:5; 16:19), but it shows up in other Pauline texts as well (Romans 13:3; 1 Corinthians 2:6-8; Titus 1:9).

32. Paul uses the term to refer to the governing (human) authorities over Roman Christians in Romans 13:1-3; Titus 3:1.

33. Janzen, *Divine Warfare*, also makes this observation throughout his article.

34. The community that Isaiah addresses is particularly defined by their selfish behavior, which motivates all of the travesties that he lists in Isaiah 59.

very real, tangible earthly effects, as evidenced by the fact that some of the “powers” listed in Ephesians 6:12 actually appear to be human agents (“the rulers” and “the authorities”).³⁵ Thus, I would argue *against* the interpretation that Best proposes (and that I cited at the beginning of this paper) – that the struggle to which Paul refers is devoid of human participation, but is a purely supernatural one. Those supernatural forces that oppose God are the ones who use humans as the vehicles for their war. This can affect the Christian community as well as the family dynamic, which is why Paul addresses both social groups in Ephesians.

Additionally, the selective nature of Paul’s intertextual application here is important, if the primary context which he has in mind is the social dynamic of the family. The equipment borrowed from Isaiah 59 in Ephesians is essentially *defensive* (he leaves out “vengeance” and “fury”) and the audience is ordered to stand firm (6:11). Despite the pressures for the father to behave according to the societal expectations of the *paterfamilias*, for example, his job is to love and protect his family, putting their needs and desires before his own. In its own way, this is both a defensive and offensive stance. They are tasked with the responsibility to institute change in their own spheres of power. For Christians to take care of their “own house” will result in a community devoid of oppression and injustice – the very state that required God’s intervention both against and on behalf of Israel. If the Ephesians do as Paul urges, God will have no need to wait in futility for someone to “intervene” (Isaiah 59:16). And just as God was victorious over his enemies, so also does Paul anticipate that Christians will be victorious over theirs, but the clean-up starts from within.³⁶

Conclusion

To summarize, in order for us to understand exactly what Paul is calling for in Ephesians 6:10-17, it must be understood in the context of its key intertext, Isaiah 59. There, God intervenes when no one else will on behalf of the oppressed to rid his

35. Along with Neufeld, *Armour*, 122-125. In many ways, Neufeld stops just short of my argument. He describes the battle as one that is being fought *on behalf of* blood and flesh (but against the spiritual forces). Yet he does not recognize a connection between that concept and the very tangible areas where this can take place – the ones that Paul has just mentioned in the household codes. However, that he earlier seems to want to hold on to a human/supernatural dichotomy, although this may be motivated by his observation that Wisdom 5 refers to Isa 59 in order to emphasize divine warfare against humans.

36. In addition to the linking of the contexts of Isa 59 and the household codes and the armor of God passage, there are other connections in the letter which suggest an interpretive relationship between the two passages in Ephesians. First, there is a link between the tones of the introduction of the household codes and that of Eph 6:18-20, which immediately follows the armor passage. Both the introduction to the household codes and the introduction to the final section of Ephesians encourage the audience to have the right attitude toward prayer, which involves mutual solidarity. Neufeld, *Armour*, 145-50, argues that this also serves to continue the Divine Warrior image. This bracketing suggests that there is more going on here than just two discussions of separate issues (the household and supernatural battle). Ultimately, Eph 5:18-6:18 as a whole demonstrates the need for the members of the community to look after one another and be alert (as if in battle).

people of those who seek injustice. What does that tell us about the nature of this armor and the Christian's role in bearing it? First, Paul is calling the Ephesian Christians to put on the armor that God had previously donned on behalf of the oppressed. Who would qualify as the oppressed in Paul's social context and in the immediate context of the passage? The household code provides that context, as it exhorts those who have the power in the societal structure of the family to live in subversion of the cultural norms of the day in their treatment of those who are deemed the weaker partner. Ultimately, this passage should not be read primarily as Paul's concern for the Ephesian Christians to guard themselves (individually) against the opposition, but to "stand up" for those who cannot defend themselves.

In his social context, then, Paul is calling for something radical. He is demanding Christians to protect and fight for those who cannot do it themselves. But what might surprise his audience is that the battle is closer than they might realize: their standing firm begins at home and with their own behavior toward each other. No longer is domination and superiority the behavioral expectation of the *paterfamilias*. Rather, he should act as Christ did, in love, patience, respect, and mutual solidarity with "the other" who is right under his nose. Paul, in citing Isaiah 59, calls his audience to be the advocate for those who have none, just as God has done for his people in the past. When that happens, the effects of their fight will reach well beyond their own family to the Family of God, with earthly and supernatural ramifications.

This is My Beloved Son, Whom I hate? A Critique of the Christus Odium Variant of Penal Substitution

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Abstract: There is a subtle, almost imperceptible, theological metamorphosis underway and it is taking place not only in the academy and as a result, in the pulpit, it is taking place in the pew. For, in some evangelical quarters, it is no longer enough to simply believe that Christ absorbed the wrath of God as a penal substitute. Some have recently gone so far as to claim that, as a penal substitute, Christ became the object of the Father's perfect hatred. In this paper, we take a closer look at this rather frightening aspect of this Christus Odium variant of penal substitution—something that we think, if gone unchecked, may well become the logical (better still, illogical) deposit of a new dogmatic inheritance for the American evangelical tradition as it pertains to substitutionary atonement.

Key Words: retribution, rectoral, reparation, substitution, odium, satisfaction

I. Introduction

That the Scriptures are so explicit about God hating certain things is something inherently distressing. "There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him" (Prov. 6:16-19). God hates idolatry (Jer. 44:3); he hates hypocrisy (Amos 5:21); he hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). And lest we forget, God hates his Son too. If this seems problematic, it is because it is. And yet, the idea that Christ made atonement for sin by his being hated by the Father has gained some ground in recent years for a number of evangelicals. In what follows, we reflect on the nature of substitutionary atonement, particularly in light of this development of penal substitution theory in evangelical theology. The student, the pastor, and the scholar, all ought to take caution against doctrinal excess. Where penal substitution is concerned, we ought to re-think the nature of substitution and commit ourselves to no more than what the Scripture and tradition require of us. Re-thinking our theological commitments is a healthy exercise. By it, we are sure to avoid a variety of doctrinal hazards.

The idea that God the Father hated his Son in order to make (or as a by-product of his making) atonement is one such hazard; one that has for some such reason been given a recent wide berth. As one scholar has recently proposed, “The culmination to Jesus’ time on earth was His death on the cross... In that death the wrath of God was poured out on Christ, and the darkness exploded. In that instant God cursed Jesus, putting Him in a position of absolute, perfect hatred. God hated Him and desired to make Him nothing.”¹ Another pair of scholars have gone so far as to propose that, “God chose to violate His Son in our place. The Son stared into the mocking eyes of God; He heard the laughter of the Father’s derision and felt Him depart in disgust... In a mysterious instant, the Father who loved the Son from all eternity turned from Him in hatred. The Son became odious to the Father.”² Provoking a moment of sudden alarm was the recent comment—a comment that we would like to point out was quickly revised because of the sort of criticism it subsequently received for its lack of clarity—of an undoubtedly wide-read Pastoral proclamation that, “If you see Jesus losing the infinite love of the Father, out of his infinite love for you, it will melt your hardness.”³ But this trend does not end here. How about some personal testimony from one of us who was recently told by a somewhat-theological educated church leader and adult Sunday school teacher that it is “fundamental to the gospel that Christ not only paid our penalty, but that in paying it, he endured the violent anger and rage of his Father on the cross.” From the academy, to the pulpit, to the pew, for those who affirm that the Son made atonement by being hated by the Father—albeit temporarily—Christianity has a new message, the simple logic of which goes like this. “The Son became sin; the Father cannot look upon sin without hatred; The Son willingly took our place of condemnation—and for an instant the Son bore the fury of God.”⁴ Is this the new logical deposit of an all-new dogmatic inheritance for American evangelicals? Some seem poised to accept it as such.

In this paper, we argue that this new logical deposit—what we henceforth refer to as the Christus Odium variant of the penal substitution theory—is a dangerous piece of theology. To this end, this paper unfolds in three parts. In order to help us distinguish the standard theory from the Christus Odium variant, in part one, we lay

1. <https://www.adamsetser.com/blog/2015/7/25/the-big-picture-of-gods-mission-a-concise-over-view-of-the-entire-bible-by-dr-abner-chou> (hereafter, Big Picture of God’s Mission). [June 19, 2018]

2. Dan B. Allender and Tremper Longman, *In the Cry of the Soul: How Our Emotions Reveal Our Deepest Questions About God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, [1999] 2015), pp. 184-85 (emphasis added; hereafter, *In the Cry of the Soul*).

3. <https://calvinistinternational.com/2017/07/27/tim-keller-the-cross-and-the-love-of-god/>. Granted Tim Keller’s statement does not entail Christus Odium it could easily be categorized as a version of the view. It certainly reflects other Trinitarian problems that are controversial in light of traditional Nicene Trinitarianism as well as Chalcedonian Christology, something relevant to the arguments we posit below. What does it mean for Christ to lose the infinite love of his Father in exchange for what? While we would not want to categorize it as such, necessarily, it comes close and is another example of pastoral rhetoric at work in the development of doctrine that is one step away from something like Christus Odium.

4. Allender and Longman, *In The Cry of the Soul*, p. 185 (emphasis added).

out what we call the minimalist criterion for penal substitution.⁵ Upon this foundation, in part two, we consider several dogmatic worries that we think exponents of the Christus Odium variant ought to seriously consider. In the third part, we propose an alternative substitution theory of atonement, in addition to a minimalist penal substitution theory, one that elides all the worries of the Christus Odium variant as well as those worries commonly associated with the classic penal substitution theory. We are not arguing against penal substitution. Far from it. We make it clear that both penal substitution and reparative substitution are live substitutionary options on the table for further consideration. Finally, we conclude with a plea.

II. Whence Penal Substitution? Origins and the Minimalist Criterion

Outside the various interpretations of the scriptural record of Christ’s atoning work and various confessional statements about the atonement, like *The Three Forms of Unity* or the *Savory Declaration*, there is no source of authority—no ecumenical symbol, like Ephesus or Chalcedon—that governs what one must believe about what Christ’s atonement accomplishes. If you are a Presbyterian (say, of the PCA variety), you look to the *Westminster Confession*, say, for a consensus of belief about the atonement. If you are a Baptist (say, of the SBC variety), you look—now more than ever—to the *Baptist Faith and Message* for it. In other words, what one thinks about the doctrine of atonement has much more to do with both the collective and individual voices of the theological tradition that inform what they believe, and these are in some sense negotiable, depending on the sort of tradition with which they ally themselves.

Despite some recent and rather awkward attempts to forge a genetic link between contemporary evangelical articulations of this doctrine and the Fathers and Medieval Schoolmen, proponents of the penal substitution theory ought to be cautious when looking for the origin of this theory not to look much beyond the Reformation, particularly John Calvin.⁶ For, before Calvin there was Anselm and

5. Before we go any further, attention needs to be drawn to some confusion in contemporary theology when doctrines like the atonement are described in one context as a “model” and in another context as a “theory.” We too have fallen prey to this. For the sake of clarity, when we say “model” we mean, a broader category, which is representative of how several theories of atonement function. When we say “theory,” we are referring to a more narrowly worked out, systematically detailed instance of a model. For example, both the satisfaction and moral government theories of atonement fall under what we have elsewhere described as belonging to restitution models of atonement.

6. See e.g.: S. Jeffery, M. Ovey, A. Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007). Such [gross distortions] have of course been recently and convincingly challenged by Adonis Vidu, in his excellent work: *Atonement, Law, and Justice: The Cross in Historical and Cultural Contexts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), p. 1ff (hereafter, *Atonement, Law, and Justice*). For an excellent treatment of the atonement in the patristic era, see: Ben Myers, The Patristic Atonement Model, in Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, eds. *Locating Atonement: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan,

those, like Aquinas and Duns Scotus, for instance, who re-visioned Anselm's satisfaction theory.⁷ After Calvin, the doctrine that contemporary theologians refer to as penal substitution underwent a series of developments, being co-opted, augmented and explained in a number of ways by a variety of British and Continental post-Reformation theologians, like, for example, Ames and Turretin.⁸ There are several recent historical works that underwrite this account of the trajectory of the atonement tradition from Anselm to Calvin.⁹ (That said, there is far more work that needs

2015), pp. 71-88. For more discussion on the history of the development of the penal substitution model of atonement in the Reformed tradition, see: William G.T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, ed. Alan W. Gomes, 3rd edn. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed), pp. 451-55. Henrich Heppel, *Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. G. T. Thomson (London: Collins, 1950), pp. 475-79ff; Herman Bavink, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 3, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), p. 455ff.

7. See e.g.: Robert Franks, *A History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2001). According to what we might think of as a classical Anselmian Satisfaction theory, Christ gives up his life in order to restore honor to God by paying a debt, one that satisfies the creditor; not of debt of punishment (as in the case of penal substitution), but of debt of honor. This again, is something that Vidu carefully treats at length, and in concert with the broader articulation and later development of the satisfaction theory amongst Abelard, Aquinas and Duns Scotus (Vidu, *Atonement, Law, and Justice*, pp. 45-88). Hitting on the major themes related to Anselm's satisfaction theory—his Platonic and realist philosophical assumptions, his theological approach to law, his emphasis the private (rather than the public) offense of sin, his contrast of punishment versus satisfaction, the necessity of the incarnation, the sufficiency of Christ's meritorious work to pay humanities debt to God—Vidu shows with great precision and clarity why Anselm's theory became epoch-making for later medieval. Summarily speaking, Anselm's theory can be expressed (roughly) in the follow set of numbered theses: (i) Christ's atonement (or a suitable equivalent) is necessary to his larger redemptive work; (ii) Christ's death procures an infinite merit (i.e. the mechanism); The infinite merit of Christ's death pays a debt of honor to God; (iii) Christ's death is a work of supererogation and therefore sufficient for all humanity; (iv) Christ's death is efficient for those who by faith are united to Christ. It should be clear from this that the mechanism of atonement on Anselm's theory is built around the idea that Christ's death somehow restores honor to the Father, namely, by virtue of the infinite merit of the sacrifice of his infinite self, thereby offsetting the infinite demerit of human sin. In this, Christ's act is one of equity to a debt; again, not a debt of punishment but a debt of honor.

8. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James Dennison Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992-1997), 1.1., p. 489; William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, ed. John Dykstra Eidsen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), 1.9.14-18, 108-9.

9. Looking closely Louis Berkhof's early 20th century reception history of the Anselmian tradition in Calvin, Vidu enumerates four-points of departure that Berkhof distinguishes Calvin from Anselm. These are worth rehearsing *en toto*. "First, the satisfaction theory focuses on the honor and dignity of God rather than his justice. The context is that of private rather than public law. Second, there is no place in Anselm's thought for the biblical idea of Christ's bearing of our punishment on our behalf. Rather, Christ offers himself as a sacrifice acceptable in lieu of our being punished (Is. 53:10). Third, Berkhof argues that there is no place for the active obedience of Christ. This might seem puzzling, yet it is not the death that effectively procures atonement for Anselm, but the infinitely valuable offer of Christ's life. Finally, the fourth weakness sensed by the Reformers is that the Latin satisfaction model turns on a purely external transfer of merits. The believer is left to his or her own devices to continue to earn the surplus merit of Christ. While, as we shall see, an economy of exchange will continue to characterize the Reformed understanding of the atonement, the satisfaction of God is construed in such a way that it can only be accomplished by the redeemer, and cannot be replicated by believers seeking to earn salvation. Christ's work is final (Heb. 7:27; 9:28; 1 Pet. 3:18) and unrepeatable." See: Vidu, *Atonement, Law and Justice*, pp. 118-19.

to be done on the development on the doctrine of atonement during this period). Among the most useful and certainly the most systematic treatment of the atonement in reception history appears in the Romanian scholar, Adonis Vidu's work. From Vidu's treatment of Calvin, we have distilled no less than six constituents of the penal substitution theory—constituents that consistently appear in its various expressions in the literature since Calvin.¹⁰ The following six propositions are what we will henceforth call the minimalist criterion for penal substitution.¹¹ If you hold to penal substitution this is what you are minimally committed to:

1. Christ's atonement is necessary to his redemptive work.
2. Christ's death is sufficient to assuage divine retribution for all humanity.¹²
3. Christ dies as a penal substitute for individual persons.
4. Christ is punished in our place. (One could revisit the theory and modify it by saying that Christ dies in order to absorb the retributive (penal) consequences of divine justice precipitated by human sin, being treated by God as if he were those individuals to whom the punishment were due) (i.e. the mechanism).
5. Christ's death pays a debt of punishment.
6. Christ's death is a vicarious sacrifice.

We should be careful to note that the mechanism of the penal substitution theory is bound up in the act of Christ's death absorbing the cumulative force of divine retributive justice against sins of particular human persons whom Christ is said to represent. In this act, Christ's death pays the debt of punishment owed by those over whom he is a so-called federal head. This is what you are minimally committed to if you are a penal substitution theorist. Of course, there are several ways that this minimum criterion has been adapted since Calvin, sometimes for good and sometimes for ill.¹³ That said, it should be clear that much of the Reformed tradition

10. According to Turretin, for example, "The satisfaction here discussed, is not taken widely for a simple and indiscriminate reparation of injury (as when one purges and excuses himself to him who has suffered injury). Rather it is taken strictly for the payment of a debt, with which is paid what another owes and with which he satisfies the creditor or judge who requires the debt of punishment... [T]he satisfaction exacted by the justice of God principally demanded two things: 1) that it should be paid by the same nature which had sinned; 2) that nevertheless it should be of an infinite value and worth to take away the infinite demerit of sin," *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. by James Dennison Jr., trans. by George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992-1997), 2.14.1, 3, 7, pp. 418, 421 (emphasis added). It is noteworthy that Turretin is often held up, and rightly so, we think, as an exponent of the penal substitution view.

11. Oliver D. Crisp, "The Logic of Penal Substitution Revisited," Derek Tidball, David Hilborn, and Justin Thacker, eds. *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement* (2008), pp. 208-27; James I. Packer, "What did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution" *Tyndale Bulletin* 25 (1974), pp. 3-46.

12. We realize that one might make some further distinctions here. One could contend that the object of the atonement is Divine wrath, without moving into Divine hatred. One might also contend that the object of the atonement rather than wrath (that might be the consequence or effect) is Divine retribution set up according to the moral law.

13. On some of these constructions, the benefits of the atonement are mediated via other doctrines.

has *not* endorsed a theory that we will consider in a moment, and we are convinced that the following theory is *not* obviously or clearly the logical entailment of penal substitution. Do not miss that. For, by assuming the objective of the atonement is meeting the demands of the moral law itself, penal substitution could simply have as its focus the satisfaction of the moral law. This does not necessarily anticipate the Christus Odium variant, despite some whom we have shown have argued for such.

III. Christus Odium

If you are committed to the minimalist criterion for penal substitution you are not necessarily committed to Christus Odium. If you think, as some have in the past and do now, that Christ's work as a penal substitute requires that the Son be hated by the Father, not only do you subscribe to the six propositions of the minimalist criterion, you are also committed to the following additional propositions.

7. The demands of divine retributive justice \approx the exercise of divine wrath \approx the divine exhibition and human experience of divine hatred.
8. Paying the debt to retributive justice, the Son is (temporarily) hated by the Father.
9. The Son of God died on the cross, which was motivated by Fatherly hate.
10. The object of the atonement is Divine hatred.
11. These additional propositions beg all sorts of questions. For the sake of brevity, we shall limit ourselves to considering only a few of them, beginning

The Holy Spirit seems to have some important role in effecting the results of the atonement. So, it is not, as if, the atonement does all of the work or transmits all the soteriological benefits of Christ's work to the elect in its own right. While many contemporary Reformed theologians suggest that there is one way of working out the penal substitution theory, this is simply not the case as reflected in the Reformed tradition. [For one popular and respected Reformed theologian who endorses penal substitution and the logical necessity of the efficacy of Christ's atoning work for the elect (as understood in what is oft called limited atonement) as the theory of atonement, [see, e.g.: R.C. Sproul. <http://calvinandcalvinism.com/?p=13943> (cited on May 16, 2017) See also: R.C. Sproul: <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/biblical-scholasticism/> (cited on May 16, 2017). This is a fairly common and singular way of understanding penal substitution theory. This is, also, often used as the ground for rejecting all other atonement theories or constructions of the penal substitution theory. But as we will see, the discussion is quite a bit more complicated. There are several ways to work out the theory that takes into account other doctrinal loci of making sense of how it is that the benefits are transferred from Christ to the elect. For one example, we could look to William Shedd, who constructively works out the meting out of the atonement benefits via the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the elect. In other words, as Shedd understands the efficacy of Christ's atonement, it is the Holy Spirit that extends/applies it to the elect [Shedd 2003, 464]. Alexander Hodge articulates the penal substitution of Christ to actually remove the legal demands on all people, which as we will see below, is similar to how we understand and develop Anselm's theory [Hodge 1972, see ch. 25.9, 25.10, 25.17]. With these various understandings of soteriological benefits within the Reformed tradition clearly secured, we can begin to see the implausibility of linking the necessity of the penal substitution theory as the theory of atonement that offers us the only, or even necessarily, the best way to articulate efficacy. If we are honest, the efficiency/sufficiency distinction, so often employed throughout Reformation history, is quite a bit more complicated than contemporary theologians let on, even when we consider the largely celebrated penal substitution theory.

with a set of scriptural and biblical-theological questions, followed by a set of Christological questions.

III.1. Scriptural and Biblical-Theological Worries

Perhaps the most pressing questions—concerns that the present readership is likely most concerned with—are the scriptural ones. Thus, our first question is: What scriptural evidence is there that the Father hates the Son? The short answer is, you may have guessed: None. There is no direct statement in all of Scripture that comes close to making the claim that God hated the Son. If this is the case (and it is) there must be some indirect statement in the Scripture—that, and some biblical-theological gymnastics—that gets one to the point of opting for the Christus Odium theory. Perhaps the most obvious indirect statement in Scripture is Isaiah 53:10, “The Lord was pleased to bruise (or crush) him.” Let us look briefly at this verse to see what it says and then look at the biblical-theological gymnastics that are going on to see if the “Christus Odium” supporters have rightly understood what this verse actually means.

If we break up this statement into its two clauses: 1-“The Lord was please” and 2- “to bruise him” and go looking for some inner-textual translation help to discern the author's intention behind the use of this word in this particular context, we find that Isaiah 1:11 and Isaiah 6:24 offer us some helpful clarity. In all three cases, the word translated pleased is used. The author's intent in this clause seems fairly plain obvious. It is bare meaning is the same in all three instances, describing the pleasure God experiences with this or that circumstance. When, however, the same word is the very next verse—53:11, “the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in his hand”—it seems from this that author's emphasis on the pleasure of God does not so much terminate on the violent abuse of the suffering servant, but on what this terrible event will in the end accomplish. It seems then that 53:11 modifies or explains the whole of the suffering-servant passage. What then about the bruising or crushing of the servant? Well, if we look a few verses back to 53.5, the same word, bruise, is employed and helps us clarify the author's intent in 53.10, namely, that this servant will undoubtedly undergo physical suffering. Now, putting all this together, it seems that God's pleasure is at least in part, directly interested in what the servant will accomplish by this physical suffering, namely, “the good pleasure of the Lord that will prosper” in the hands of the God-man. This seems like an altogether faithful reading of this passage that in no way commits one to the Christus Odium variant, which says that God somehow takes pleasure in the physical violence that his Son endures. So, how does one get there?

Some might arrive at the Christus Odium variant through the use of enthusiastic pastoral rhetoric that overburdens the Biblical-theological category of kingship and misunderstands the meaning of cursedness.¹⁴ Now, certainly the enthusiasm of

14. We are simply offering one way in which this could be worked out along these lines. For one

pastoral rhetoric has its place. As we shall see, it is just not when we are making doctrine.¹⁵

Let us look to the prophetic and priestly tradition, specifically Isaiah's vision, and his idea of what the future King will satisfy.¹⁶ One might take Christ's prophetic and priestly mission to be something of a parallel between God's relationship to humans and God's relationship to Christ's humanity. But this, we think, goes too far. For, if we are charitable, the logical implication could be worked out along these lines. Such that if we press the biblical categories, listed above, of God hating—even hating fallen sinful humanity—then that logic could extend to God the Father's Son. Herein, the idea is that the Father transfers his hatred away from fallen humanity and places the full force of that same hatred on the King who satisfies everything, namely, Christ the son. Now, as far as Christ's kingship goes, we have no desire to diminish what it means for him to be the legal representative of his people. We do, however, want to resist making more of the idea of representationalism than Scripture's legal paradigms permit. This is the first part of the problem.¹⁷

In terms of Christ's cursedness, which is the second and arguably the crux of the problem on this line of thinking, Paul is quite explicit that "Christ became a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). This, as Calvin carefully points out, does not mean that Christ *was* cursed, but that he became *a* curse. This is quite an important distinction. It is not the case, recalling one of the statements at the beginning of this paper, that "God cursed Jesus, putting Him in a position of absolute, perfect hatred. God hated Him and desired to make Him nothing."¹⁸ Instead, the curse that was due to others terminated on him. This is what it means for Christ to represent others! In other words, the relational categories employed should not necessarily yield the notion that the Father hated the Son *because* he hated humanity (if one is willing to make the latter assumption), but that as the representational substitute the Son became a curse by bearing the brunt of sin's offense. This is not the idea that Christ the Son was hated in an actual sense, but that the effects of the Father's seeking restitution or pouring out his wrath transferred from one class of people to a person. Interestingly, Calvin himself goes on to point to John 8:29, which says that the Son, "always [does] those things that please Him," and argues that, "[Christ] could not cease to be the object of

example as to how a biblical-theologian could work it out, see, Chou, *Big Picture of God's Mission*.

15. Unbridled enthusiasm of this sort smacks of the unthinking passion of the 18th century American evangelist, James Davenport, who during a book-burning of "immoral books and expensive possessions" (one that he instigated) in the name of Christ took off his pants and threw them into the fire! For more on this bizarre story, see: Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008), p. 1. The dangers of such pastoral rhetoric are reflected in the development of penal substitution in the direction of Christus Odium.

16. See again for one example of someone who follows this logic, Chou, *Big Picture of God's Mission*. He says, "The prophets show that all is not lost, for there will be a King to fulfill everything."

17. It is not clear whether Chou understands kingship-representationalism in terms of owing a debt or owing a debt of punishment.

18. Chou, *Big Picture of God's Mission*.

the Father's love, and yet he endured his wrath. For how could [Christ] reconcile the Father to us, if he had incurred his hatred and displeasure?"¹⁹ The obvious answer to Calvin's rhetorical question is: he could not. What all this means is that at some point the idea of Christ's paying a debt of punishment for sin metastasized into the idea that being liable to punishment is equivalent to a payment of a debt owed to violent divine anger for sin. And here in lies the next question.

When did the Christus Odium argument first appear? If penal substitution has its origin in Calvin, the fact that he was already defending against this idea says something about when. And there are several sources that among Reformed Scholastics that make us think that this idea was in circulation at more than one historical period after Calvin and among more than one group of thinkers. Consider the Swiss-Italian theologian Francis Turretin (1623-87), for instance, who when he speaks of Christ's endurance of what he calls the "punishment of desertion," says,

But as to a participation of joy and felicity, God suspending for a little while the favorable presence of grace and the influx of consolation and happiness that he might be able to suffer all the punishment due to us (as to the withdrawal of vision, not as a dissolution of union; as to the want of the sense of divine love, intercepted by the sense of the divine wrath and vengeance resting upon him, not as to a real privation or extinction of it.) And, as the Scholastics say, as to the "affection of advantage" that he might be destitute of the ineffable consolation and joy which arises from a sense of God's paternal love and the beatific vision of his countenance (Ps. 16); but not as to the "affection of righteousness" because he felt nothing inordinate in himself which would tend to desperation, impatience or blasphemy against God.²⁰

A generation later, the Dutch theologian Herman Witsius (1636-1708), offers a more explicit and lengthy consideration and *rejection* of, "Whether Christ was abominable to God on account of the sins which he had taken upon himself."²¹ His answer is quite revealing. He says that,

it is so far from being true that by the voluntary susception of our sins the love of God to him was any how diminished that on the contrary he never pleased the Father more than when he showed himself obedient unto death even the death of the cross. For this is that excellent that incomparable and almost

19. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. by William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), pp. 91-2. It is of some additional note that later in John 10:15 and 17, John records Jesus as saying, "I lay down my life for the sheep... For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again", and in John 17:4, John records Jesus saying, "Father, I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which you gave me to do." In this context, Calvin is discussing the theory in his own Reformed context.

20. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 14, Q. II, VI.

21. Herman Witsius, *Conciliatory Or Irenical Animadversions on the Controversies Agitated in Britain Under the Unhappy Names of Antinomians and Neonomians* (Glasgow: W. Lang, 1807), p. 39.

incredible obedience which the Father recompensed with a suitable reward of ineffable glory.²²

From such statements as these it seems that the contemporary evangelical flirtation with the “Christus Odium” variant of penal substitution is not something new. However, looking closely at the content of Wititus’ larger argument against this divine hatred of the Son, there are several, significant Christological questions that Wititus’ treatment left untouched; ones that we see as bearing directly upon contemporary proposals of the Christus Odium variant. Taking propositions (7)-(9) in their turn, in this next section, we lay out a set of Christological concerns.

III.2. Christological Worries

“The Son became sin; the Father cannot look upon sin without hatred; The Son willingly took our place of condemnation—and for an instant the Son bore the fury of God.”²³ This statement, you will recall, is what we said comprises the logical footing of the Christus Odium variant. And it is from statements like this one that propositions (7)-(10) follow from (1)-(6) of the standard view. For the sake of brevity and clarity, let us consider each proposition (7)-(10) on its own.

The demands of divine retributive justice \approx the exercise of divine wrath \approx the divine exhibition and human experience of divine hatred.

12. Paying the debt to retributive justice, the Son is (temporarily) hated by the Father.

We will consider 7 & 8 together. There are two questions here, one having to do with who is hated by the Father and another having to do with the timing of this hatred. Let us take the question of who is hated first. Did God the Father hate the human nature of Christ, just not his Divine nature? Surely, it would be a logical contradiction for the Father to hate his own nature.²⁴ For one thing, the violation of the Divine nature would yield an unorthodox Trinitarianism. Why is it that God could not also hate the human nature of Christ? To answer this question, we must first point out the fractured portrait of Christ this yields, something that would certainly force one to re-think the Old Testament portrayal of Christ as the perfect image of God (Col. 1:16) pointing us back to the Genesis image where humans are portrayed as representatives in their entirety, body and soul. Christ fulfills the image bearing relation we humans have toward God. More importantly, when we consider the traditional Chalcedonian statement and the history of interpretation on Christ’s nature, we are confronted with the fact that Christ was first a Divine person (with a corresponding Divine nature), which assumed an impersonalized

22. Ibid., p. 44.

23. Allender and Longman, *In The Cry of the Soul*, p. 185 (emphasis added).

24. These worries both echo and in several important ways extend beyond what Tom McCall has recently and helpfully labeled broken-Trinity theology, see: *Forsaken: The Trinity and the Cross, and Why it Matters* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012), p. 22 (hereafter, *Forsaken*).

human nature not a personal human nature—averting Nestorianism. This is the anhypostasis interpretation of the divine and human nature relationship that come to comprise Christ’s person.²⁵ It is Christ’s Divine person that supports the human nature. It seems hardly conceivable that the Father hates the human nature (which is a perfect representation of humanity) divorced from the Divine person when in fact the human nature lacks any personal agency apart from the Divine personhood of Christ. The problem for ‘Christus Odium’ is that Christ’s Divine and human natures are divided in a way that is not only unnatural, violating the Scriptural account of his representational work, but also violates traditional catholic Christology—something we think all should be loath to do.

Did God the Father literally hate Christ’s soul or body? If it is his death that is taken as evidence that the Father hates his Son and this act is God’s pouring out his wrath motivated by retributive justice, then it yields an interesting conclusion, namely, that God hates the Son’s physical body. But why? What did the Son’s body ever do to the Father? Does this not yield a fractured picture of Christ’s work on the cross? What about Christ’s human soul? Could it be that the Father pours his wrath out on the human soul of Christ? But, then, this raises other serious concerns about Christ as the perfect substitute, our representative that accurately represents God’s intentions of what we ought to be for God. The gnostic picture emerges in a new way.

Another question emerges regarding the timing of the Father’s turning wrath from humans toward Christ. At what moment did the Father turn in his wrath (assuming this is motivated by hate) and direct it at his Son? Presumably, the Father did so at some point while Christ was on the cross. This is a common assumption. Why is it this moment rather than an earlier moment in Christ’s sacrificial work as the suffering servant? One could make the case that the Father’s wrathful stance occurred much earlier when the Logos assumes the lowly estate of human nature and becomes one of us. By identifying with us in our weakness and sin, Christ identifies with something that many take to be deplorable to the Father.

(9) The Son of God died on the cross

In what follows, we want to raise more questions than offer answers. Consider this a Christological reflection on what it means for Christ to die and how that exhibits most acutely Divine hatred in the Son. Recall, once again, what we saw earlier, ‘God hated Him and desired to make Him nothing’ and the language of absolute separation of the Father from the Son during this one instant. Our big question, what does that mean or what are we to make of it? This is a pretty specific claim, one that for the Christus Odium exponent suggests a more fundamental belief that God himself can die, that is, cease to exist. To make such a claim is to make a dangerous metaphysical misstep. Can the *Son* of God die? According to dogmatic teaching in all three expressions of catholic Christianity (i.e., the Nicene tradition), neither the

25. See: Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 75ff.

Divinity of the Son nor the humanity of the Son died in the sense that they fall into non-being. Maximally speaking, somatic death reflects our common-sense belief of what will inevitably happen to all humans (excepting Enoch and Elijah). Somatic death is portrayed as something of a spiritual loss of God's presence, which in the case of Christ's death may amount to nothing more than Turretin's "punishment of desertion." What or who then absorbed the penalty of God's wrath? If the penalty is death, then is it just the body of Jesus? The Son, the soul of Jesus, and the indwelling Spirit are certainly not resident in the body after it expires. It seems from this set up that the Son—whom exponents of Christus Odium say is hated by the Father—must not be the one who is hated after all if he is not the one absorbing the penal consequences for sin, namely somatic death. That seems like a significant problem for the Christus Odium variant. So, what are we to make about this select time on the cross? If, "the culmination to Jesus' time on earth was His death on the cross," and if at that particular temporal instance he was hated by the Father and if he was hated at no previous time prior to those hours of agony, then what are we to make of the Father's disposition toward him when he was scourged, or when he was beaten, or when he was mocked, or when he was arrested, or when he sweat drops of blood, or when he was abandoned by his disciples and followers?²⁶ In other words, why is it that the Father only hated the Son at this one instance? Presumably, the Father would have hated his Son at some prior moment, assuming the Son assumed the guilt of humanity (or some portion of humanity), which originally precipitated Divine hate in the first place. These and other related Christological questions about the atonement-making work of Christ deserve additional attention, but our point is not only to raise perplexing questions about Christus Odium. It is also to point out the logical and metaphysical problem of claiming that the Father hates his Son (tantamount to saying that God hates God), and that the Father hates the Son for whom we know in other passages of Scripture that God was in fact well pleased with the Son's work of suffering. These Trinitarian and Christological problems are significant for the defender of Christus Odium.

(10) The object of the atonement is Divine hatred.

It seems a natural, even a necessary entailment, that Christus Odium adherents understand Divine hatred as the object of atonement. Rather than placing divine law at the center of the atonement, the emphasis is on Divine hatred. The object is not the paying off of some debt or satisfying the moral law, but the opportunity for God to vent his wrath motivated by hate. This certainly raises other questions that we, at present, cannot determine with certainty. Does the Christus Odium theory of atonement presume that hatred is a central characteristic, or attribute, of God? Like some Reformed theologians of the past, one of God's primary characteristics is hatred. As such, with this in mind, there is a metaphysical necessity for the manifestation of Divine hatred in relation to God's creation. So the logic goes, all of

26. Chou, *Big Picture of God's Mission*.

the Divine attributes must be manifest in God's relationship to creation, particularly in redemption, in order to adequately reveal his nature/essence to that creation.

As we see it, this is not so for a classical or standard penal substitution theory of atonement where the honoring of Divine law by covering the debt owed is central. On the classical penal substitution theory it is not that hatred must be vented in some way or on some person, but that the debt of punishment be satisfied, so that the moral law be honored or satisfied. However, this does not presume that hatred is central to the atonement nor does it suppose that hatred is a primary defining characteristic of God. What is required is that the demands of the law are met, and this is precisely, on a classical articulation of the penal substitute, that which Christ achieves on behalf of those he is representing.

Short of moving in this direction to affirm the divine hatred of the Father for the Son, traditional defenders of penal substitution could affirm that Christ satisfies the demands of the moral law for which God measures the quality of human actions, but this never becomes the measure by which the Father measures the quality of the Son's works—as if the Son literally was a sinner or became a wicked person representing us sinners.

The tradition has consistently affirmed that Christ was without sin as the spotless lamb (1 Peter 1:19). In fact, the death of Christ is construed as a pleasing fragrance to the Father (2 Cor. 2:15-16; Phil. 4:18; Eph. 5:2). While one might affirm that God re-directs his wrath away from humans, it is not necessary that one affirm that wrath is literally poured out on Christ in the sense that God's wrath is motivated by his displeasure with the Son.

Thus, if Christus Odium is to become the new logical deposit of penal substitution, then we suggest that one look elsewhere for a substitutionary theory of atonement or stay contented within the bounds of penal substitution's minimalist criterion by developing it a bit more in terms of its biblical basis and the theological receptions of it throughout history, and resist the move toward Christus Odium. This will require dealing with its other liabilities, which include, most notably, the "legal fiction" objection, which states that Christ's representational substitution fails to make restitution on behalf of fallen humanity because he cannot literally bear the penalty (i.e., Divine wrath or satisfaction of retribution) for that which he did not commit and could not otherwise be held liable. Alternatively, you could re-consider a view that is often disregarded and taken for granted in the contemporary evangelical theological literature, but, itself, has a varied reception throughout the history of Christian thought, including Reformation history.

IV. Substitution of a Different sort?

This theory or something near it, we call Reparative Substitution, which is a development from Anselm's satisfaction theory in the context of the Reformed

tradition. In this way, there is more than one way to parse out the substitution relation between Christ and humanity. A retrieval of Anselm deserves some reconsideration. For, there are aspects of Anselm's theory that he left largely undeveloped; these developments being significant enough in our minds as constitutive of a theory separate unto itself. We call it the Reparative Substitution theory of atonement, according to which Christ dies in an act of divine love to pay a debt of divine honor owed by humanity to God by offering himself up in act of supererogation that procures an infinite merit (of honor), offsetting the infinite demerit of human sin in order to satisfy the rectoral demands of divine justice, thereby restoring honor to God (and by consequence, his moral law). Now, we will not spend a great deal of time here, so here is a sketch:

1. Christ's atonement is necessary to his work.
2. Christ's death is an act of divine self-love.
3. Christ's death procures an infinite merit (i.e., the mechanism).
 - a. The infinite merit of Christ's death pay the full sum of humanity's debt of honor to God (Christ does this qua his divine nature).
 - b. The infinite merit of Christ's death pays the full sum of humanities debt of honor [not a debt of punishment] to God's moral law (Christ does this qua his human nature).
4. Christ's death is sufficient for all humanity (what we might call a global substitute).
5. Christ's death efficiently defers divine wrath for all humanity until the consummation/Judgment.²⁷
6. Christ's death effectively defers wrath for those who by faith are united to Christ's work.

The similarities to Anselm's theory are clear. The present theory is motivated by Anselm's satisfaction theory of atonement. Christ bears or absorbs no penalty on this theory, thus it is not to be confused with penal substitution.²⁸ Rather, the mechanism of atonement is the restoration of divine honor (i.e., a commercial framework, which highlights the King in relation to his kingdom) where the earth is conceived as God's kingdom and wherein the moral law functions, not the assumption of a debt of punishment or chance for God to dole out his wrath on Christ for sin. On reparative

27. There are several additional constituents of the Reparative Substitution that could be mentioned, about which we have said more in detail elsewhere, including: (6) The incarnation establishes both a vital union and legal union between Christ and all humanity, without which Christ's work would not obtain for all humanity; (7) The resurrection generates a newly constituted humanity, whose members include those who by faith (as the relative union), at the Judgment will receive their remunerative benefit; (8) Christ's work is efficient for the elect by settling all debts and eliminating eternal death.

28. There remains debate as to whether Christ, because he died and because death is a penalty, incurred his own penalty. That is, whether he paid a penalty—death—for the human nature that he was united to.

substitution it is the love of Christ for his Father that is the primary motive in his making atonement. Through Christ's death the God's honor is publically restored. What does reparative substitution do then? It restores to God the glory that was taken from him, who, as the apostle says, graciously "passed over former sins," the result of which was his willingness to be dishonored for a time. Then came the fullness of time. What does reparative substitution do for humanity? It defers divine retribution until all moral accounts will be settled. It fixes both the private and public problems that humanity faces for having transgressed God's rectoral justice. In this way, the reparative substitution theory is radically theo-centric, an idea we suppose few would want to publicly resist, and which is the principal reason for God's patient endurance of the reproach of sinners.

IV. Conclusion

The mere suggestion that a theory of atonement other than penal substitution might have some theological purchase is nothing short of anathema in some circles. While the present exercise is not strictly about penal substitution, but rather about the development of penal substitution in a quite problematic direction, we have taken this as an opportunity to re-visit the nature of substitution. For those in favor of the "Christus Odium" variant, this paper will be a cautionary tale. It is about how unchecked doctrinal development sometimes has results like that of a government program; once the people have it, it is hard for them to let it go. For those not quite sure what to think, this paper is a brief exercise in - systematic theological analysis; a feature that is signally absent from the scholarship of those who maintain the "Christus Odium" variant because as seen above the theory is motivated by pastoral rhetoric and exaggerated biblical-theological reasoning.

Moving beyond the radical developments of penal substitution, we are convinced, once again, that the present exercise is an opportunity to revisit the nature of substitutionary atonement. Whilst the merits of penal substitution are clearly spelled out in the recent evangelical theological literature, there is one other version of substitution that has not received the attention it deserves. We offer this not as the final conclusion to the discussion, but as one consideration along with penal substitution. We are not convinced that either are the necessary deliverances of biblical moorings, but both have merits deserving further consideration from students, pastors, and scholars alike. Tentatively, we believe that reparative substitution actually does more than penal substitution theorist's think their theory does. For example, in what way does the penal substitution theory do anything positive or efficacious for God that is also efficacious for all humanity? Simply put, we are not sure that it does. To put it rather bluntly, it seems that nothing is restored to God on the penal substitution theory. Neither are the benefits that follow from Christ's work beneficial for all humanity. Instead, and quite to the contrary of the apparent demands of God's

retributive justice, penal substitution seems only to make provision for God to make amends concerning the moral law for some part of humanity or the opportunity for God to work out his wrath, leaving God dishonored and his Son crushed (as the prophet says) for this dishonor, and what is more, all of this being of no apparent benefit to himself, save perhaps for the opportunity to vent his just wrath. In other words, upon closer examination and a comparison of mechanism and efficacy with other theories of atonement, penal substitution seems rather anthropocentric. Not so for the reparative substitution theory, according to which Christ's sacrificial act actually achieves something for all humanity and for God, namely, the restoration of divine honor.

Christ bore the miseries of the debt for sin from the moment he assumed a human nature. His was an affliction that was parceled out across the whole of his life. His most acute experience of this misery began in the garden when in distress he sweat drops of blood and it culminated in the moment he breathed his last. His whole life was necessary for giving himself up as a sacrifice to the Father, but this should in no wise be identified with Divine hatred instanced in one time, namely, on the cross.

Moving toward our conclusion, we leave the student, the pastor, and the scholar with a question. Is this really what we are supposed to lead with when we speak of God's salvation? "God hated his Son so that he could love you." Rather should we not lead with God loved his Son so much that he received Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. While there was something unlovable about humans, this is not true of God the Father's son. Instead, it was Christ's work of love for the Father (see John 15:10) that established and secured our salvation in Christ's sacrifice, beginning with his life and ending in his death. This, we suggest, is an important distinction in the gospel message the Church proclaims.

If Christus Odium is the new evangelistic message, which in some places it apparently is, we no longer have good news. Instead the Son becomes the object of the Father's derision. Is it not preferable that the Father be pleased with the Son's sacrificial work? That is the picture we wish to portray of the atonement. Furthermore, this is the picture we believe accurately represents the wider Scriptural teaching expressed in the Church's appropriation of it. For this to work, the defender of penal substitution must reject the Christus odium variant of penal substitution preferring instead to work out the logic of the traditional variation differently or, what we will suggest, consider taking up an alternative.

Philemon: Signed, Sealed, and Delivered

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Abstract: Given that the documents that later formed the canon of the New Testament were intended to be persuasive, it is a relatively safe assumption that the lector reading these texts would have added some vocal modulation and gestures at appropriate places during his recitation. Reading, acting, and rhetorical delivery were considered related skills. Following a summary of the nature of oral societies, a discussion of ancient public speaking, and an overview of the letter of Philemon, we will examine the letter for clues that indicate the lector may have made use of his voice and body to strengthen the message of this short letter. We will propose that the reading of Philemon was likely accompanied by hand and body gestures communicating affection, dependence on God, and to evoke pity. In addition, the lector's eyes and tone of voice may have been utilized to enhance the vocalization of joy, admiration, and pity.

Key Words: Biblical Performance Criticism, Lectors, Oral Cultures, Philemon, Rhetorical Criticism

Introduction

Given that the documents that later formed the canon of the New Testament were intended to be persuasive, it is a relatively safe assumption that the lector reading these texts would have added some vocal modulation and gestures at appropriate places during his recitation. Reading, acting, and rhetorical delivery were considered related skills.¹ Part of the methodology of Biblical Performance Criticism is to examine the New Testament writings for any indication that a lector might have utilized some

1. Whitney Shiner, "Oral Performance of the New Testament," in *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media: Story and Performance*, eds. Holly E. Hearon and Phillip Ruge-Jones, Biblical Performance Criticism 1 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 52.

form of theatrics to support his reading.² While the analysis of New Testament texts through the lens of rhetorical criticism has a long history, the approach of this present study is focused on the last step of that analysis, the delivery.³ Following a summary of the nature of oral societies, a discussion of ancient public speaking, and an overview of the letter of Philemon, we will examine the letter for clues that indicate the lector may have made use of his voice and body to strengthen the message of this short letter. We will propose that the reading of Philemon was likely accompanied by hand and body gestures communicating affection, dependence on God, and to evoke pity. In addition, the lector's eyes and tone of voice may have been utilized to enhance the vocalization of joy, admiration, and pity.

Oral Cultures and the New Testament Church

Most public communication in the ancient world was oral. Consequently, most ancient texts were composed with their aural and oral potential in mind, and they were meant to be orally delivered when they arrived at their destinations.⁴

The oral nature of the ancient world was due in part to the low literacy rate. In his extensive study of ancient literacy, William V. Harris concludes that the overall level of literacy in the first century ancient eastern Mediterranean world was below fifteen percent.⁵ Catherine Hezser believes that the literacy rate among Jewish individuals may have been as low as three percent, depending on how one understands and defines "literacy."⁶ Supporting the view that the ability to read appears to have been rare in antiquity are the remarks of the character Trimalchio in Petronius' *Satyricon*, who mentions the unusual talent of a servant who could read books by sight (75).⁷ Some merchants of long-distant trade may have had a limited

2. For examples of studies which apply Biblical Performance Criticism to New Testament texts, see Whitney Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark* (Harrisburg, PA 2003); Kelly R. Iverson, "A Centurion's 'Confession': A Performance-Critical Analysis of Mark 15:39," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130 (2011): 329–350; Holly E. Hearon, "Characters in Text and Performance: The Gospel of John," in *From Text to Performance: Narrative and Performance Criticisms in Dialogue and Debate*, ed. Kelly R. Iverson, Biblical Performance Criticism 10 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014) 53–79; Bernard Oestreich, *Performance Criticism in the Pauline Letters*, trans. Lindsay Elias and Brent, eds. David Rhoads, Holly E. Hearon and Kelly R. Iverson, Biblical Performance Criticism 14 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016) esp. 152–183; Peter S. Perry, *Insights from Performance Criticism*, ed. Mark A. Powell, Reading the Bible in the 21st Century: Insights (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), esp. 173–184.

3. Hans D. Betz represents one of the first major sustained attempts to apply rhetorical criticism to the New Testament (*Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

4. Ben Witherington III, *What's in the Word: Rethinking the Socio-Rhetorical Character of the New Testament* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2009), 35.

5. William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 267.

6. Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 496.

7. Lee A. Johnson, "Paul's Letters Reheard: A Performance-Critical Examination of the

capacity to read and write for their work, or they hired literate employees to carry out these functions.⁸ Further, practical matters such as the absence of eyeglasses and the presence of eye diseases with minimal remedies, would have prevented many from reading regardless of their literacy level.⁹ While low literacy rates contributed to the popularity of oral recitation, even highly literate persons were accustomed to listening to passages read out loud, especially when the availability of texts was limited (e.g., Pliny, *Epistulae* 9.34). Seneca articulated the added benefit of listening to something recited even if a person was fully literate, when he asked and answered "Why should I listen to something I can read? Because the living voice contributes so much." (*Epistulae morales* 33.9).¹⁰

Because vocalization of ancient Greek texts required navigating through a "river of letters"—uninterrupted and unpunctuated streams of capital letters, not only would a speaker need to be literate, but he would also have to be well acquainted with the work prior to standing before listeners to recite it, dedicating some time to regular practice (Plutarch, *Demosthenes* 8).¹¹ It appears that in the first-century there was some level of shame associated with committing verbal slips of the tongue during public speech (Lucian, *A Slip of the Tongue in Greeting* 1).

In addition to the low literacy rate, the spoken word was preferred because texts were enormously expensive to produce—things such as papyrus, ink, and scribes were costly.¹² During the first century, it cost two drachmas to get a letter copied, which was the amount it cost to hire a foreman or industrial worker for two to three days.¹³ In the second century C.E., one sheet of papyrus cost two obols, about one third of the average daily wage for an Egyptian worker.¹⁴ Since documents and reading material were scarce, people were adept at remembering what they heard—memory was the storehouse of information rather than books.¹⁵ Seneca boasted that he could repeat two-thousand names in the order they were given to him and recite from memory numerous lines of poetry (*Controversiae* 1, 2, Preface).¹⁶

Preparation, Transportation, and Delivery of Paul's Correspondence," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 79 (2017): 60–76, here 67.

8. Joanna Dewey, *The Oral Ethos of the Early Church Speaking, Writing, and the Gospel of Mark*, ed. David Rhoads, Biblical Performance Criticism 8 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 10.

9. Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 463.

10. Rex Winsbury, *The Roman Book. Books, Publishing and Performance in Classical Rome*, ed. David Taylor; Classical Literature and Society (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2009), 112.

11. Winsbury, *The Roman Book*, 113.

12. Witherington, *What's in the Word*, 7.

13. Pieter J. J. Botha, *Orality and Literacy in Early Christianity*, Biblical Performance Criticism 5 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 48.

14. Robert A. Derrenbacker, "Writing, Books, and Readers in the Ancient World," *American Theological Library Association Summary of Proceedings* 52 (1998): 205–229, here 207.

15. Margaret Ellen Lee, and Bernard Brandon Scott, *Sound Mapping in the New Testament* (Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2009), 92.

16. Winsbury, *The Roman Book*, 121.

For our purposes, a final characteristic of oral societies is their communal nature. Literature can be read in private. When read privately, texts allow for considerable spatial distance between the author and the reader. In contrast, literature intended to be recited out loud, was experienced in community and in a more intimate fashion with the performer, which allowed the listener to experience his facial expressions, voice inflection, and body language.

The Bible affirms that the early church was situated in predominately an oral culture. This is apparent based on the author's remark in Revelation 1:3: "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear..."¹⁷ Other New Testament texts also give explicit instructions to read the letters aloud in the churches (1 Thess 5:27, Col 4:16, 1 Tim 4:13). The congregations likely included both slaves and slave owners. Those slaves who were clerks may have been literate. For the most part, reading was sometimes considered physical labor and carried little or no status. Pliny the Younger, who could read, spoke of hiring one of his slaves, who was a slightly better reader than himself, to publicly recite his poetry for him (*Epistulae* 9.34). Thus, it is possible that someone from the church community, with an appropriate amount of preparation, would have been able to read the documents that later became the New Testament. However, Harry Gamble argues that in a time when the ability to read was rare, perhaps Paul's letter carrier would have been required to read the letter's content upon his arrival at the church, not knowing if there would have been a proficient reader present.¹⁸

Reading the Manuscript: The Lector

To obtain the most convincing argument, lectors probably borrowed some of the tactics of the orator's craft, and adapted them for their public recitations. The techniques of the orator set the standard for all kinds of public speech. According to the ancient philosopher Theophrastus, the delivery of oral material was concerned mainly with two features: voice and gesture (Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 11.3.14).¹⁹ Gesture appealed to the eye; the voice appealed to the ear—two senses by which emotion reached a person's soul (Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 11.3.14). Gestures can be defined as deliberate, conscious movements, governed by an intention to say or to communicate something.

Quintilian stated that one should not only use the voice, but the whole carriage of the body for the effective delivery of a speech (*Institutio oratoria* 11.3.2). Pliny remarked that when a person read while he was seated, and while he held a scroll,

then the two main aids to effective delivery and pronunciation were hindered, the eyes and the hands (*Epistulae* 2.19.4).

Richard Ward and David Trobisch describe an ancient painting on the wall of a Roman villa in Pompeii, Naples, depicting a typical oral performance.²⁰

A robed figure is standing, speaking and clasping a scroll in the left hand. The performer's right hand is lowered, loose and at rest; an extended forefinger points to the floor of the stage. The artist has draped a toga across the left arm. The performer's face, unmasked, is a thoughtful countenance, revealing that the piece being presented is no comic diversion; its subject is serious.

From the image, it is apparent that the right hand remained free for gestures. Orators used gestures for surprise, indignation, entreaty, anger, adoration, reproach, grief, insistence, emphasis, laughter, irony, and aversion (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.14–15; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 11.3.92–102). The picture also reveals that facial expressions can convey emotions that correspond with the text being recited. Gestures can lend support to the words spoken to render them more meaningful and emotional. While the gestures described in the ancient rhetorical handbooks were used by orators, many of them were widespread in Roman society, even among the poor.²¹ Given the constant exposure to orators, the public would have likely been well-equipped in interpreting the gestures and responding to them.

Philemon: Plot Summary and Audience

Ernst Wendland labels Philemon as a letter of intercession, where the writer intercedes on behalf of one person to repair the relationship between that individual and the recipient of the letter.²² The letter can be outlined as follows: (1-3) introduction, (4-7) thanksgiving, (8-20) body, and (21-25) conclusion.

Behind the letter lies a narrative where the plot of the story might have unfolded in the following sequence. Onesimus, was a slave who had encountered some domestic trouble with his master Philemon. The life conditions and careers of slaves in the first-century Mediterranean world varied. If a slave worked in the mines or on galleys, life was miserable and in many cases, would have resulted in death. In contrast, the life of a house slave in a city could be relatively comfortable.²³ Paul,

20. Richard F. Ward, and David J. Trobisch, *Bringing the Word to Life: Engaging the New Testament through Performing It* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 3.

21. Gregory S. Aldrete, *Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1999), 50.

22. Ernst Wendland, "'You Will Do Even More Than I Say': On the Rhetorical Function of Stylistic Form in the Letter to Philemon," in *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter*, ed. D. Francois Tolmie (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 79–111, here 83.

23. Risto Saarinen, *The Pastoral Epistles with Philemon & Jude*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 199.

17. All scriptural quotations are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.

18. Harry Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University, 1995), 97.

19. Shiner, *Proclaiming*, 79.

who was in prison (1, 9, 23), is sought out by Onesimus to serve as his *amicus domini* (friend of the master) to intervene on his behalf in the hope he would be restored to his former status in Philemon's household.²⁴ Roman law allowed a slave who was in trouble with his or her master to seek arbitration with a colleague or friend of that master. In such instances, the slave was not considered to be a fugitive and could be granted sanctuary under the mediator's care until the difficulty was resolved (*The Digest of Justinian* 21.1.17.4).²⁵ For Onesimus to be able to visit and interact with Paul, suggests the apostle must have been in *custodia libera* (liberal detention), something akin to house arrest where a soldier was present.²⁶ Upon finding Paul, Onesimus became a Christ follower (10). Paul then sends Onesimus back to Philemon (12) with a letter of intercession to accept Onesimus back, while offering to pay Philemon for any loss he has suffered (17–19a).

The primary recipient of the letter, Philemon, was hospitable, since the church met in his house (2, 5–7). Ownership of a home large enough to accommodate a group of individuals, and with a guest room also suggests that he was also a person of wealth (2, 22). He possibly was the leader of the church meeting at his house, as he had a hand in ministering to other believers (5, 7).

While Philemon was the primary addressee of the letter, the other recipients were not mere bystanders. They would have played an active role as observers, watching Philemon intently to see what he will do in response to Paul's request.

The repetition of the plural pronoun *hēmōn* (our) in the opening address (1, 2, 3) and the language used to describe the relationship among the authors and recipients (co-workers [1], dear [1], fellow soldier [2], brother [1], and sister [1]), express that the group enjoyed a close intimate relationship with each other.²⁷ Further, in addition to Paul, Timothy, Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and the entire church, God and Christ also inhabited this specifically defined community space, for they served, along with Paul and Timothy, as co-dispatchers and co-authors of the epistle (3).

Philemon Delivered

The reader of Paul's brief, but passionate letter becomes the author's means of being present in the Christian community. This presence is embodied by the lector who

24. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 34C (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 18.

25. Alan Watson, ed., *The Digest of Justinian*, vol. 2, trans. Alan Watson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1985), 148.

26. Roy R. Jeal, *Exploring Philemon: Freedom, Brotherhood, and Partnership in the New Society*, Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity 2 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2015), 83.

27. Lee, *Sound Mapping*, 227; Pieter G.R. De Villiers, "Love in the Letter to Philemon," in *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter*, ed. D. Francois Tolmie (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 181–203, here 183.

has at his disposal his body, his facial expressions, and his voice to deliver the words to the church in the most persuasive manner while serving as Paul's substitute. In this portion of the analysis we will explore places in the text where expressions of admiration, joy, pity, and dependence on God could have been supplemented with gestures, a modulated voice, and eye contact to strengthen Paul's persuasion of Philemon and to bolster other significant portions of the letter.

Admiration for Philemon

From verse 4 through verse 21, the pronoun "you" (*sou*) is singular, indicating that in these verses Paul is speaking directly to Philemon. While there are several places in this section of the letter that convey Paul's appreciation for Philemon (4, 5, 7, 9, 12, 16), we will only mention one. It is located early in the letter when the apostle says, "When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ" (4–6). According to Peter Lampe, the three terms, *pantote* ("always" [4]), and *pantos* ("all" [5, 6]) are hyperbolic and serve to intensify Paul's feelings of affection toward Philemon.²⁸ Paul's words are strongly motivated by his love for Philemon as a valuable member of the family of God.

Given the prominent language that reflects Paul's affection and admiration for Philemon, it seems entirely fitting that the reader, during some of Paul's affectionate statements, would have communicated these feelings not only with a soft and gentle voice when reading, but also through physical touch. In ancient Athenian art, placing one's hand on the chin of another person seems to have been a common sign of affection or unity between two people.²⁹

In addition to physical touch, affection for an individual, both for us and for the ancients, is typically associated with increased eye-contact. The ancient belief of vision, especially among the Greeks, was that seeing, or gazing at another person was a material process analogous to touch.³⁰ In the ancient world, there were a variety of theories concerning the mechanics of vision. Two extreme theories referred to by moderns as "extramission" and "intromission" suggest that ancient viewers tended to think of the meeting of eyes between two people as far more active and physical than

28. Peter Lampe, "Affects and Emotions in the Rhetoric of Paul's Letter to Philemon: A Rhetorical-Psychological Explanation," in *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter*, ed. D. Francois Tolmie (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 61–77, here 65.

29. E.g., Angelos Chaniotis, Nikolaos E. Kaltsas, and Ioannis Mylonopoulos eds. *A World of Greek Emotions: Ancient Greece, 700 BC–200 AD* (New York: Onassis Foundation USA, 2017), 154. See also Alan Boegehold, *When a Gesture was Expected: A Selection of Examples from Archaic and Classical Greek Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1999), 18.

30. Susanne Turner, "Sight and Death: Seeing the Dead through Ancient Eyes," in *Sight and the Ancient Senses, The Senses in Antiquity*, ed. Michael Squire (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 143–160, here 156.

we do today.³¹ Both theories considered that the eyes were constantly either giving out or receiving streams of tiny particles through which emotions like love or hate could travel. In ancient thinking, sight was tactile. Given this view, the lector surely would have, at certain places during the recitation of the letter, made and sustained direct eye contact with Philemon to more effectively communicate Paul's affection and appreciation for him.

Paul's Joy

Paul discloses that he has experienced much joy and encouragement upon hearing that Philemon had refreshed the hearts of God's people (7). While translations of the letter typically render *splanchna* (7) as "heart," the word more literally means "entrails," "viscera," or "inward parts," and thus, refers to the feeling in one's stomach.³² Ancient people likely associated emotions to their internal organs such as the stomach because that is where they were physically experienced.³³ Paul is joyful upon hearing that the deepest innermost part of God's people have been healed, ministered to, renewed, and refreshed because of Philemon. Joy is a characteristic of the Holy Spirit's own nature and a manifestation of his indwelling presence (Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22). To experience joy is to have a sense of well-being, gladness, intense satisfaction, and exultant delight. These feelings can find expression in poetry, elated vocabulary, gestures, dance, celebration, humor, music, laughter, song, and gratitude.

Peter Arnott has noted that in the Greek theater, joy was expressed by some passionate, ecstatic rapid movement of the body.³⁴ For example, in *The Libation Bearers*, Electra is told by her brother Orestes to contain herself and to not go mad with joy (230). Given that Christian joy is in part a result of the Spirit's presence in an individual, the reader may have recited Paul's statements of joy in a tone of voice different than he does elsewhere in the letter. Upon hearing that the ministry of Philemon provided rest to the very innermost being of the redeemed, the lector likely articulated these words in an excited, slightly ecstatic manner, with increased tempo and volume that usually accompanies vocalization of exuberant joy.

31. Michael Squire, "Introductory Reflections: Making Sense of Ancient Sight," in *Sight and the Ancient Senses*, The Senses in Antiquity, ed. Michael Squire (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 1–35, here 16–17.

32. Frederick W. Danker, et al., "σπλάγχνον," BDAG 938.

33. See the research discussed by Mark S. Smith ("The Heart and Innards Israelite Emotional Expressions: Notes from Anthropology and Psychobiology," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 [1998]: 427–36).

34. Peter D. Arnott, *Public and Performance in the Greek Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 66.

Acknowledging God

Three times in Philemon God is acknowledged. Twice he is mentioned directly (3, 4) and once he is referred to in a divine passive (15; *echōristhē*). In Scripture, the act of communicating with God is often accompanied by raising the arms or spreading of one's palms (e.g., 1 Kings 8:22, 54; 2 Chron 6:13; Ps 28:2; 44:20; 63:4; Isa 1:15). David Calabro suggests that this gesture communicates a person symbolically seeking to establish a bond with the divine.³⁵ Like the posture of an infant reaching towards his or her mother for care, the prayer posture of an individual with outstretched arms and palms open toward the heavens, similarly acknowledges dependence on God. In Philemon 3 it is noteworthy that God is referenced as "father." In verse 4 God is thanked for his role in Philemon's love for the saints. Finally, the Greek word translated as "separated" (*echōristhē*) discussing Onesimus' departure and conversion is in the passive tense, insinuating God's providential involvement in Onesimus's and Philemon's circumstances (15).³⁶ In any one of these three references to God, the reader properly could have recognized God with extended arms and palms open toward the heavens.

Admiration for Onesimus

Love is a strong, self-giving affection that stands at the heart of Christianity. This affection finds vivid demonstration in Paul's willingness help Onesimus and more specifically to financially intercede for any debt Onesimus owes Philemon. Paul's self-giving love is emphasized in the text when he repeatedly refers to himself ("I") at the beginning of three succeeding clauses, creating a sort of staccato affect: "I Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about you owing me even yourself" (19). The reference to Paul's personal involvement in the actual composition, function as a guarantee of payment and likely insinuates that Paul had a secretary write the rest of the letter. More importantly it is apparent that Paul did not hesitate to express his willingness to repay any debt due Philemon on behalf Onesimus.

Here it would be entirely appropriate for the reader to gesture towards himself each time he recites the pronoun "I." Further, a gesture toward the manuscript he is holding would underscore Paul's guarantee of payment. Paul is in a small way modeling Jesus' demonstration of love for sinners by offering to help pay for the consequences of Onesimus' offence against Philemon (19).

35. David Calabro, "'When You Spread Your Palms, I Will Hide My Eyes': The Symbolism of Body Gesture in Isaiah," *Studia Antiqua* 9 (2011): 16–32, here 31.

36. James W. Thompson and Bruce Longenecker, *Philippians and Philemon*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 184.

Pity for Paul

Paul attempts to persuade Philemon by evoking feelings of sympathy towards the apostle. First, by stating that he is imprisoned and advanced in age, Paul presents himself as an object of pity (1, 9, 13, 10, 22, 23). Given that Paul's remark about his old age is parallel with his status as a prisoner (9), suggests that rather than being an attempt to assert his authority, the reference to his advanced age implies that it was a self-humbling gesture.³⁷

The references to Paul's advanced age represent an aspect of his physicality (9).³⁸ In addition to allowing the audience to become sensitive to and experience the bodily presence of the author, it also reflects an attempt by the apostle to pull at Philemon's heartstrings and cause him to feel sympathy towards him and his appeal. The lector could impersonate people through various means, including, but not limited to, consideration of the person's age, sex, and, social status. The reader may have imitated Paul as an elderly man by bending slightly over, slowing down the tempo of his speech and using a tremulous voice.

A second means by which Paul seeks to stir feelings of pity are through his requests to Philemon, which give the impression that the apostle is dependent on him (9, 10). Paul pleads with Philemon on behalf of Onesimus, providing him with a persuasive motive: "I am appealing to you for my child (*tou emou teknou*), Onesimus (*Onēsimon*), whose father I have become during my imprisonment. Formerly he was useless (*achrēston*) to you, but now he is indeed useful (*euchrēston*) both to you and to me" (10–11). In the Greek, Paul's statement concerning his spiritual fathering of Onesimus and the child's transformation exhibit both a balanced rhythm and rhyming. The rhythm and the rhyming directs attention to Paul's plea and Onesimus' spiritual transformation from slave to brother and from one who was once useless for the cause of the gospel to one who is now beneficial. The sound features of the letter were important for audiences listening to the letters recited and here stress Paul's passionate appeal on behalf of the estranged slave.

The appeals that Paul made on behalf of Onesimus, serve as a "rhetorical prostration" (9–11).³⁹ A supplicant often realizes that a verbal plea for pity requires much more than a request to succeed—a kneeling position would serve to reinforce the vocal plea. Ancient Greek dramas exhibited physical acts of supplication. For example, in Euripides' drama *The Suppliants*, the scene opens with aged, grey-haired, Argive women kneeling at the feet of Aethra, appealing for help in retrieving the unburied bodies of their sons who have perished in battle (1–40).⁴⁰ Their posture,

along with their age, enhanced their plea and the pity that was felt towards them. To further persuade, the reader may also resort to physical contact that creates a bond between Paul and Philemon. Besides demonstrating affection, the gesture of placing one's hand on another's chin, also depicts an act of supplication or pleading with another individual.⁴¹ Consequently, we might imagine the reader kneeling before Philemon and/or touching his chin at certain points in the recitation to strengthen Paul's appeal for Onesimus.

Conclusion

We do not know who read the letter of Philemon to the congregation. We do know that the epistle contains Paul's emotional language, which was potentially read with modulation in voice, dramatic gestures, and eye contact. Beyond a mere recitation of the correspondence, we have suggested how the reader may have communicated affectively, the community's dependence on God, and the emotions of joy, admiration, and pity. All with the goal to enhance Paul's message and to convince Philemon to forgive Onesimus and warmly welcome him back not as a slave, but as a brother in the Christian community.

Literature (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2006), 206.

41. Boegehold, *When a Gesture*, 19.

37. Lampe, "Affects and Emotions," 65 n. 10.

38. Bernard Oestreich, *Performance Criticism in the Pauline Letters*, trans. Lindsay Elias and Brent Blum, eds. David Rhoads, Holly E. Hearon and Kelly R. Iverson, *Biblical Performance Criticism* 14 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), 84.

39. Lampe, "Affects and Emotions," 70.

40. David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical*

Exegesis by Story: The Disciplined Imagination of the World of Scripture

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Abstract: This paper is about a method of exegesis, an exegetical procedure. It addresses the issue of reading the text in a way that respects and takes seriously all three traditional foci of interpretation, the author, the text, and the reader in one holistic approach to interpreting the text. Thus, the core issue is the focus of exegesis of the text (Is it the world of the reader or of the author?) and the locus of meaning (Is it in the text or in the mind of the reader?). Exegesis should focus on the life-story of the text (or passage of Scripture) as the primary context. The life-story is the reconstructed story behind and revealed in the passage. The life-story provides the common ground for the author, text, and reader to interact in a holistic way in the work of the exegete. Underlying this method is the assumption that the passage represents and reveals the world of the ancient community of faith, which can be imaged in such a way that the modern reader can participate in it and interact with author and community in a meaningful way. This interaction allows the exegete not only to discern the meaning of the text for the ancient community, but also to find the patterns of application for the ancient community and for the church today.

Key Words: exegesis, life-story, imagination, historical-grammatical, deep structure, transformation

“Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked.

“Yes,” they replied.

He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

Matthew 13:51,52 NIV

Introduction

Exegesis by story is about.....exegesis, opening the Bible and interpreting a passage of Scripture. When Jesus had finished his discourse on parables (Matt. 13), he gave his disciples the “great commission” for the scribes of the Kingdom (that is, the exegete, the “teacher of the Law”). He admonished them that their task was to bring

the Scripture to the Kingdom community in such a way that the old (The Bible) was brought to newness (understanding and relevance for the community). This is, or should be, exegesis. Exegesis by story is a better way to do this.

The title of the article, *Exegesis by Story: the disciplined imagination of the world of Scripture*, functions as a table of contents for this treatise. The article is about *exegesis*. By this is meant the study of a passage of Scripture to draw out its meaning in preparation for teaching or preaching. Be advised that references to “text” and “passage” usually refer to a particular passage of Scripture (like Matthew 13:51,52) which the “scribe” focuses on as he does his work. This article deals with how to approach and interpret such a passage of Scripture. *By Story* suggests a method for exegesis, a way to approach the text which will hopefully produce good results in understanding the old and bringing it to the new. *Imagination* refers to the procedure the exegete follows to access the Story. *Disciplined* describes the technique used to find the Story and to bring it to written expression in a faithful way. *The world of Scripture* is the Bible (each and every one of its books and passages), given as God’s Word and guide to life for the ancient and modern community of faith. Exegesis by Story then is the task of Kingdom scribes.

Hermeneutics, especially exegesis, is a complex issue for the church today. Scholars have identified and been working on a key problem, the focus of exegesis¹. Is the main focus the intention of the author and the understanding of the original audience? Is it the text, as the obvious bearer of the message to the church? Or is it the reader, who must in the end be the one to formulate the meaning of the text? Exegesis by Story seeks to explain how these three aspects of the task of exegesis work together in a holistic way. In reality, the church has been doing exegesis adequately for centuries. But insights into language, literature, and the nature of history in the 20th and 21st century from the social sciences and hermeneutical studies call for observations about biblical interpretation which need to be brought out of the treasure chest.

Exegesis

Biblical exegesis is the process of reading the Bible in order to interpret or explain the meaning of the biblical text in a careful and detailed way. Since exegesis is at the

1. W. Randolph Tate devotes his whole book to it. *Biblical Interpretation: an integrated approach*, Peabody Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991. He calls it a “journey into three worlds” (xv) and calls these worlds the “author-centered approaches to meaning,” the “text-centered approaches to meaning,” and the “reader-centered approaches to meaning” (xvi-xix). Grant Osborne notes the same issue in, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, revised and expanded (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 516. See also Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke, Grant Lovejoy, eds., *Biblical Hermeneutics: a comprehensive introduction to interpreting Scripture* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 5-13, in the section “A Student’s Primer for Exegesis” Corley discusses at length the task of integrating the three foci, author, text and reader in finding the meaning of Scripture.

very core of hermeneutics, the description and definition of this process has attracted much attention among philosophers, theologians and biblical scholars. However it is evident that the precise nature and a commonly agreed-upon procedure of exegesis continues to allude the academic community.

The approaches to exegesis vary depending on the focus of the interpreter and the assumption about the locus of meaning. Tate highlighted the three main “groups of theories” that effect the definition and method of exegesis—author-centered, text-centered, and reader-centered². He notes that these three centers (or foci) for interpretation are “usually viewed as mutually exclusive” when it comes to the search for the meaning of the text³. In his book, Tate seeks an integrated approach between these three—“Hermeneutics is a dialogue between the text and reader, and the text and reader enter into a conversational covenant informed by the world of the author.”⁴ His approach to integration puts special emphasis on the interaction between text and reader⁵. Osborne continues the same discussion of the problems concerning these three foci (author, text, and reader) in the process of discovering the meaning of a text⁶. He challenges us with urgent questions--

Which of the three [foci] is the primary force in determining [a text's] meaning? The focus has shifted from one to another of these as various theories of meaning have been propounded. Since an author is no longer present to explain the meaning of the text once it is written, is the text autonomous from the author? And since the reader provides the grid by which the text is interpreted, what place does the text itself have in the process of understanding?

Osborne affirms that the author, text, and reader “are not contradictory but are interdependent parts of a larger whole.”⁷ He affirms the priority of authorial intent and suggests that integration of the various approaches takes place mainly in interaction between text (as prior) and reader guided closely by the world of the author/recipients “as a control on the way we apply biblical language to current issues.”⁸ Both these scholars (and many others) are looking for a way to provide a wholistic approach to the text that takes into account the dynamics found in these three essential elements of author, text, and reader.

This paper is about a method of exegesis, an exegetical procedure. It is the “how” question. How can the church read the text in a way that respects and takes seriously

the whole context, the author and recipients, the text, and itself as the readers. Thus, the core issue is the focus of exegesis of the text (Is it the world of the reader or of the author?) and the locus of meaning (Is it in the text or in the mind of the reader?). Does the exegete take his signals from the ancient world (as the primary context), or some other context? How does he make the decision what the text means? A related concern will be the question of significance or application, a natural and expected outcome of exegesis. Can one bypass the historical/literal meaning and go straight to the various theological or ecclesiastical contexts to apply the text? Or should the sermon be set mostly in the zipcode of ancient Jerusalem, leaving the application of the Word to the individual believer?

To begin to answer some of these questions, a clue from the early church's own exegetical method should be observed, because it appears that the leaders of the early church practiced exegesis by story. The term “exegesis” comes from a Greek concept. The Greeks spoke about the importance of interpreting and explaining the law, or delivering the oracle of a god, or expounding on the meaning of a sacred text. The word used was ἐξηγέομαι (exegeomai) or ἐξήγησις (exegesis) (from ἐξηγέομαι, *interpret, explain, tell, report, describe*⁹). The use of the word in the New Testament however usually carries a different but related sense—to narrate or report¹⁰. Only the verb form is found in the New Testament, used mostly in contexts that speak about the narration or report of a series of events. In four instances, different individuals or groups (the disciples from Emmaus, Paul and Barnabas, Simon, or Paul alone) are relating a series of events (telling their story) to the disciples gathered. In these instances, the narration of the story is given to explain or interpret (exegeomai) the meaning of the circumstances they are in. (Read the passages containing Luke 24:35, Acts 15:12,14, and Acts 21:19). The other two instances (John 1:18 and Acts 10:8) are the use of the verb to mean “reveal” or “explain”. Etymologies and word studies in themselves seldom prove a definitive, final meaning for a word, but the story in Acts (read in Greek) clearly shows that the early church saw the value of knowing the larger story in order to understand the significance of their particular circumstances and the pathway to proper decision-making. In the New Testament, “exegesis” was a technique of explaining something by telling the whole story around it.

This technique provides a promising approach to understanding the biblical text. The elements of historical-grammatical studies (traditional exegesis) are still required, but there is one important step to be taken before the exegesis of a passage can be complete--finding the story behind the text. As the title of the article suggests, the story behind the biblical text will provide a more comprehensive and holistic

2. Tate, xvi.

3. Ibid.

4. Tate, 210.

5. Tate, 210-212, see this discussion.

6. Osborne, in Appendix 1 The Problem of Meaning, 465.

7. Osborne, 516.

8. Osborne, quoting R.T. France in his 1984 article “The Church and the Kingdom of God: some hermeneutical issues,” 521.

9. Kittel, Friedrich, Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, abridged in one volume*, trans and ed. Bromiley, s.v. ἡγήομαι.

10. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, University of Chicago Press, 1979, s.v. ἐξηγέομαι, ἐξήγησις.

context for exegeting a passage. The role of story in exegesis in explaining texts has great promise.

What is the story of the text, and in what sense is story an essential element in exegeting a text?

Story

It has been affirmed that the *story* behind the text provides the appropriate context for interpretation. What is story as the exegetical focus? How is this focus distinguished from the traditional foci of author/text/reader? In what way does the story carry the meaning of the Scripture to the reader?

In practice, of necessity when a person comes to a passage of Scripture to exegete, she first focuses on the text. The exegetical procedure (however complex or simple) then directs the exegete through the text to some understanding of meaning in the text or in the effect the text makes upon her. The text is at the center of the process. However, as mentioned above, in order to find a wholistic approach to the passage it is necessary to take an intermediate step after carefully examining the text and before starting to draw out the meaning (exegeting). One must first *reconstruct the story revealed by the text, the story of which the text is a part as an event*. Everything has a history, a story behind it. This is true of a biblical book or part of a book. The passage of Scripture is part of the larger story of the writing of the book (in most genres, but the Psalms might be an exception¹¹). The passage is in reality part of the larger story of the author's or editor's life especially in his relationship to the recipients (however close or remote that relationship may be). To understand the passage, the exegete must first find the story behind it. The locus of meaning is in the narrative behind the text. One finds the meaning by imaginatively entering that story. One enters that story by carefully applying the traditional steps and tools of exegesis to reconstruct the story. With the story, then, the exegesis of the passage can begin.

Can it be said that the text has a history and thus reveals its own story? In this sense, yes. The text of Scripture does not simply create a world in the literary sense, but rather the text arises from the ongoing life of the author and recipients, the ongoing activities of the author and recipients in the original context of their world. The text has a history, a life-story it should be called. In traditional, historical-grammatical exegesis the steps guide the exegete to find the *background* of the text, the world from which the text arises. However, is this background merely supplementary to the text, as a way to understand more clearly the concepts expressed by the text? In reality, this background material is the *foreground*, the focus of the search for meaning. The exegete should be looking more deeply in the passage for the world and life-story of the text. One needs to reconstruct and focus on a narrative which describes

11. In the case of a psalm, each psalm contains its own life-story, although its story is related to the larger story of the compilation of the psalms.

the flow of events which provoked the production of the book. The exegete should look for how the author and community struggled with circumstances or issues as revealed by the passage, how the author represented and dealt with these matters, and what was going on when the text was being read for the first time by the original intended audience, and for other important features, as will be seen. The historical/social background, the story behind the text, is actually the *primary* context of the text, not supplementary. The cultural concepts and events behind the text, what is usually called "background" and used to illumine the ideas of the text, is actually the foreground. The world we are looking for in a biblical book is the underlying story of the writing of the book, the underlying flow of circumstances that led the author to say what he did and the recipients to understand it the way they should. This reconstructed story reveals the history of the text, and particularly the events going on as the text is being written and read.

The concept of deep structure guides in understanding the text as story. The text of a passage is the surface structure. As surface structure, it should be seen as arising from the deeper story of the text as told by the text. Thus it is necessary to talk about the deep structure of the biblical text. Osborne's comments at this point are relevant. In discussing the implications of structuralism on biblical studies, he discusses how the "mythopoetic" understanding of the deep structure of literature guides us to look for the underlying universal categories of thinking (binaries like comedy/tragedy, light/dark) which are found in the text, and which are the true matrix of meaning¹². He also discusses at length the other form of structuralism applied to language studies, the Chomskian idea of generative/ transformational grammar as the deep structure of sentences¹³. In Osborne's analysis of deep structure, the reality of a broader deep structure underlying the text is made evident. Osborne (citing Thiselton) comes to an interesting insight. He refers to "biblical" deep structure.

As Thiselton states, there is a very real danger in placing the cognitive element [Chomsky's transformational grammar] above *the emotive, cultural, or religious deep structures that also underlie a surface statement*. Indeed, deep structure properly considered certainly goes beyond the categories Chomsky [or Levi Strauss, *author's addition*] elucidated. For biblical study it demands a recognition of the many areas of nonlinguistic realities behind the actual statements of the passage."¹⁴

It reflects more the reality of the text to realize that the deep structure (or substructure if you will) is not only mythopoetic and/or grammatical. It is the *historical* deep structure, the deep structure story/history of the text which best reveals its meaning.

12. Osborne, 471ff.

13. Osborne, 140ff.

14. Osborne, 143. See Anthony Thiselton, "Language and meaning in religion," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*.

The text is the literary surface structure which reveals the deep structure story of the text. It is this deep structure story which must be reconstructed and made the focus of exegesis.

So what is the exegete looking for in the text? How does the text bear meaning? The text arises from and is an integral part of a broader story. The primary context of a text is not the surrounding literary text, not the historical/social conditions which are background of the text, not the needs and issues of the modern reader. The primary context is the series of events and interactions involving the author/recipients/faith community going on at the time of the writing—the deep structure story. The text is one event in that story. If the text is an event in the life of that ancient community, it can be reconstructed as a story, the life-story of the text. This reconstructed story describes what is going on at the time of the writing and reading of the original author/recipients, what the subjects are doing, what they are saying to one another, how they react (or should react) to what is being said, even what God is doing at the time and through the situation. If the exegete is willing to see the text not as an object to use in some way, but rather as the interaction between two subjects, the author and recipients (really, three, because God is always involved), he can see himself as a subject interacting with the author just as the original recipients interacted. The more he is part of that story as subject, the better he understands the text being studied.

Imagination

What is the methodology for finding and entering the life-story of the text? How does the exegete become a recipient just as the original audience was? The word imagination is used, but a better designation would be imaging. One enters this story by picturing and describing the story that is there. This methodology has promise. L.T. Johnson, in his article *Imagining the world Scripture imagines*¹⁵, offers such a methodology. (At this point it should be stated that Johnson is proposing a method for bringing the *theological ideas* of the text to the community of faith today in a way that will allow more vital understanding and application. He is not speaking about the life-story of the text but the world of ideas (the worldview) of the Scripture.) He says that the focus of theology as it speaks to the church today cannot be the dissected Scriptures of historical/grammatical studies (“sterile literalism”¹⁶) nor even the propositions of biblical theology, both of which have distanced us from the conceptual world imaged by Scripture. Johnson contends that theologians need to discern and recover the world imaged in Scripture in such a way that it is possible to see clearly how to live in it today. This theological world is like a city, in which not only the ancient community dwelt but also in which the community of faith continues

15. Luke Timothy Johnson, “Imagining the World Scripture Imagines,” (*Modern Theology*, April, 1998): 165-180.

16. Johnson, 170.

to live today¹⁷. Theologians today must recover a way of relating Scripture to the 21st century world by imaging the world of ideas which Scripture brought into being. This image, this map of the life and beliefs of the ancient community, becomes the guide so the church can live in it and be transformed by it. Thus the methodology is a process of studying Scripture in order to bring into clear focus (image) the world which Scripture depicts and through that to help congregations see how to live out those ideas.

As stated above, to understand this process, Johnson contends it is necessary to think of the theological world of the Scripture as a city which has a past and present. In such a city (one’s hometown, for instance), the past lives along with the present. The present residents live in many ways in the same world as their ancestors—parents, grandparents, great grandparents. Johnson holds that there is a continuity of existence of life and living that informs the present residents through and literally in the life and structures created by the past residents¹⁸. Thus Johnson proposes bringing the theological worldview of the ancient community of faith to the present by imagining the biblical world. The assumption behind this is that theology is active properly only in a living, breathing community, and the Scriptures of the ancient community of faith did indeed create such a world in which the church today could live and move and have their being. Thus the present generation finds the real pertinence of Scripture by discovering again and living in that world. In his article, Johnson has begun to explore the possibilities of recreating the world found in Scripture as a way for the church today to access it.

In exegesis by story, the concern is with Johnson’s *methodology* not his content (theology). For *exegetical* purposes, imaging is a way to make the world of the text available so the community of faith can live in it, learn from it, be molded by it. The world behind the text is not just the worldview of the theological ideas, but the actual historical setting and life of the author and recipients. *Imaging thus becomes the method for accessing the world of the author/recipients in order to live in it.* This method requires a search not just for ideas in the text to put down on paper (propositions) but it must picture and recreate in narrative form the world in which those ideas were alive and active. This narrative will depict the people involved in the writing of the biblical book and how they interacted with one another, the series of events that transpired and produced the writing, the social circumstances and their dynamics that were part of the methods and concerns of the writer and recipients, the important theological, philosophical, ideological factors that molded and guided the thinking, the patterns of activity which the author refers to and of which the ancient community was a part. This narrative must even take into account the geography and weather events in and behind the written text. The present reader can perhaps think of other significant features that would be part of the story of the text.

17. Johnson, 167, 168. He calls it a living city, one that has continuous existence.

18. Johnson, 168.

This methodology for exegesis implies two things. At the core of the exegetical process is the discovery and imaging of the deep structure of the biblical text. The process is called transformation. It is the process of transformation from the surface text to the deep structure world. It is more than simply a grammatical transformation, or simply a narrative structural analysis¹⁹. The exegete is not simply looking for the archetypal substructures, the subconscious codes²⁰ that are foundational to human thinking. All of these are *aspects* of the substructure world of the text in some way or other. This approach to exegesis assumes that the transformative substructure of the text is a history, a story of human interaction within the larger story of the faith community and within the larger natural, social, and spiritual world of the author and recipients. It is this story that underlies and produces the text; it is the transformative grammar of life that gives shape (and meaning) to the text. In the case of exegesis, the concern is to start with the text and work to the substructure story, a sort of reverse transformation if you will.

Secondly, perhaps the most significant reality of the substructure story being imaged is that the community of faith today is part of the same story. The past city of the biblical world is continuous with the city the church lives in today. Thus there is an essential and substantial continuity of life with the original author and recipients²¹. Johnson's point is that the present community *can* live in the ancient world through imagination, and in this existence can discover the living power of the ancient community's theological worldview and how it can and should become theirs. This author would add that discovering the theological world is not the only thing needed. Even more, it is necessary to discover how the ancient community lived in their cities, addressed their problems, related to one another, dealt with social pressure, and perhaps most importantly understood and related to God. When one enters this world he will be able to see patterns of activity (natural, social, and spiritual) that are recognized as still active in the world. The early church fathers discovered these patterns relevant for their own generations, patterns of salvation and spiritual transformation, patterns of relating to God. But the patterns of activity seen behind the biblical text involved much more than just the spiritual or theological. There are patterns of government (like the monarchy), patterns of social interaction (like the hellenistic household), patterns of nature (like the rain cycle), even patterns of tradition and biblical interpretation (like Paul's use of midrash), which can and

19. Such as is laid out in Jean Calloud, *Structural Analysis of Narrative*, trans. Daniel Patte (Fortress Press, 1976).

20. Osborne, 471.

21. Johnson, 167. "In a living city, the past is not someplace else, but this place; the city's past continues as part of its present. The past is not memorialized but incorporated. The city's history is not external to its inhabitants, but is part of their own story; indeed, their story cannot be told without telling the story of the city....In this city there is constant change, yet the change is contained within a deeper continuity, as this city remains, undeniably and indefinitely, this and only this city." In other words, the world of Scripture is the same "city" the church lives in today.

should also guide in finding the relevance and proper application of the biblical text. This "city" of the biblical world is the same one the community of faith lives in today. Many of the old buildings have been torn down, some of the streets have been rerouted and many have been added, some of the old theatres are still there but mostly new ones with stadium seats have replaced them, but it is the same city in most of the essential and important ways. It is essential that the church find this ancient map as a guide in the modern city.

Discipline

The deep structure story is the focus of our exegetical efforts. It is from this story one determines what the author was saying and doing and how it connected to the world in which he and the recipients lived. This story helps the exegete see more clearly how the recipients received the writing. The vivid image of this world makes the modern reader aware of the broader context of the life-story of the text and thus to see more of the implications of the text—not only what the text is saying, but what the author is doing, how that message was or is intended to be applied and how that application will function in the life of the community of faith. This idea is the dynamic of which Johnson speaks when he proposes that the theology of the Scripture will become more accessible to the community of faith through the imagination of the world of Scripture.

However, the imaging of this world of Scripture is not the work of pure imagination. The dangers of that kind of exegesis are obvious and well documented. The work of imaging the life-story of the text requires discipline, and discipline of a certain kind. Discipline happens (as do all things) in context. Training for the Olympic competition in gymnastics requires a certain kind of disciple. The wrong kind or amount of training will not be adequate. This is perhaps too simple an example, but the point is that imaging the world of Scripture requires discipline, discipline that is determined by the nature of the task and the goals of the exegete. The need to ground meaning in authorial intent still guides the process (the author-centered approach). In fact, all the commonly accepted rules of historical-grammatical study are to be applied. The result however is not an outline and summary of teaching, but a full account of the world of the text. What kind of discipline is required? What qualifications, limitations, and guidelines should be applied to the process of imaging?

First, a thorough historical-grammatical analysis of the text of Scripture must be done. These steps are clearly and helpfully laid out in such manuals as Gordon Fee's *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*.²² Osborne lists as the basic tasks of exegetical effort investigation of the context (historical, logical, and compositional), establishing the text (textual criticism), grammatical analysis (analysis of individual words or grammatical units), semantic investigation

22. Third edition, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

(word studies, syntagmatic and paradigmatic use and meaning of the words, even investigation of deep structure), and investigation of the syntax in the broader sense (finding the flow of thought of the whole discourse, identifying kernel statements, finding the illocutionary and perlocutionary aspects of the text)²³. The process of imagination, or reconstruction of the world of Scripture, must be guided at every point by the thorough exegesis of the text, the text itself being the anchor point for imagination and understanding, or exegesis.

But exegesis must go one step further after the historical-grammatical investigation is done. From the light which the carefully exegeted text sheds on what the author and recipients are doing in the text, the full story must be reconstructed. The final step in the traditional exegetical process should be the reconstruction of the life-story from the surface structure. One compelling reason for this reconstruction arises because the surface text leaves much unsaid that is properly there. Tate stresses the gaps which exist in a written text, especially an ancient text in a different language from a different culture.²⁴ The original author and recipients shared a common pool of knowledge which was necessary for clear understanding but much of which is not immediately available and obvious to the modern reader. This pool of knowledge includes knowledge of language, culture, past experience between the author and recipients, circumstances attendant upon the events described (in a narrative) or the issues ongoing (in an epistle). Through the historical-grammatical work, these gaps in knowledge can be filled in to a great extent. A fuller, clearer story of the world and narrative behind the text can then be reconstructed. On the other hand, lack of careful historical-grammatical investigation will result in filling in the gaps from our own language, culture, and experiences, that is, from our own imaginations. Thus much of the depth and fulness and of the true relevance of the ancient text is lost to the modern reader.

The World Of Scripture

The question now is, “How does this world, this context, guide us in understanding the Scripture?” It has been asserted that the world of Scripture is the substructure story from which the biblical writings arise and that which constitutes their most important and essential context for understanding. “Dwelling” in this world²⁵ provided the ancient community of faith the proper perspective for receiving and using the texts. For the community of faith today, leaving their own world to dwell in the world of Scripture and read the texts in that context provides the same advantage. What

23. Osborne, 30-33. In these pages Osborne summarizes the steps to exegesis that are addressed in his book.

24. Tate, 152-159. Tate cites Wolfgang Iser’s concept of “gaps of indeterminacy” which the reader of the text must bridge in order to find the meaning by filling in the gaps.

25. As L.T. Johnson words it, 173.

is the advantage of exegeting the text in the context of the life-story of the ancient community?

The first advantage of exegeting by story is the *holistic* context of understanding it provides. It is a *whole* world which appears for the exegete, a world in which he can participate more fully because it is presented in clarity and fullness. The life-story reveals the whole process behind the authors’ statements. All the dynamics of the text (literary, theological, sociological, spiritual, natural) can be seen flowing together providing a coherent picture. The old axiom (simply stated) is true— we understand the whole by the parts, we understand the parts by the whole. It is the hermeneutical circle (or spiral as Osborne would insist). If this is true, then the clearer and more complete the picture of the context of the text, the better the reader understands each part. The details in the text (words, sentences, discourse, background) reveal a larger story, and this life-story of the text allows the exegete to understand the parts much better. The holistic context allows for greater clarity of each part of the text, each idea, each syntactical connection, each social or cultural allusion.

For the modern reader, the second advantage is contemporaneity, of being able to read and understand the text in the spirit of the times. But it is not primarily contemporaneity with the world of the modern reader but with the world and spirit of the original audience. Thus, dwelling in the world of Scripture allows a significant measure of synchronicity with the author, recipients and text (despite the diachronic relationship the exegete has to the text) and provides a perspective on the text that is much closer and truer to the original intended impact. Contemporaneity is a powerful force (for good or bad) in the process of understanding. Readers of Scripture too often want to sense the relevance of the text to their own thoughts, issues or life situation, thus missing much of its meaning and intent for the community of faith. Dwelling in the world of the text through the life-story enables the reader to allow the apostle (or prophet or psalmist) to speak to the community of faith (in any age) in the way its author intended.

The need for contemporaneity and relevance is especially important to the reader of Scripture. It is the Canon, the guide for faith and living adopted by the ancient community of faith and faithfully passed down as such. It is the Word of Life. The Scripture needs to “work” in the life of the community of faith of which the reader(s) is a part. It cannot be read like the morning newspaper, however, because the primary context of its meaning and power is the biblical story, not the story of our day. So in what way is the world of Scripture a better context for interpretation than the 21st century?

This leads to the question of application, or significance as some would call it. This is the third advantage of this holistic approach. Application is almost universally acknowledged to be the ultimate goal of exegesis or hermeneutics. The church must make the Bible relevant for today. When exegeting the text through the substructure life-story a world opens up which reveals amazing details of application. The exegeted

text and the reconstructed life-story show how the ancient audience applied the text, or were expected to apply it. It shows what cultural, political, social life situations the text bore meaning for. It reveals who was supposed to find the significance of the message and what role such persons would play in applying the text. It clearly reveals what the author was trying to *do*, and therefore what effect the message was expected to have on readers. It exposes the important theological ideas and traditions the author and readers were committed to and operating by, and also shows how the author was applying his theology and tradition (the OT for the NT author) to the issues of the community of faith. In other words, not only the theological ideas but the method of applying those theological ideas to life situations. The reconstructed text reveals trans-cultural patterns of activity that can be easily perceived and understood by the modern reader. A simple example of such a pattern would be the storm in which Paul and his traveling companions were caught out in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea on the way to Rome. The reader can sense much more fully the impact of this storm if one is dwelling in that world and allowing oneself to be taken up in the weather patterns. There are, however, many patterns of life operating in the life-story of the text, social patterns of interaction (as in a house church), political dynamics in operation (as in the turmoil behind the Revelation), spiritual dynamics and patterns operating in the spirit of the individual (as in a psalm). These are the same patterns of life and nature which are operating today, so the modern reader can enter into the ancient world with greater understanding. The story will show how the community of faith perceived God working among them and how they clearly identified and responded to him. In the end, exegesis by story becomes application, or brings application into the process of exegesis. Exegesis now directly flows into the life and understanding of the modern reader bringing the application of the dynamic flow of life found in the ancient faith community as seen in the world of the text into the life of the community of faith today.

Conclusion

Exegesis by story focuses on a biblical passage by reconstructing the life-story of the text and exploring the whole story of and behind the text. Interpreting the text with this life story as the immediate context allows the exegete to discern more clearly the dynamic of the text, not just the flow of ideas but *the living interaction between the author and his audience. It is through this living interaction that the modern reader finds an entrance into the meaning of the text.* The world of the text beckons the reader to imagine living in this world as her own.

Thus, the question of priority (is it the text, the author, or the reader?) can be seen in a new perspective. Exegesis by story allows all three aspects of biblical interpretation to find common ground on which to interact equally. The debate no longer has to exclude one or the other of these elements to find some sort of resolution

to the exegetical problem mentioned above. To put it another way, the exegete no longer has to take sides for theology, or history, or literature to the exclusion of the others in interpreting the text. This trichotomous tension is not the way the text works. *The text as literature captures and expresses the story of the life of the ancient community in which the reader in any age can participate meaningfully.*

How does this happen? By living (or “dwelling”) in the story. How can the exegete do this? She must start with the text. Of necessity, the text is the primary focus of the exegete. It is simply the way the word of God has been presented, through language, through text. The exegete then reconstructs the story, using good exegetical techniques, to reveal the life story in and under the text. Then, on the assumption that there is indeed a significant level of continuity of life between the ancient community of faith and the church today (not a totally agreed upon thing), the life-story of the ancient community contained in the text provides the opportunity for the reader through imagination to cross her own horizon into the world of meaning and interaction which was reality for the ancient community. In this “dwelling,” the text brings the reader and the author/original audience together into a mutual interaction with one another. The assumption here is that the ancient text is not a thing or object, it is the still- living voice of a person, the author and his audience. In dealing with the text, the exegete is dealing with a subject with whom to interact, not an object that she can use for her own purposes. Finally, the exegete can begin to explore the world of the text. If one knows the whole story and can see clearly the world of the ancient community, one can listen and observe what is going on in the text and, in faith (just as the ancient community did), respond to the urging of the inspired author to live faithfully to the presence of God in the community. One knows what questions to ask and what not to ask. Thus, one hears true and meaningful answers. One learns not only what is being said but also how to respond, how to make the choices that should be made, how to integrate the tradition of the community into the issues of life. The assumption here is that the wisdom of the ancient community is equally available to the exegete for decision making, and the patterns of theologizing for the ancient community are a norm for the exegete as well. Careful observation of the world of the text will reveal many more insights. The key to this path to understanding is of course to live in the story. The text then provides common ground for the original and modern audience to meet by creating the opportunity for subject-to-subject interaction in the context of the life and faith of the ancient, originating community.

In the text of Scripture there is a common ground for the ancient author and community and the church today. The common ground they stand upon is the story. By dwelling in the world of the ancient text through the life-story, the modern reader finds herself dwelling in a city she can recognize and respond to in the most appropriate way.

Unique Hermeneutical Issues in the Homiletical Treatment of Historical Texts: A Case Study on 1 Kings 21:1-29

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Abstract: Any preaching of the Old Testament necessarily must face historical narrative passages. Properly handling these passages though presents certain unique difficulties, and often the texts are handled with substandard care. Traditional Aristotelian three-point sermons seem arbitrary or forced upon the text and do not capture the heart of the message. There is tension in handling historical narratives between moralizing the story to bring it from “then” to “now”, and treating it as a merely historical item of note. This article seeks to study the elements and methods of hermeneutics unique to historical texts with an eye towards proper preparation for homiletical use. What follows seeks to be a distillation of methodology on hermeneutics in general, towards a direct application to historical texts. It will be argued that to rightly handle the text, expositors must appreciate the text as both historical and redemptive in nature. Exegeting from that starting point will lead the expositor to work along the textual, epochal, and canonical horizons of the text. By carefully attending to the three horizons of a given biblical text, an expositor should be able to more fully capture and apply the teachings of God from historical passages to their modern church audience.

Key Words: 1 Kings 21, preaching, narrative, history, hermeneutics, typology, exegesis

Introduction

The story of God’s interaction with his people through historical narrative constitutes the bulk of the Old Testament. As such, these passages deserve special attention and care in their preaching. Unfortunately, that care can often be lacking. Wanting that care, preachers may instead settle for a simple moralization of the text, or equally troubling, a segregation of the text as amoral history. Sadly, both choices have numerous examples to their name.¹ This is not an issue relegated to evangelical

1. For examples of moralizing a historical passage without reflection upon its nature as a historical text, see the sermon on Genesis 12 by Lisa Comes, “Claim Your Inheritance.” <https://www.joelosteen.com/Pages/Article.aspx?articleid=6474> (accessed June 26, 2017).

circles, nor even broader Christian catholicism, but these issues can arise in the work of any group seeking to teach from these passages of the Old Testament.²

It is not sufficient though to be able to point out what is wrong, one must strive to provide a basis for how these difficult texts can rightly be handled. To rightly handle the text, expositors must examine and know the value of the historical text, the horizons by which that text is understood, employ such knowledge to inform a given historical text, derive the theological principle(s) of the text, and then ultimately communicate those truths to a modern audience. This article will seek to study the elements and methods of hermeneutics unique to historical texts and present a synthesis of various approaches to the topic at hand.

One important caveat at the start. This article seeks to discuss those issues unique, or properly, more critical in handling historical passages. It is assumed that other standard hermeneutical tools should also be employed on these texts even if not explicitly mentioned. One cannot seek, in such a brief space, to be exhaustive in the methods and tools of the hermeneutical trade, nor would it be helpful to cover what has already received extensive treatment from much wiser sources. This article is seeking to distill and promote the salient points of hermeneutical work relevant to the historical texts and to frame them in a helpful and useful manner. Students and pastors alike should establish a baseline proficiency in hermeneutics from which this article seeks to build upon.³

Methodology for Historical Passages

All preachers of the history of the Old Testament are faced with an initial question vital to their study. Graeme Goldsworthy states the issue best: “[This issue] has to do with whether historical texts should be treated mainly for their exemplary value or for their contribution to...salvation history.”⁴ Decisions made at the beginning of an endeavor often have the most profound influence on events.⁵ The exegete of Scripture would do well to bear such considerations in mind. When approaching a historical passage in the Old Testament they must be aware that their first steps or assumptions concerning the passage necessarily shape their future work. There are two spheres of

2. For an example from Latter Day Saints teaching, see the article from Elder Ronald Rasband, “Lessons from the Old Testament: Fleeing Temptation.” <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2006/03/lessons-from-the-old-testament-fleeing-temptation?lang=eng> (accessed June 26, 2017).

3. For examples of good baseline works on hermeneutics, see: Kevin VanHoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), or Stanley E. Porter Jr. and Beth M. Stowell, *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, Spectrum Multiview Books (Westmont, IL: IVP, 2012).

4. Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 141.

5. The novelist Frank Herbert captures this sentiment masterfully at the opening of his epic novel *Dune*. “A beginning is the time for taking the most delicate care that the balances are correct.” Frank Herbert, *Dune* (New York, NY: Ace, 1965), 3.

thought that seem available to the exegete. First, historical narratives could be treated as moral lessons to be taken, spiritualized, and then repackaged for modern audiences. Second, historical narratives could be viewed as mere historical facts; stories to be retold as is without seeking to find spiritual virility within. Preachers must decide which then is the appropriate starting place for their work. Two considerations must be weighed in order to reach a verdict.

First, careful readers of the Hebrew canon will recognize that the characters portrayed are rarely presented as morally monolithic. Patriarchs and kings are presented as flawed sinners used by the grace of God.⁶ One may rightly doubt then if adopting a purely moral approach to a given text is advisable. Indeed, “Serious misunderstanding can occur when individual episodes are viewed in isolation, rather than as part of their larger plot.”⁷ Reading a historical passage to draw only moral conclusions from the persons portrayed lowers the biblical narrative to nothing more than one of Aesop’s fables; it becomes a story both impotent to bring spiritual growth, and blind to the redemptive plan of God.

Secondly, and conversely, it would be an error to assume such passages are merely historical artifacts without moral lessons. Kenneth S. Hemphill contends, “the Hebrew writers were not writing a history of the ancient Near East, but they were selecting and telling events designed to express their theological understanding of how history works.”⁸ Such an observation is crucial, for it provides a much-needed counter-balance in understanding. While the historical texts of the Old Testament defy simple moralization, they do claim theological and peripateological⁹ didactic intention within their communicative expressions.

It would seem then that the right balance to strike for the expositor is the *via media*. The best approach is to see the historical texts in a redemptive-historical light. Moral lessons can and are put down in history, but those lessons must be derived from the central character of the story: God. As Walter Kaiser contends, “The central character of the Bible is God...Therefore, the interpreter’s and expositor’s attention must be centered on God’s role in the narrative.”¹⁰ Beginning with such a focus will lead the exegete to consider not just a text at hand, but where it fits into the revelation of God. For the historical passage, this is key as it leads to a framework where the exegete is to trace a passage along three different horizons: the textual, the epochal, and the canonical.

6. This can be seen in Jacob’s actions in Gn 34 or David’s indiscretions with Bathsheba in 2 Sm 11.

7. Lawrence A. Turner, *Reclaiming the Old Testament for Christian Preaching* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2010), 18.

8. Kenneth S. Hemphill, *Reclaiming the Prophetic Mantle*, Georg L. Klein ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992), 292.

9. Coined from the Greek περιπατεω (*peripateo*). That which is pertaining to regulation or conduct of one’s life.

10. Walter Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 70.

The Three Horizons

Understanding a given text according to the textual, epochal, and canonical horizon is a framework that can and should be applied throughout Scripture. In many ways, it “is what all Christians have done, at least implicitly...in their reading and application of the biblical text,”¹¹ and is a well-advocated method.¹² Briefly, this method calls for the interpreter to first consider the immediate context of a passage: the textual horizon. Next, the eye is turned to consider when this text occurs in history and how it fits into God’s overarching redemptive plan for creation: the epochal horizon. Finally, the text is considered in light of the full, unified canon of Scripture: the canonical horizon. While this method can be applied to any portion of Scripture, it can and should be uniquely applied to historical narratives.

The Textual Horizon

When understanding the historical text, it is important for the preacher to be aware of the artistry, in addition to the history, of the passage. The Western mind can often approach a text of Scripture with preconceptions born of thought patterns inculcated in modern literature. It is vital though to recognize that ancient storytelling may, and indeed does not always, share the same methods as its modern descendant. Instead, it is to the screenplay that modern audiences will find a greater degree of familiarity. As Kenneth Matthew states: “Cinematography provides a closer analogy to Hebrew narrative than modern literature.”¹³ Merely because a text is historical does not mean it is free from artistry.¹⁴ The history of the Old Testament can be viewed as a succession of scenes, linked one to another. Just as the camera can switch between long-shots and close-ups to bring the viewer through a story, so the telling of biblical narrative moves and shifts focus scene-to-scene to bring its audience through a story.¹⁵ It is crucial then for workers in the text to have, at the very least, a basic understanding of how stories are put together. An understanding of classical quinary structure in narrative is necessary to faithfully preach the text.

11. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 93.

12. I am indebted to the excellent list of these works compiled by Gentry and Wellum. See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom*, 93 n. 27. For examples of the three-horizon approach, see: Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 259-311; Edmund Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 16; D.A. Carson, *The Gaggling of God*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 190; Michael Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 147-180.

13. Kenneth A. Matthews, *Reclaiming the Prophetic Mantle*, Klein ed., 31-2. For others who draw this comparison, see Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield, UK: Almond, 1983), and Jacob Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem, IL: Hebrew University, 1986).

14. C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 250-1.

15. Berlin, 44.

Be it modern cinema or ancient folktale, the compulsion to craft cohesive and coherent stories of life is a constant throughout history.¹⁶ In crafting a tale, most stories are composed of five basic events.¹⁷ (1) The initial situation in which the story begins. (2) A complicating event that places obstacles between the protagonist and their goal. (3) A transforming action by which the characters seek to overcome and deal with the complication. (4) The dénouement where the transforming action resolves the issue. (5) The final situation in which the characters are left. While not every story contains all five elements, these are the basic building blocks of narrative.

For an example of how these elements work, consider the plot of George Lucas' first Star Wars movie, *A New Hope*. The movie opens on a title crawl which establishes the universe and the desire of the Rebels for freedom from tyranny (1). It next introduces the might of the Empire as seen first in the Star Destroyer, and later finally in the existence and use of the Death Star (2). The heroes of the film seek to recover the plans of the Death Star and deliver them to the Rebellion (3). The Rebellion uses the plans to launch a final attack on the Death Star and destroy it (4). With victory won, the heroes are celebrated and we close on their victory (5). This is certainly a crude and macro-level view of the story, but it goes to show how these story crafting elements can work.

It is crucial that the point is not missed in all this: the plot of the story must shape the preaching of the story. Indeed, "no factor plays a more central role than the plot of the narrative."¹⁸ To do true justice to the textual horizon of narrative, the exegete must wrestle with the plot and story crafting.¹⁹ Preachers should understand historical passages through this structure, as opposed to a more traditional three-point sermonic structure. Stories cannot be distilled into three alliterated declarative statements, that is not how narrative is fundamentally crafted. Laurence Turner goes so far as to contend that if one simply thrusts upon the historical text "the frame of Aristotelian logic, you will be less successful" in preaching the said text.²⁰

Return, briefly, to the example of *A New Hope* from above. Could one do justice to the story by presenting it in three logical points that flow one to another? Point one: the Empire are the bad guys in power. Point two: the Rebels are the good guys

16. "The narrative impulse is as old as our oldest literature." Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 3.

17. Turner, *Reclaiming the Old Testament*, 16. These five basic stages, or acts, can be called the *quinary* structure of storytelling. Such is the terminology of Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism*, (London, UK: SCM Press, 1999).

18. Joe Linares, *Proclaiming God's Stories: How to Preach Old Testament Historical Narrative*, (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2009), 43.

19. Narratives are a selective record of events that the author has shaped into a form for a reason. For a fuller treatment of this point, see Peter T. Vogt, *Interpreting the Pentateuch: An Exegetical Handbook*, HOTE (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2009), 48-60, or Robert Chisholm, *Interpreting the Historical Books: An Exegetical Handbook*, HOTE (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2006), 25-88.

20. Turner, 13. Turner later calls the "proverbial three-point sermon structure...the kiss of death to an exposition on a narrative", 20.

without power. Point three: the Rebels win because they steal a secret. While that broadly, and crudely, finds the contours of the plot, it is severely wanting. Preaching the story of the passage through attentiveness to the quinary structure of the story seems to be a simpler, more persuasive, and more faithful way to tell the story.

In addition to structural forms, the composer of narrative has many tools at their disposal in the crafting of a story. A story may be crafted to have: a unique point of view, a focus on *Leitwort* or keywording, repetition as an *inclusio*, or numerous other stylistic choices.²¹ Attention to such matters can clue readers into the heart of the story as they appear both in the text proper or surrounding texts. Elements such as the ordering of events, ambiguity of the narrative, and naming of characters all deserve a student's gaze.²²

Perhaps most obvious, but still possibly overlooked in these passages, exegetes cannot leave their work on this horizon until they have settled the two most basic questions of interpretation: what was the author's intended meaning in the passages, and what need did it seek to address.²³ These are significant questions to settle as this establishes the baseline of interpretation and application. Rightly grasping the text in its original setting provides a launching pad from which to draw theological principles and applications for the modern audience.²⁴

Uniquely for the historical passage, these questions should be addressed through the aide of understanding the narrative elements previously discussed. Finding elements such as repetition of keywords or chiasmic structure can greatly ease the preacher's task by highlighting the didactic intent of a passage. Such clues can be present both on the micro level of a single pericope,²⁵ or can even be seen in larger bodies of work.²⁶ Such attention to both the text of the story, as well as the place of the story in its literary context is vital for the preacher.

The Epochal Horizon

Moving to the epochal horizon of a given text, preachers need to be aware of the applicable historical and literary setting for their passage. This dual focus should be seen through an engagement with both the *Sitz im Leben* and the *Sitz im Literatur* of a given text. Passages from the later monarchy of Judah do not share the same setting

21. For a list of some possible choices, see Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 64.

22. Kissling, *Reclaiming the Old Testament*, 38-39.

23. Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 285.

24. Ibid., 285.

25. See the intentional chiasm in the organization of the flood narrative as put forward by James K. Hoffmeier, *Genesis: History, Fiction, or Neither*, Counter Points, Charles Halton and Stanley N. Gundry eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 50.

26. For example, see the chiasmic structure of Jacob's life as put forward by Gordon Wenham, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 46.

in life or literature as the patriarchal stories of Genesis. An eye then should be given to the history of the correct time and literary period for it may inform the text at hand.²⁷

For the Old Testament itself, Graeme Goldsworthy identifies two major epochs of note.²⁸ The first runs from creation through the reign of Solomon. Here Goldsworthy sees the emphasis on “the way of salvation and the nature of the kingdom of God.”²⁹ The second epoch then runs from the divided kingdom through the end of the Hebrew canon. Unlike the first half, which sees promises being made and fulfilled to God’s people, here the focus is on the degeneration of the people of God. “The final indignity is for the descendants of Abraham to be deprived of every material pledge of God’s blessing: the land, the temple, the kingship.”³⁰

Such observations should lead exegetes into asking pointed questions of their texts. What was the motivation or rationale of the author at hand? If one agrees with Hemphill’s previous contention that the historical stories are selective accounts intended to communicate truths, then what is the significance of a story’s selection? How does this story fit into the epochal theme in which it falls? On this last point, students must use care. One should not assume *carte blanche* that the message of a passage equates to its epochal theme. Even in darkness and degeneration stories may be given to show hope³¹ or vice versa.³²

Outside of the Old Testament proper, there should be an awareness of the historical world of the ancient Near East and the import it may bring to the table. As mentioned earlier, the writers of the Old Testament are historians, but not necessarily in the sense most modern readers expect.³³ With a proper understanding of the significant persons and events of ancient Near Eastern history, readers of the Bible can be clued into the significance of passages, especially when the Bible differs in what is seen as significant. As an example, a preacher of Chronicles would do well to note that the chronological subject matter parallels the books of Kings, but the intentionality does not. Whereas Kings seemingly focuses on the political, historical significance of kings, in Chronicles there is a unique intent in the author’s history as they focus on the covenant fidelity of the Davidic heirs.

27. V. Philips Long, *The Art of Biblical History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 190.

28. Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 140.

29. Ibid., 141.

30. Ibid., 142. While one need not accept Goldsworthy as the final word on the matter, he offers a valuable starting point from which one can posit more nuanced themes. This article will utilize Goldsworthy on this point for the sake of space.

31. An example could be King Josiah who seems to stand against the general degradation of the faithfulness of Israel.

32. An example could be Lot’s Daughters who are not showing growing in faithfulness in the promises of God.

33. Hemphill, *Reclaiming*, 292.

The Canonical Horizon

Lastly, the preacher should turn their eye towards the greater canon of Scripture. In this final step of the study, the focus is on Scripture’s internal mechanisms of interpretation in light of the whole of revelation. Elements such as typology and quotation are the aspects to be considered to flesh out the meaning of a passage and pave the way for the application of the text in a modern setting. Ultimately the goal at this stage is to find the text’s place in God’s redemptive plan.

Typology seeks to find the elements of the Old Testament that are taken up as prefigures or foretastes of fuller realities in the New. The value for historical preaching should be evident from the definition; typological understanding leads one to naturally bridge the Old and New Testaments and thus ease the preacher’s task in applying lessons to a modern audience. Caution though should be stressed, for without control or guidelines for discerning and applying types one runs the risk of slipping into allegory. For examples of typology becoming allegory, one can look to Justin Martyr seeing the cross throughout the Old Testament in “the tree of life in paradise, Moses’ rod, the tree that sweetened the bitter waters of Marah, Jacob’s rod and ladder, Aaron’s rod, the oak of Mamre, the seventy willows of Ex. 15:27, Elisha’s stick, and Judah’s rod.”³⁴ Such unchecked allegorizing distorts or misses the point of the Old Testament passage.

Sidney Greidanus offers the exegete a helpful list of checks and rules for discerning types and then applying them.³⁵ For a type to be genuine it must first be historical. This is significant for the work at hand, for if a type must be historical then it follows historical passages will contain types. Second, a genuine type must be theocentric, “that is, it has to do with *God’s* acts in and through human persons and events.”³⁶ Third, genuine types must have real correspondence to their antitype and cannot be merely superficial. Fourth, a genuine type will see escalation from its Old Testament origin to New Testament final form. By now it is clear why typology is to come at the end of the study. Without first grounding oneself in the literary and historical aspects of a text, a preacher cannot make the necessary judgments as to what constitutes a type and what does not. Having gone through that work on both the textual and epochal horizon though, verdicts can be rendered with more confidence.

34. Rowan A. Greer, “The Christian Bible and Its Interpretation.” In *Early Biblical Interpretation*. James L. Kugel and Rowan A. Greer eds. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1986), 148. This criticism could be applied to many of the early interpreters of Scripture, as Greidanus points out, “For good or ill, Justin Martyr set the tone for early Christian interpretation of the Old Testament.” (p.75). Martyr’s connection also highlights the problem of analogy in interpretation as his connections are not necessarily wrong, perhaps better misapplied at points. Certainly, Christ is tied to Jacob’s ladder, but is it through the cross or rather Christ Himself as the mediator between God and man? The latter appears the better connection. See Jn 1:51 for Jesus’ own connection between the passages.

35. Greidanus, 256. All four signs of a genuine type follow from here.

36. Ibid., 256. Emphasis his.

Concluding work on this horizon, the preacher should examine the citations of their passage in the rest of Scripture. It can be significant to see in what manner a historical event is alluded to or developed by future authors, or in what ways it draws upon previous passages. This can be beneficial as it also provides an avenue for application to a New Testament audience. Discernment should be shown, however, as the preacher should never lose sight that they are preaching the Old Testament text and not its citation later on. It cannot be assumed that later authors intend to fully capture the meaning of an event in a citation or allusion. For example, Paul's use of Genesis 12 in Galatians does not fully capture every aspect of the Genesis account. It would be a homiletical misstep to preach Genesis 12 solely as a pointer to Galatians 3 without regard for the other metanarrative threads present in the call of Abraham.

Modern Application

Once the preacher has fully worked through a text as seen in its three horizons, then the final task of application to a modern context can get underway. Here the original decision, to view the text as both redemptive and historical in nature, bears fruit. Since the text is ultimately part of God's redemptive plan it will contain information relevant to the modern Church. Since the text is likewise historical, this information is more than allegory or chicken soup for the Christian soul. Rather it forms part of the backbone of the metanarrative of Scripture and allows modern audiences to not only see how God acted then but also what needs to be understood now.

As hinted through the canonical horizon, a preacher has several avenues by which to find the application. First and foremost, the exegete can look for a connection to Christ either by typology, analogy, or citation. A preacher should rightly ask of the text, "Why did this event have to occur before Christ came?" While it is possible to overly apply connections to Christ,³⁷ a preacher should start here and not depart unless convinced other theological points are at the fore of the text.

The second area of application to consider is the revelation of theology concerning God himself. Here again, preachers need to have put in the work understanding a given text. Statements of explicit theology rarely exist in historical narrative, but that does not mean those texts have nothing to say concerning theology. Rather, it means that "all historical events and artifacts require interpretation"³⁸ and its truths will not always be explicitly gleaned. Most narrative accounts, directly or indirectly,³⁹ teach the Church about God and how He acts for that is what those accounts deal with: God's interaction with people through history.

37. Spurgeon's spiritualizing of the Old Testament could be seen as such an example. For further reflection see Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 153-162, esp. 160-162.

38. Hemphill, *Reclaiming*, 291.

39. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 70.

Thirdly, the preacher of Old Testament history should seek to understand the stories for implications as to what it means to be the people of God. Such a connection between the Testaments is a contentious subject at best, and space prohibits exploring all the facets of Israel's relationship to the Church today. At a minimum level, however, it can be said that the heart attitudes of the people of God towards both Him and neighbor do not change between the Testaments.

Lastly, the preacher should evaluate the actions of the story characters for possible moral lessons. As has been argued, it is improper and misleading to solely moralize a story,⁴⁰ but that does not mean historical stories are devoid of such lessons. Rather, those lessons may be present, but are not often explicitly stated nor are they necessarily primary to the intent of the passage. Preachers must wrestle with the fact that men and women of the Old Testament are presented as real persons, not mythic figures. They may be capable of great virtue in certain instances but are far from perfect persons.

Case Study: 1 Kings 21

Thus far, this work has sought to demonstrate the hermeneutical principles and methods that must be employed in exegeting a historical passage. The preacher has been called to view narrative texts as both redemptive and historical accounts. As such they are to be viewed with an eye towards theology and history. To test the validity and applicability of this method, a case study will now be briefly undertaken. The goal is to work through and demonstrate how this methodology can be applied to a specific pericope, namely 1 Kings 21:1-29.

Case Study: Textual Horizon

To begin work on 1 Kings 21:1-29, preachers should recognize its connection to the story thus far in the book of Kings. A new section of the narrative begins in 1 Kings 21; however, it is grammatically hooked in verse 4 to the previous section. The king is "sullen and vexed" (1 Kgs. 20:43 cf. 21:4, NASB) in both stories, and verse 1 of the text explicitly states the story occurs "after these things" (1 Kgs. 21:1). This should clue in the exegete that the events of the first story set the background for Ahab's mental and emotional frame of mind.

40. For an example, see Mike Grave's critique of Sidney Greidanus' moralizing of Jacob's experience at Bethel with Jesus' promise in Matthew 28. "For example, he says that 'preachers can use analogy to make the point that as Israel learned about God's protecting presence from Jacob's experience at Bethel before his hazardous journey, so Christ promises to be with us on our dangerous journey through life (analogy combined with New Testament reference such as Jesus' promise in Matthew 28:20).' But why bother with the Old Testament text if the promise of Jesus in Matthew is the point?" Mike Graves, "Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method," *Review & Expositor* 97 (Winter 2000): 129.

A brief summary of 1 Kings 20, sufficient for purposes here, is as follows. Ahab is told by God that he will be victorious against an enemy, Ben-Hadad (v.13). Ahab goes out and is victorious, but instead of slaying the enemy of the people, he makes a covenant with him (v.34). For such an action, Ahab is told judgment will fall on his house; Israel and Ahab's lives are now exchanged for Ben-Hadad's (v.42). This judgment causes Ahab to withdraw from court life and is where the king is found in chapter 21.

Switching to the text proper, preachers should note the duplicated quinary structure being employed. Two scenes, tied together due to the resolution of the first inciting the second, appear in the text. The chapter crafts its narrative thusly: the initial situation of Ahab's desire (v. 1), the complicating event of Naboth's rejection (v. 2-4), the transforming action of Jezebel's plot (v. 5-10), the dénouement of Naboth's execution (v. 11-14), the conclusion with Ahab's taking possession of the vineyard (v. 15-16), the initial situation of Elijah's calling (v. 17-19), the complication of Naboth's murder (v. 18), the transforming action of judgment (v. 20-26), the dénouement of Ahab's repentance (v. 27), and the final situation of God's delayed pronouncement of judgment upon Ahab's lineage (v. 28-29).

In addition to the structure, preachers should also note the artistic tools employed to highlight the tension in the narrative. Naboth and Ahab are contrasted against one another, not merely through the inclusion of titles, but also by what they possess. Alexander Rofé observes, quite rightly, the stark contrast of vineyard to the palace. "Naboth has a vineyard which is the basic property of any Israelite; Ahab has a palace—hekāl [*sic*]. This is the contrast between bare necessity and luxury, lying at the basis of the plot."⁴¹ By crafting a narrative with such a stark contrast, the author is priming his reader to experience outrage at what will unfold.

Case Study: Epochal Horizon

According to Goldsworthy's understanding of Old Testament epochs, the story of 1 Kings 21 falls within the later degeneration focus. Such a theme fits the text well, for the general theme of the text does seem to focus on the Omride dynasty's fall in God's judgment and subsequent ultimate annihilation. The trajectory is downwards, and this story stands at the near bottom of Ahab's line. Such an observation should factor into the preacher's message.

Another item of major significance here is the book of Kings heavy emphasis on Ahab. Studying the ancient Near Eastern setting of the man should reveal an important clue, namely, that Ahab was not a significant king from a historical perspective. It was his father Omri,⁴² not Ahab, that both established a dynastic line and Samaria

41. Alexander Rofé, "The Vineyard of Naboth: The Origin and Message of the Story." (*Vetus Testamentum* 38, 1, 1988), 90.

42. Mentioned in only thirteen verses as opposed to Ahab's seven chapters in 1 Kings.

as the capital of the kingdom. Marvin Sweeney notes that Tiglath-pileser III, over 140 years later, refers to Israel as the land of Omri.⁴³ Eugene Merrill sees this focus as theologically significant as "for the first time, the cult of Yahweh was officially replaced by paganism and not allowed to coexist with it."⁴⁴

Case Study: Canonical Horizon

Canonically, preachers must understand the connections to the Torah that undergird the narrative and dialogue of the characters. According to Deuteronomy 17, the kings of Israel were to make a copy of the law and read it constantly (Dt. 17:18-20). The king was to uphold the commandments of the law for his people. This is vital for the crux of the story; Naboth's rejection of Ahab's request is based firmly in the law code.

The right of every Israelite family to their ancestral land is codified in the book of Leviticus.⁴⁵ This right of land is sensible, for in it a family could find food, shelter, and a chance for economic prosperity.⁴⁶ It is based on this law that Naboth refuses to sell his land; the law demanded that the land of Naboth be passed down as an inheritance.⁴⁷ Such a requirement not only should have been known to Ahab as a student of Torah but even applied to him.⁴⁸ The vital point then is that the one who should know and uphold Torah, i.e. Ahab, does not, but rather the lowly peasant is shown to have the moral high ground.

Modern Application

Having worked through the method to this point, the pastor should have enough information to not only speak to what the story meant, but also what it means for a modern audience. Looking at all three horizons, it should be clear that there are several applications that are not satisfactory to apply here. First, one cannot find a solid type or analogy for Christ within the passage. No character, by act or office, can lead on in a clear manner to the cross.⁴⁹ Second, none of the actors present is a

43. Marvin Sweeney, *1 Kings*, Old Testament Library series (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 203. See also ANET 284 and 320-21 for evidence of such naming.

44. Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 355. Sweeney would agree saying, "This is due to the DtrH interest in theological evaluation of Israel's history and the key role of Ahab- and not Omri- as the worst of Israel's monarchs", 209. Also Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *Interpreting the Historical Books* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2006), 115.

45. See Lev 25:23.

46. John Walton ed. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*. vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 90-1.

47. Simon J. DeVries, *1 Kings*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 256. Also: Philip J. King and L. E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 48-49.

48. See Eze 46:18.

49. Elijah could provide an avenue forward on this point. As a prophet sent to call the king back to repentance, preachers may find allusions to Christ here. Exegetes will need to decide whether that

fleshed out moral exemplar. Certainly, Ahab is horribly wicked, but even he repents and judgment is forestalled. The lesson of his life from this passage defies a simple prohibition of similar action. Likewise, Naboth is righteous in act, but he is a two-dimensional character without full form or volition. Audiences will rightly struggle to see themselves in his shoes without the preacher crafting a narrative beyond the text at hand.

A better application can be found in the revelation of God's justice. It is no small matter that the murder of a peasant by a king, an act not singular in nature nor oft marked in history, represents the final straw in God's judgment on the Omride dynasty. Many Naboths come and go, lost to the history of mankind, but they are not lost to God. This story is preserved so that the people of God might know that He sees, He remembers, and He is just. In the face of repentance, there is grace, but judgment must still fall for this violation of law and life. For the Church today then, especially those amidst hardship, they should be called to rest and trust in the justice of God for He sees and knows their situation. Those that do wrong, even if they escape the justice of law here, will be punished. "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hb 10:31).

A second application can be found in the need for knowledge of the word of God. Ahab's request to Naboth was not troubling from a cultural standpoint. Kings could and did buy vineyards for gardening was a hobby of kings,⁵⁰ and Ahab's offer of something in return is compatible with others of his time.⁵¹ Taken against the word of God though, this act was grievously sinful. The kings of Israel were not free to act like their foreign counterparts.⁵² The tie to modern churches then is of similar thrust, what culturally appropriate actions or attitudes have crept into our minds that are contrary to God's revealed will? Such a tack will strike closer to the hearts and minds of the audience than a simple prohibition to "not be like Ahab."

Conclusion

The Old Testament poses a considerable hermeneutical issue for the modern exegete. In its pages, modern readers are brought back to a world not only separated from them by several thousand years but also distinct in culture and heritage. For European and American readers, it is a truly alien world. As such it can become a neglected

is the focal point of the text. This author does not see that connection as a major theme of the text, and thus does not explore it.

50. Alastair I. Mackay, *Farming and Gardening in the Bible* (Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press, 1950), 40.

51. Nadav Na'aman, "Naboth's Vineyard and the Foundation of Jezreel" *JSOT* 33, 2, (2008), 211. He refers to Sargon II and his plans for building his new capital at Dur-Sharrukin. A similar offer of value for land is made.

52. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, "The Circumscription of the King: Deuteronomy 17:16-17 in Its Ancient Social Context." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121, no. 4 (2002): 601.

section of Scripture in the preaching and teaching life of the church. For some who do venture into its stories, often the message is distorted or lost for the hearers today.

This paper set out to both explicate and demonstrate principles unique to the hermeneutics of historical narratives in the Old Testament. It is important that these passages are not reduced to fables or Sunday school stories for children, for doing so misses a vital and major swath of God's revelation for his people. By carefully attending to the three horizons of a given biblical text, a preacher should be able to more fully capture and apply the teachings of God from historical passages to their modern church audience. It is my hope that this work can, in some small way, bring together many voices to offer a help and guide for students to go forward with confidence in the preaching of the historical passages of the Old Testament.

Isaiah 53 in the Theology of the Book of Isaiah

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Introduction

Critics attack the Christian faith in various ways, and their attacks gain a hearing. One such critic is Christopher Hitchens, a self-designated “anti-theist.” He critiques Good Friday and vicarious redemption by asserting that accountability, responsibility, and guilt remain on the perpetrator and must always remain on the perpetrator. He claims it is non-transferable. In his view the notion of vicarious punishment leads the guilty to evade their own responsibility.¹

With that critique in the background, I wish to explore the book of Isaiah, specifically Isaiah 53 within the theology of the book. To use the analogy of Irenaeus, all the pieces together form a beautiful mosaic of a majestic King.² In the mosaic of Isaiah the central diamond is the Suffering Servant Song of Isaiah 53.³ In order to appreciate that central diamond we need to understand the overall design of Isaiah’s mosaic. I will illustrate each piece of the mosaic with a few examples.

Isaiah 53 is rightly one of the most famous chapters in the Bible, the Suffering Servant Song. To fully appreciate this glorious chapter we must understand it in its literary, historical, and theological context. Here I will focus on its theological context.

Method

A brief word about method might prove helpful. In the current state of Isaiah studies redaction critics typically treat the book of Isaiah as the end result of a lengthy process of composition, one that took place over about 300 years and involved numerous interpolations and additions along the way and at least four redactional strata (from

1. Christopher Hitchens, *Letters to a Young Contrarian* (Basic Books, 2001).

2. *Adversus Haereses* 1.8.

3. Technically the song is Isa 52:13-53:12. The verse numbers and translations follow the English Standard Version.

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740 to ca. 450 B.C.).⁴ Such an approach makes it rather difficult to say the least to treat the book as a whole.⁵ Yet, the book currently does in fact exist as one book.

All 66 chapters are written on one scroll. The oldest copy of this Hebrew scroll is the Great Isaiah Scroll of Qumran, dated to about 125 B.C., and it includes all 66 chapters. There is, in fact, no external evidence to the contrary. The opening verse of the scroll gives the heading for the entire scroll. It attributes the scroll to Isaiah ben Amoz during the reigns of the Judahite kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. This scroll claims to present “the vision of Isaiah ben Amoz” (1:1), whose ministry covered a period of about 60 years, 740-ca. 680 B.C.⁶

All 66 chapters are written on one scroll. The opening verse attributes all 66 chapters to Isaiah ben Amoz of the eighth-early seventh century B.C. Because of these two unassailable and indisputable facts, it is legitimate and wise to take a holistic approach and consider the entire scroll as it now exists. The scroll invites readers to treat it as one scroll, and in this article I will do so.

To a great extent, biblical exegesis is a process of addressing questions to the biblical text. The book of Isaiah certainly requires attention to its literary design and historical dimension, but here I will address theological questions to the text. My goal is to describe how Isaiah 53 fits into the theological framework set forth and projected by the entire scroll of Isaiah. Every individual verse could be explored in more exegetical detail, but in this article I will survey the entire landscape with a wide-angle lens. Specifically I will consider how Isaiah 53 fits into the book’s presentation of how the God of Israel deals with sin and sinners.

What Is the Language Used for “Sin”?

Isaiah uses several terms to refer to the semantic domain of sin: “sin, iniquity (also translated guilt), transgression (better understood as rebellion), evil, wickedness, and unclean.” With these terms Isaiah designates both individuals and collective groups, both their individual actions and their condition itself. Their very thoughts and plans are bent on iniquity (59:7). Israel’s condition is unclean before their God (6:5; 64:6).

4. On the current state of the discipline, see *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches*, eds. David G. Firth and H. G. M. Williamson (InterVarsity Press, 2009); *Bind Up the Testimony: Explorations in the Genesis of the Book of Isaiah*, eds. Daniel I. Block and Richard L. Schultz (Hendrickson Publishers, 2015).

5. Some scholars accept redaction-critical work and then attempt to interpret the entire book in a holistic way. The interest in a holistic reading is a positive step forward. However, the twofold approach can end in two very different interpretations of the same evidence. Moreover, assuming the legitimacy of source-redaction “slicing and dicing” of the text can hinder or interfere in the effort to read holistically. See the observations by Edgar W. Conrad, *Interpreting Isaiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991): 12-20.

6. The earliest date in the scroll is the death of Uzziah in 740 B.C. (6:1), and the latest date is 681 B.C., the year of Sennacherib’s assassination (37:38). According to early tradition, Isaiah was sawn in half under Manasseh (cf. Hebrews 11:37).

Usually Isaiah employs this language for Israel, but he can also include Gentiles under these terms (13:9-11). In the book of Isaiah, the indictment of “sinner” applies to all people (26:21).

What Is So Bad about Sin?

“Sin” is defined by the God of Israel. Isaiah speaks of sinners doing “what is evil in the eyes of Yahweh” (65:12; 66:4). What the doers think or believe is not the criterion. In fact, what they think and believe can be fundamentally wrong. Isaiah condemns “those who call evil good and good evil” (5:20). The key consideration is what the God of Israel thinks and has revealed. Sin is against Yahweh. It is not walking in his ways, not hearkening to his Torah (42:24). Sin is first and foremost to be understood in a theocentric way, what the Holy One of Israel opposes.

Let us ask the scroll of Isaiah a simple question. “What is so bad about sin?” For one thing, sin directs people’s attention away from the God of Israel to false objects, things that cannot actually help. Very often the God of Israel condemns his own people for turning away from him and looking elsewhere for their security and life. For example, his own children take refuge in Egypt and in Egypt’s military but “do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD,” even though the “Egyptians are man, and not God” (31:1-3). Sinners despise God’s own word and revelation and instead put their trust in their own oppressive actions (30:12). They deny and turn away from Yahweh (59:12-13).

Isaiah often condemns idol worship. One of the hardest hitting passages in all of Scripture against idolatry occurs in Isaiah 44. Idol worshipers make their own wooden images and then call out to what they made, “Deliver me, for you are my god!” (44:17). First things always come first. Yahweh, the God of Israel is the only God who deserves to be worshiped and looked to, because he is the creator of all things and all people. This particular God, whom Isaiah frequently calls “the Holy One of Israel,” wants his own people Israel and in fact all Gentiles to fear, love, and trust in him above all things, to turn away from their weak, impotent, futile, invented images to the God who made the heavens and the earth (17:7-8; 45:18-22).

Sin turns a person or a collective group inward, toward self. Thereby the focus of people turns to self-autonomy, self-determination, self-security, self-honor, and self-glory. Isaiah frequently condemns human pride and hubris. “The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day” (2:11; cf. 2:11-17). Isaiah exhorts his hearers, “Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is [mere] breath, for of what account is he?” (2:22). The Lord is coming in judgment against all human arrogance: “I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless” (13:11).

Moreover, sinful actions do harm to the neighbor. Isaiah frequently accuses and specifies how sinful activity ruins the lives of others, the wicked rich taking

advantage of the lowly and vulnerable (5:23), the liar falsely accusing others (29:21), the innocent becoming prey to the ruthless (59:15). Because of their false dealings with each other, the people’s worship of Yahweh is rejected as hypocritical (1:10-17).

Most important of all, sin offends the God of Israel. In his purity and righteousness the Holy One of Israel cannot casually coexist with sin and sinners. The “unclean lips” of Isaiah and his people put their lives in danger before Yahweh of Hosts, who is “holy, holy, holy” (6:3-5). Israel’s iniquities and sins made a separation between Israel and their God; they caused God to hide from them his face of kindness and favor (59:2; 64:7). With their sins they despised and taunted their God (1:4; 5:19). Israel’s sins and iniquities burdened and wearied God (43:24). Sin provokes God to wrath (57:17; 64:9). God desired Israel to seek him, but with their idolatry they were “a people who provoke me to my face continually” (65:3). Throughout Isaiah the reader sees accented both the horizontal and the vertical dimension to sin.⁷

How Does the Holy One of Israel Respond to Sinners?

The God of Israel responds to sinners by executing his just judgment. Divine judgment is shown to be deserved, to be caused by human sinners, by both their condition and their actions or inactions. It comes to human sinners themselves “in exchange for” their own human sin (50:1; 57:17).⁸

The alternative to this response would be apathy. It would be a god of Deism, aloof and indifferent to what is going on. But the Holy One of Israel is zealous for his own holy name. He is the only God who actually exists, because he alone created the heavens and the earth and all people. The God of Israel is zealous for human righteous behavior, desiring that his own people walk in his ways. As much as he is zealous for his holy name and for righteous activity, to that same extent he is zealously opposed to idolatry, self-glory, and unrighteous activity. The God of Israel is zealous, not apathetic, indifferent, or aloof.⁹ To sin and sinners the Holy One of Israel does not simply say, “Whatever.”

Isaiah refers to the response of judgment in several different ways. First, he depicts sinners as bringing evil upon themselves (3:9). They receive the consequences of their own actions. Second, his language conveys the thought of retributive punishment (13:11; 26:21). God responds in conformity with *lex talionis*, “an eye for an eye, a

7. Both dimensions are typically emphasized throughout the Latter Prophets. See Mark J. Boda, “Prophets,” *T&T Clark Companion to the Doctrine of Sin*, eds. Keith L. Johnson and David Lauber (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016): 27-43.

8. The preposition *b* denotes “in exchange for.”

9. See the classic work by Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets II* (Harper & Row, 1962). I sense that the “god” expected by the “new atheists” is essentially the god of Deism. In their mind if “god” wants to “forgive” sinners, he should simply “forgive” them. But that would amount to apathy projected onto the level of “god.” This kind of “god” resembles the “anonymous god” promoted by American civil religion. For helpful essays, see David L. Adams and Ken Schurb, eds., *The Anonymous God: The Church Confronts Civil Religion and American Society* (St. Louis: CPH, 2004).

tooth for a tooth, a life for a life”: “Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for what his hands have dealt out shall be done to him” (3:11). This emphasis on “tit for tat” communicates that the punishment is appropriate, fair and just; it corresponds to the crime.¹⁰ Third, Isaiah refers to the transgenerational dimension of judgment. God repays the iniquities of the present generation and previous generations (1:4; 14:20-21; 57:4; 65:7). Fourth, human sin and rebellion provoke God to wrath, and he responds in his just wrath (5:25; 63:10). In exchange for their iniquity God was angry and hid his face of compassion from them (57:17; 64:7; 8:17). Isaiah frequently speaks of God enacting his holy wrath against the wicked.¹¹ It is not an inevitable impersonal process of sin-consequence but the response of the personal God.

The wages of sin is death, and God will remove sinners away from his holy presence. “Woe is me,” Isaiah said, “I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips” (6:5). God sold Israel into exile in exchange for their iniquities and rebellions (50:1). God will destroy and remove sinners from upon the earth (13:9). Sinners cannot dwell with the consuming fire (33:14).

How Does the Holy One of Israel Respond to Sinners?

Isaiah can also speak of the divine response in the very opposite way. The God of Israel responds to sinners with his gracious favor and compassion, by forgiving them, by reversing their plight and restoring them. Yahweh will again have compassion on Israel (14:1). This response is completely undeserved and uncaused by human behavior. Addressing Israel God promises: “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake” (43:25). God attached his name and honor to his people Israel. For the sake of his own name he will spare Israel; he will not give his glory to another (48:9-11).

Isaiah speaks of God no longer holding sinners accountable for their sin. God will remember their sin no more, no longer count it against them (43:25; 64:9). God will remove their sin from his holy sight. God will blot out their sin, make it disappear and vanish from his sight (43:25; 44:22). God will forgive (55:7). Though “your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (1:18). He will “take away” and “make atonement” for the uncleanness of Isaiah and of the people (6:7).

What Is the Connection Between the Two Responses?

The scroll of Isaiah depicts the Holy One of Israel responding to sinners in two radically contrasting ways. In some texts God executes his just judgment against

10. See Patrick Miller, Jr., *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets: A Stylistic and Theological Analysis* (SBL, 2005); Tikvah Frymer-Kensky, “Tit for Tat: The Principle of Equal Retribution in Near Eastern and Biblical Law,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 43 (1980): 230-234.

11. For a good introduction to the topic of God’s wrath, see Bruce Edward Baloian, *Anger in the Old Testament* (American University Studies, series 7, Theology and Religion vol. 99; New York: Peter Lang, 1992).

sinners, but in other texts he shows his love and mercy toward them. So, which one is it, his deserved punishment and wrath or his undeserved mercy and restoration? The one scroll of Isaiah speaks both ways. Moreover, the reader encounters both types of discourse in all parts of the book and in numerous texts. What is the inner logic of this? Are they simply two unrelated responses?

Often the scroll depicts the two responses as chronologically sequential. God first used the Assyrian army as his instrument of judgment against northern Israel and Judah, and, as Isaiah predicts in chapter 39, God will use Babylon against Jerusalem. The second half of the book assumes that has happened and then announces a new stage in God’s dealings with Israel, the future restoration of Israel and the return of exiles back to Zion. These two sequential stages can be articulated together: “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...my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed” (54:7-10; cf. 60:10; 10:24-27).

Yet, the hearer/reader still wonders how God will ultimately deal with sin. There is one place where the two responses are tightly connected in one event. That text is the famous Suffering Servant Song. While the literature regarding Isaiah’s Servant is vast, here I will direct your attention to a few key features.¹²

Isaiah 41-53 use the singular noun “servant” to speak of “the servant of Yahweh.” This figure is explicitly identified as Israel (41:8; 44:1-2, 21; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3). We should take that textual identification seriously. At the same time, in chapters 42-48 collective Israel is condemned for being blind and disobedient. But the Servant-Israel spoken of in chapters 49-53 is obedient and has been given a mission toward Israel, to restore collective Israel (49:5-6) and to be stricken and put to death for the transgression of collective Israel (53:8). Therefore the reader should understand the “Servant of Yahweh” who is to restore collective Israel and atone for collective Israel as Israel-reduced-to-one, God’s Israel-in-one.¹³ This is the case for Isaiah 49 and 53.¹⁴ Within the book of Isaiah it is a legitimate approach to connect this Israel-in-one figure with the future promised Messianic king of the line of Jesse. Note how the language of 53:2 recalls the same language in 11:1. The Messianic king will represent, substitute for, and embody collective Israel.

God’s Servant, Israel-in-one, is given a mission that extends beyond collective Israel. He is to be “a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of

12. For a survey of views, see *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, eds. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher, trans. Daniel P. Bailey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

13. The expression of “Israel-reduced-to-one” comes from Horace D. Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh* (St. Louis: CPH, 1979). In several ways the New Testament stresses that Jesus the Messiah is true Israel, Israel in one. See David E. Holwerda, *Jesus & Israel: One Covenant or Two?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

14. Especially Isaiah 48 seems to show a transition to the Servant as Israel-reduced-to-one. See R. Reed Lessing, *Isaiah 40-55* (Concordia Commentary; St. Louis: CPH, 2011): 76-83.

the earth” (49:6; cf. 42:1-7). The term translated “nations” designates “Gentiles,” non-Israelites. As noted by Christopher Wright, “in the surprising purposes of God, the Servant enables the original mission of [collective] Israel to be fulfilled.”¹⁵

How will the Servant of Yahweh accomplish salvation? The Servant Song in Isa 52:13-53:12 spells it out. He will be God’s substitutionary, vicarious Israel. He will bear upon himself the sins and iniquities of collective Israel and the Gentiles. Regarding collective Israel the Song explicitly states: he was “stricken for the transgression of my people” (53:8). The Servant suffers and dies in the place of and to the benefit of collective Israel, “my people.” Regarding the Gentiles the Song speaks of his suffering and dying for “the many.” What does the term “many” mean? In biblical Hebrew the word “all” (*kol*) denotes totality viewed as a singular. The way to express “all” viewed as a numerical plural is with the word “many” (*rabbim*), “many,” not a “few.” A better translation would be “multitudes.” These “multitudes” include Gentiles. Note the expression “many nations” in 52:15, where the Song states that the Servant will “sprinkle many nations,” that is, he will function as a priest toward the multitudes of Gentiles.¹⁶

The Song clearly says that the Servant will die: “he was cut off out of the land of the living...they made his grave with the wicked” (53:8-9); “he poured out his soul [*nephesh*—“his self”] to death” (53:12). By his suffering and death the Servant will be a substitute. He will not suffer and die for his own offences and deeds. In fact, the Song stresses that he will be innocent and righteous, “although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth” (53:9). Instead, he will bear and carry the sins, iniquities, and transgressions of others. The language of “bearing/carrying iniquity” denotes enduring the punishment for iniquity (e.g. Lamentations 5:7).¹⁷ The Suffering Servant will endure the punishment for the iniquities of others; he will be a sacrificial guilt “offering” (53:10).¹⁸

How can the Servant bear the sins of others? Sinners do not have the ability to transfer their guilt, responsibility, and sins to another. By their own reason and strength sinners must bear their own sin and its punishment. Israel is heavy “laden with iniquity” (1:4). But the God of Israel is the One who will transfer them to the Servant, “the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (53:6). God is behind what is going on, “it was the will of the LORD to crush him” (53:10). The Servant will die, and then he will bodily rise again. The Song speaks of his bodily resurrection as well:

15. Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992): 162.

16. The Masoretic Text employs the Hiphil of *nazah*, “to sprinkle,” used in sacrificial priestly contexts. See Christopher W. Mitchell, *Our Suffering Savior* (St. Louis: CPH, 2003): 100-104.

17. This language is also used of the scapegoat who carries Israel’s iniquities away in the wilderness on every Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:22). Does that meaning also apply here?

18. On the Servant as a substitutionary sacrifice, see Angel M. Rodriguez, *Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1979): 276-302.

“he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days” (53:10). This is not metaphorical language. He will physically come back to life.

Half of the story is that the Servant will deal with the sins of Israel and Gentiles. The other half is stated in 53:11: by means of his death and his resurrection, by means of his experiential knowledge “shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous.” There is a blessed exchange. God places the sins and iniquities of the multitudes on the Servant, and the Servant gives to the multitudes his righteousness. God accounts sinners as righteous.¹⁹

Where Is the Place of Life with Israel’s God?

To properly understand the entire mosaic of Isaiah one must include some additional emphases of the book. Very often Isaiah will make a contrast between in-Zion and outside-Zion. It is a spatial type of contrast, between those who take refuge in the God who dwells in Zion and those who locate themselves outside of Zion and take refuge elsewhere. This spatial dimension needs to be added to the picture. The Servant atones for the sins of the multitudes, of both collective Israel and the Gentiles. But Zion is the only place where divine favor can be found. Zion is not restricted to one ethnic group. It is the place for all peoples, both Israelites and Gentiles, and Isaiah often promises that Gentiles will be drawn in. Yet, only those in Zion will benefit and enjoy the blessing of life and fellowship with the God of Israel. Only in Zion do “the afflicted of his people find refuge” (14:32; cf. 28:16). In Zion where the God of Israel dwells, “the people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity” (33:24). Outside of Zion, only death and destruction.

Moab, for example, illustrates those who stay put and refuse to come to Zion, those who remain in their Gentile condition and ways, “Moab shall be trampled down in his place” (25:10). In contrast Isaiah depicts “all peoples” in Zion as enjoying the eschatological feast and eternal life with the God of Israel, for he will swallow up physical death forever (25:6-10a). In fact, the book repeatedly promises the day when Gentiles from the ends of the earth will be drawn to the God of Israel who dwells in Zion. The mosaic reveals facets that stand in paradox with each other. One such paradox is this. The Servant atones for all, but only those in Zion enjoy the benefits. Only those in Zion enjoy the benefits and yet, Zion draws all peoples to herself. The promised centripetal movement of all Gentiles to Zion frames the entire book (2:2-4; 66:18-23).

19. The ESV gives an accurate translation here. The Hiphil of *tsadaq* has the forensic sense “to account as righteous.” It does not mean “to ontologically transform a person from doing bad works into a person doing good works.” See the lexicons.

Who Benefits?

Another dimension necessary for properly understanding the entire mosaic is Isaiah's stress on the importance of human faith. In the context of the Syro-Ephraimite threat, Isaiah's word play makes the point: "If you [plural] are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all" (7:9).²⁰ Those who look to the Holy One of Israel in faith are the only ones who benefit from God's gift of life and fellowship with him. Only they benefit from the atoning work of the Suffering Servant. Only they have a future life with the God of Israel. God promises "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength" (30:15). Isaiah adds "For the LORD is a God of justice, blessed are all those who wait for him" (30:18). Isaiah uses different expressions but each one is theocentric, focused on the Holy One of Israel, expressions such as: "turning from false ways and turning toward the God of Israel, looking to him, taking refuge in him, trusting in him, seeking him, and waiting for him."

What Kind of Life Characterizes Those Who Benefit?

Only those who look to the Holy One of Israel in faith have a future in fellowship with him. Only they benefit from the Servant's atoning work. And they actively live in a certain way, by walking in the Lord's ways. The one who will dwell with the Holy One of Israel is the one who "walks righteously and speaks uprightly...and shuts his eyes from looking on evil" (33:14-16). The kind of fast that God chooses is "to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke...to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house" (58:6-7). Yahweh is intent on having a people who do not rebel and forsake him but who walk in his righteous ways, the ways he has designed and commanded. From faith flows an actively righteous life.

Who Does Not Benefit?

In contrast are those who do not benefit. Their future is to be removed from God's sight. In several texts Isaiah makes a distinction between those who look to Yahweh in faith and those who do not. Such a distinction appears already in chapter 1: "Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent by righteousness. But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed" (vv. 27-28). Another example occurs in chapter 57 where God addresses the idolaters in Israel: "When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you...But he who

20. The wordplay employs the root 'aman in both the Hiphil ("to believe in, trust") and the Niphal ("to be steady, made firm, unmoved"). Here the ESV captures the wordplay. Translations could capture wordplays and sound plays much more frequently than they typically have done. See, for example, Eric Fudge, *Translating Pun and Play: Wordplay and Sound Play in Hosea* (Ph.D. dissertation; Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2018).

takes refuge in me shall possess the land and shall inherit my holy mountain" (v. 13). Chapter 65 stresses the different futures between those who forsake Yahweh and those called Yahweh's "servants," namely Israelites who benefit from the atoning work of the singular Servant (65:8-16).²¹ The end of the book reveals the ultimate separation between the two groups (66:15-24). Those who worship Yahweh will inherit eternal life with him in the new heavens and new earth, while those who rebel against Yahweh will experience eternal separation and hell itself.

What is the Ultimate Desire of God?

The entire book clearly reveals the ultimate desire of the Holy One of Israel, to bless and save, not to condemn. Unlike human ways that think only in terms of just deserts and punishment, the ways and thoughts of Yahweh are fundamentally different and unique, characterized by compassion and abundant pardon. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth," so are his pardoning ways higher than human ways (55:6-9). The book is saturated with exhortations for sinners to turn away from their wicked and rebellious behavior and to look to the God of Israel for their refuge and future. All of the discourse in the book of Isaiah has rhetorical purposes.²² Isaiah's proclamations are not simply setting forth information for the sake of information. They need to be understood as threats, accusations, and promises designed to move the hearers. The ultimate desire of the Holy One of Israel is simply this: "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other" (45:22).

A Response to the Critique of Hitchens

Now we are ready to respond to the critique of Christopher Hitchens. His criticism is part of his entire agenda to reject theism. With respect to what he calls "vicarious redemption," Hitchens argues that accountability or responsibility for criminal behavior cannot be transferred to another. The perpetrators are and always will be accountable for their own misdeeds. According to Hitchens, to believe in a substitutionary atonement is to evade personal responsibility.

Clearly Isaiah 53 sets forth a substitutionary atonement. Yet, such a critique fails to understand how Isaiah 53 fits within its own theological context, within the overall

21. Only after the discourse with the singular "the servant of Yahweh" does the plural usage "the servants of Yahweh" occur (54:17; 63:17; 65:8, 9, 13, 14, 15; 66:14). Since Gentiles have been drawn to Zion, Gentiles would be included among these "servants."

22. The approach of "speech acts" proves to be very helpful with prophetic discourse. For introductions, see John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, eds. J. O. Urmson and M. Sbisà, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975); James W. Voelz, *What Does This Mean? Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modern World*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: CPH, 2003): 275-292; Walter Houston, "What Did the Prophets Think They Were Doing? Speech Acts and Prophetic Discourse in the Old Testament," *Biblical Interpretation* 1 (1992): 167-188.

theological picture given in the book of Isaiah. In the analogy of Irenaeus, we have to see how the mosaic pieces fit together to picture a majestic King.

We who believe in the Suffering Servant do not evade our responsibility. On the contrary, we willingly acknowledge our own culpability without hiding it or lying to ourselves. We admit that by our own will and power we cannot transfer our guilt to someone else. No sinner can do that. In and of ourselves we are heavy laden with iniquity. We are guilty before our Maker and Judge, the Holy One of Israel, just as he himself has accused us through his prophet Isaiah. We have no excuse. We agree with Isaiah's own self-assessment of being of "unclean lips," and we say with Isaiah 64:6, "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment." We confess before the holy God himself our own sins and iniquities, and admit that we deserve temporal and eternal punishment. We do not pull any punches regarding ourselves but confess the truth about ourselves. And we pray "Be not so terribly angry, O LORD, and remember not iniquity forever" (64:9).

Then we hear a completely different word from God himself spoken through the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah 53 announces a completely different word, the "good news" (52:7), the glad tidings that the God of Israel out of his own abundant steadfast love took the initiative and did something to change our plight. He created a different future for guilty sinners. The Holy One of Israel laid upon the Servant, Israel-reduced-to-one, the iniquity of us all, the iniquity of both collective Israel and of all Gentiles. The Holy One of Israel did not simply ignore or overlook our guilt and sinfulness. He took it seriously, as seriously as could be.

The just Judge did not condemn the multitudes as we deserved but provided a substitute. Why would the just Creator and Judge do that? Not because sinners deserve it but because he desired his treasured people Israel and all Gentiles to enjoy a different future, not condemnation but life with him. Why would the Holy One of Israel provide a substitute? Not because sinners deserve it but for the sake of his own holy name and because of his compassion and everlasting love (48:11; 54:7-8). In fact, the event of the Suffering Servant fully displays God's grace and mercy. On the basis of the Suffering Servant the Holy One of Israel now says to you what he said through the seraph to Isaiah, "your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for" (6:7). The Holy One of Israel not only condemns but also makes holy (4:3-4). Believe the good news, come to Zion, and enjoy fellowship with your God, the Holy One of Israel.

Basically Hitchens disallows the "gospel" and allows only the "law" to be true. The wages of sin is death, and he insists that you yourself must carry your own iniquities and your own guilt. That is the only future he permits. Actually, that is the only conclusion that naked human reason can reach.²³ However, the Holy One of Israel reveals a radically different action on his part. It is the action of forgiveness and pardon

23. Hitchens reaches the same conclusion as Immanuel Kant, "Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason," in *Religion and Rational Theology*, translated and edited by A. W. Wood and G. Di Giovanni (1996): 113 (at 6:72).

for guilty sinners, an action that in ordinary human interaction would simply amount to overlooking guilt. But the ways of Israel's God are higher than our ways. Out of his abundant steadfast love and on the basis of the substitutionary atonement of the Suffering Servant, God gives full and free pardon to guilty sinners. He promises the day when physical death will be swallowed up and we will enjoy eternal life with the God of Israel in Zion (25:6-9). He promises the day when he will "create new heavens and a new earth" for all those who look to him in faith. All of this, and in fact every promise given in the book of Isaiah, flows from God's abundant steadfast love and is ultimately based on the work of the Suffering Servant.

In the end Hitchens takes the side of the Satan, the accuser, who always accuses sinners as responsible and guilty for their own misbehavior.²⁴ Hitchens and those who agree will hear and believe only the law, only the accusation and the sentence of guilty.

But in fact, the Satan, the accuser, has been hurled away from God's holy presence. He is no longer permitted to accuse us before the heavenly throne (Revelation 12). The status of being accused and guilty before the Holy One of Israel is no longer the last word. Now by faith we hold on to the last word from God himself, that we stand forgiven, innocent, righteous and free before our Maker and Judge. And all this by virtue of the vicarious suffering and death, all this by virtue of the bodily resurrection unto life of Isaiah 53's Suffering Servant.

Who is this Suffering Servant, this Israel-reduced-to-one, this Messiah of Israel? Who is this figure in history? The Ethiopian Eunuch asked that question two millennia ago, and it is still the crucial question (Acts 8:26-39). Jesus of Nazareth is his name. This Jesus is the Suffering Servant "who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25). Turn away from yourselves or the world's invented idols. Turn to the Holy One of Israel and give thanks to him, the God and Father of his incarnate Son, the Lord Jesus the Messiah, the Suffering Servant. Give thanks with the song composed by Isaiah in chapter 12, an eschatological song meant for people like you and me:

"I will give thanks to you, O LORD,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
that you might comfort me...
Give thanks to the LORD,
call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples,
proclaim that his name is exalted.
Sing praises to the LORD,
for he has done gloriously;
let this be made known in all the earth.
Shout, and sing for joy,
O inhabitant of Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."

24. See Zechariah 3; Job 1-2.

Book Reviews

Boda, Mark J. *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions*. Grand Rapids, Mi.: Baker Academic, 2017, pp. 220, \$22.99, paperback.

Mark Boda holds a Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge and is professor of Old Testament at McMaster Divinity College in Ontario, Canada. Dr. Boda is the author of numerous articles and books, including reputable commentaries on Judges, 1-2 Chronicles, Haggai and Zechariah, and several independent volumes on Zechariah. He has also published *“Return To Me”: A Biblical Theology of Repentance* (2015) in the New Studies in Biblical Theology series edited by D.A. Carson. In addition to his duties at McMaster, Dr. Boda is a seasoned evangelical minister and itinerant preacher who has served in various pastoral, missionary, and consulting positions.

Chapter one argues that an over focus on the diversity of the Old Testament (OT) in late twentieth-century scholarship has led to a loss of the OT’s essential unity (p. 6). Boda submits that the core of OT theology is located within three rhythms of the OT: the narrative, character, and relational rhythms.

According to chapter one, the narrative rhythm of the OT is found in the multiple historical summaries (Deut 6:21-23; 26:5-9; 24:2-13; Ps 78; Neh 9) that recite “the history of God’s redemption through finite action, that is, particular acts within specific times of history” (p. 15). While the elements differ from text to text, the central historical actions of God are “exodus and conquest” (p. 16). Together, the elements “form a single story” (p. 23) that is repeated across multiple texts and thus “binds together the historical experience” of God’s people (p. 23).

The character rhythm of the OT, developed in chapter three, is “expressed as God’s redemptive character, described through consistent activity utilizing nonperfective/nonpreterite verbal forms...as well as personal attributes utilizing adjectives and nouns” (p. 29). The “foundational example [is] in Exod. 34:6-7” (p. 29). The “character creed” declares “Yahweh’s typical redemptive activity in relation to his people” with a “focus on God’s steadfast love, which entails forgiveness but also justice...[which] point to his key characteristics of mercy and holiness” (p. 49).

The relational rhythm is explored in chapter four and begins with the “copular syntactical construction”: “I will be God for you and you shall be a people for me” (p. 54-55). This foundational phrase is regularly located within covenant texts that appear at pivotal moments of redemptive history. Boda argues that “‘covenant’ is not the relationship itself [between God and his people] but rather an agreement that articulates the nature of the relationship and structures it” (p. 60). A *berît* (בְּרִית) is thus “an elected...relationship of obligation” (p. 61) that includes reciprocity, identity and responsibility (cf. Deut 26:16-19; Gen 17:1-15; Num 18; 1 Kgs 3:9; etc.) (p. 63).

Chapter five shows these three rhythms in concert together in Exodus 5:22-6:8 and Nehemiah 9. Chapter six relates the goal of these three creedal rhythms with the goal of redemption: the transformation of creation and the cosmos. Chapter seven demonstrates that these three rhythms continue into the New Testament while chapters eight and nine apply the three creeds to the Christian life.

Boda employs a careful methodology that is textually/Scripturally grounded, sensitive to the progress of revelation and the canonical context, and cognizant of current discussion in OT scholarship. Boda is pursuing the “core theology of the OT” through the theological hermeneutic of Biblical Theology (p. xiv). He terms his methodology a “selective-intertextual-canonical approach” (p. 7). He thus selects texts that “constitute its ‘inner structure’” by paying attention to intertextual rhythms that focus on “repeated use of particular phrases, expressions, and structures throughout the breadth of the OT and NT” (p. 7). The end of the book includes an appendix (pp. 151-182) that provides a robust overview and defense of the history and methods of Biblical Theology. As a whole, Boda’s methodology both explains and exemplifies the task of contemporary evangelical Biblical Theology.

While he does not use these words, Boda argues effectively that the center or “heartbeat” of the OT is located within these three rhythms of the OT. He rightly relates these three rhythms to the overall goal of redemption: creation and the cosmos. Boda shows how God’s creational activity is often the foundation for his redemptive activity, especially in the Psalter, the wider wisdom literature, and the prophetic literature: “the redemptive agreements with Israel were part of a much larger story of redemption that would impact not just all nations (Gen. 10) but also all creation” (p. 100).

The pursuit of a center in Biblical Theology has occupied scholarship for several decades. The search for a center has itself led to an overly narrow focus on particular themes or motifs within the OT. While various scholars may argue that the presence of God, the glory of God, the kingship of God, or the kingdom of God are at the center or a part of the center of OT theology, Boda’s three rhythms do indeed represent the heartbeat of OT theology. Any OT theology that is attempting to genuinely represent the OT scriptures as they present themselves must deal with the ubiquitous references back to Exodus 34:6-7, the multiple narrative summaries of Israel’s history, or the many covenantal texts that lie at pivotal moments in OT redemptive history. Boda’s three rhythms serve to summarize the message of the OT simply, within Scripture’s own categories, and with actual Scriptural language. Further, Boda shows multiple passages in which these three rhythms are woven together into a coherent theological statement contextualized within the history of Israel (cf. Exod 5:22-6:8 and Neh 9). The result is a thoroughly biblical description of OT theology.

Boda is careful to show how these three rhythms of the OT’s heartbeat make our own hearts beat for the Lord. For example, his call to evangelicals to not lose the essential narrative story of the Bible is a helpful corrective to pastors and scholars

alike who may stop with historical-grammatical exegesis and not connect the larger canonical dots. His other applications have a similar poignant and convicting call (p. 123). The character rhythm compels us to develop a spirituality that worships and regularly pursues relationship with a strikingly personal God who works miraculously in the present (pp. 130-133). The relational creed calls us to focus on biblical conceptions of covenant that emphasize relationship instead of extra-biblical covenantal systems.

Boda's consistent interaction with the non-evangelical guild of OT scholarship shows an appreciation for their work and a sincere effort to recognize their contribution. However, the absence of interaction with recent key evangelical authors within the field of Biblical Theology is surprising. Interaction with the likes of Kaiser, Hamilton, Schreiner, Sailhamer, Gentry, Wellum, Alexander, Hafemann, and perhaps most surprisingly, C. J. H. Wright, are essentially missing except in footnotes. By leaving these evangelical authors out, one wonders how Boda's argument complements and corroborates the most recent work done within evangelical Biblical Theology. Notwithstanding, Boda makes an important contribution to OT theology that is concise, exegetically sound, pastorally sensitive, and useful to scholars, students, and lay believers alike. I heartily recommend this work.

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Gentry, Peter J. and Stephen J. Wellum. *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2012, pp. 848, \$45.00, hardback.

Peter J. Gentry serves as Donald L. Williams Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and as Director of the Hexapla Institute. Stephen J. Wellum serves as Professor of Christian Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and as Editor of *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*.

In *Kingdom Through Covenant*, Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum establish a biblical and systematic theology designed to "show how central the concept of 'covenant' is to the narrative plot structure of the Bible, and secondly, how a number of crucial theological differences within Christian theology, and the resolution of those differences, are directly tied to one's understanding of how the biblical covenants unfold and relate to each other" (p.21). In effect, they contend that to know the covenants rightly is to know the Scriptures rightly (pp. 139, 603, 611). As such, they examine each OT covenant so as "to speak on its own terms" (p. 113) by aligning interpretation to 1) its immediate textual context, especially emphasizing a historical-grammatical hermeneutic of a covenantal text, 2) its epochal point in redemptive history, especially to what preceded it to ground the categories of covenants, and

3) its typological reception within the canon by latter texts in response to saving events in redemptive history (p. 93). They build their "'thick' reading of Scripture" (p. 89), which is their version of a canonical reading, in the covenant's representation in the text and its position in progressive revelation so that the covenants define the points of comparison for typology (pp. 89-108; 606). They argue for a typological development from creation (Adam and Noah) and Israel (Moses and David) to the person and work of Jesus in the New Covenant (NC) with the Abrahamic Covenant (AC) playing the major role in their connections and in the critique of Covenant Theology (CT) and Dispensational Theology (DT).

Their "progressive covenantalism" (p. 24) aims to stand between the readings of CT and DT because both systems fail to follow the trail of typological links in the covenantal aspect most dear to their model (pp. 24, 113, 121). "[I]n order to discern properly how Old Testament types/patterns are brought to fulfillment in God's plan, Jesus and the new covenant must become the hermeneutical lens by which we interpret the fulfillment of the types" (p. 608). They contend that CT too quickly equates circumcision with baptism without connecting circumcision to Christ first. CT settles, therefore, on an ecclesiology that equates the nature of Israel and the Church as mixed, visible and invisible, affirming paedobaptism. Progressive covenantalism, however, accepts a regenerate church and believer's baptism that reflects the nature of Christ and the new covenant. In the same way, DT fails to appreciate that the antitype to the land and the creation itself is "the new creation that Jesus has inaugurated in the new covenant" (p. 607). The eschatology of DT, accordingly, moves too quickly to set the promised land in its old setting rather than as new creation, severing it from its typological development through the covenants to Christ and His perfect work.

This perfect work of Christ as King of His Kingdom is accomplished in the new covenant whose scope is the "the entire universe" (p. 592). His creation of everything, in other words, typologically anticipates its redemption in Christ that extends God's rule "throughout the life of the covenant community and to the entire creation...in the context of a covenant relationship of 'loyal love' (*hesed*) and 'faithfulness' (*emet*)" (p. 594). These paired terms from the covenants (pp. 144-145) find their typological fulfillment in Christ, allowing the new covenant to supersede the older covenants because "we are no longer under those previous covenants as covenants, since they reached their fulfillment in Christ" (p. 605). As they advance their argument, Wellum and Gentry also reject seeing these covenants as merely unconditional or conditional because each covenant displays aspects of both in "a deliberate tension" (p. 609). Each covenant is "unconditional or unilaterally guaranteed by the power and grace of God" (p. 610). At the same time, each one demands an obedient partner, a condition, that frustrates the reader as "one works across the covenants and the tension increases" (p. 611). This magnifying tension eliminates any hope that a mere

man can meet this condition and leaves open only one possibility: God Himself will act to keep the condition of “a new and better covenant” (p. 611).

In chapters 1–3, Wellum and Gentry establish the importance of covenants to the Scriptures and theology. They highlight how CT and the various versions of DT come to differing conclusions based on their understanding of the covenants, especially in light of ecclesiology and eschatology. The nature of God’s people remains the primary evidence for underlying differences. Neither CT or DT consistently binds all of its conclusions to the Christological implications of the progressive and predictive nature of typology.

In chapters 4–11, therefore, Wellum and Gentry analyze each of the Old Testament (OT) covenants, beginning with defining the very nature of Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) covenants. In particular, they focus on the word pair *hesed* and *emet*, “loyal love” and “faithfulness” (p. 141). These terms serve as their semantic backbone for each covenant. Wellum and Gentry turn, next, to the Noahic covenant and define it as the confirmation of the original Adamic covenant that extends it to Noah and his descendants as it is “established” (p. 161). In a similar manner, they mark the Abrahamic covenant as one that is “cut” in Gen 15:18 and “established” in Gen 17:17. It becomes the centerpiece of God’s work to bless humanity and show his “loyal love” and “faithfulness” (pp. 245, 280). As Wellum and Gentry turn to the Israelite (Mosaic) covenant, they find the Ten Commandments and the covenant begun in Exod 19–24 as foundational to the expression of God’s will, contending that Deuteronomy stands as a renewal and “supplement to the covenant at Sinai” (pp. 379–381) so that Israel may “fulfill the Adamic role reassigned to Abraham” (p. 388). When they pivot to examine the Davidic covenant, therefore, they link it to both the AC, whose blessings will come “through the Davidic King/kingdom” (p. 427), and to the MC because this kingship will be “a means of accomplishing Exo 19:3b–6” (p. 422).

In chapters 12–15, Wellum and Gentry develop their understanding of the New Covenant by tracing its proclamation in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel before turning to its proclamation in the NT. They focus on Ephesians and link the shape of the text and the new covenant community to the expectations embedded in Exod 19–24 (pp. 565–570). Paul’s instructions to the Ephesians draw together and fulfill the elements of *hesed* and *emet* from the earlier covenants with the call to speak truth in love (pp. 570–582) so that loving Jesus and others manifests itself in a renewed humanity that seeks social justice as a community through Jesus (pp. 582–587).

In chapters 16–17, Wellum and Gentry complete their project by defining their approach, “Kingdom through Covenant” as a canonical reading that embraces the story of Scripture through the covenants before stretching the implications of their work into “theology proper, Christology, ecclesiology and eschatology” (p. 653).

This volume serves as a needed reference for any scholar who pursues biblical theology within the evangelical traditions. Its cumulative argument advances a

reasonable case for its main thesis, especially by the detailed testing of its ideas through many key parts of the Scripture. They demonstrated that the covenants can be understood to frame the reading of Scripture and the development of theology. However, this project and the validity of its thesis depends heavily on its methodological starting points, especially its view of typology and its equating of the covenants with Scripture. If typology should not be grounded in the relationship of the covenants but in the author’s acts of composition and canonization, for example, then typology may be broader than described. Their thesis, then, may have too narrowly defined how the different aspects of the Scriptures form connections, create exegetical comparisons and develop theology across a biblical book, books and the whole canon. Despite these limitations, Wellum and Gentry have in this work helped the various Protestant interpretive camps to understand each other and the Scriptures better.

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DeRouchie, Jason. *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017, pp. 640, \$39.99, hardback.

While there are many introductory books on the Old Testament (OT), there are few which walk both beginning and advanced students together through each step of the exegetical process leading into theology and application. Jason DeRouchie does just that in *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology*. The book lays out a step-by-step guide to OT Exegesis intended to be accessible, yet complete. DeRouchie currently serves as an elder of Bethlehem Baptist Church, is Professor of OT and biblical theology at Bethlehem College & Seminary and received his Ph.D. from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. DeRouchie has published and contributed to other books on the OT including *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus’ Bible*. He has also recently published an elementary Hebrew Grammar with Duane Garrett titled *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*.

The stated goal of the book is to provide a twelve-step guide to interpreting the OT, with a focus on textual analysis, synthesis, and significance. DeRouchie guides his readers from the foundational elements of genre, literary units, and translation concerns (part one), through text grammar and analysis (part two), context (part three), into biblical, systematic, and practical theology (parts four and five).

After his introduction, DeRouchie begins with step one on evaluating genre and understanding how it effects hermeneutical methodology. In step two he gives an initial demonstration of the tracing and diagramming method for bringing forth the natural divisions in the text. Steps three and four on text criticism and translation provide detailed information on each discipline alongside of practical methodology.

These chapters begin with basic elementary principles and then transition into the fields of Hebrew textual criticism and translation work respectively.

Steps five to seven provide the grammatical and syntactical meat of the book. Step five begins by defining grammatical terms, examining the use of various verb conjugations, and surveying markers of immediate significance and inference markers. From there, DeRouchie quickly broadens out into clause grammar and steps back further in step six of the exegetical process: argument tracing. Building on the previous steps, DeRouchie guides the reader through the process of deciphering the literary argument, creating an argument diagram, and drafting an exegetical outline. Step seven provides a guide to doing Hebrew word and concept studies, even for those without training in Hebrew.

In the next two steps, DeRouchie introduces how historical and literary context fits into the exegetical process by asking and answering the right questions. Steps ten and eleven define biblical and systematic theology, unpacking the use of these disciplines in the exegetical process. The final step dives into practical theology or how Christians should relate to, apply, and teach the OT.

DeRouchie has here provided a one of a kind work which efficiently unites grammatical and hermeneutical principles, generally learned from a Hebrew grammar and a hermeneutics book respectively, with exegetical practice. The uniting of these preeminent, seemingly abstract principles, with his steps of OT exegesis allow this one book to do the work of three. DeRouchie does all this while remaining accessible overall to those with little to no knowledge of Hebrew. This is possible through the labeling of each section under an “easy,” “moderate,” and “challenging” tract heading.

In the preface, DeRouchie says, “two of the distinctive contributions of this book are its focus on discourse analysis and biblical theology.” (p. xxiv). Regarding biblical theology, step ten does present a well-developed and thoroughgoing introduction to biblical theology. Furthermore, the “kingdom” acronym which he has created for tracing redemptive history and visualizing salvation-history connections (p. 353) provides a stellar redemptive history overview. Yet even with these, DeRouchie’s section on biblical theology, while important and informed, provides only a minimal contribution to those who are already acquainted with biblical theology. Furthermore, some will find this chapter’s progression of topics hard to follow, making future reference difficult and less fruitful than other resources on biblical theology.

On the other hand, steps two, five, and six of the exegetical process dealing with literary units and text hierarchy, clause and text grammar, and argument-tracing, make DeRouchie’s guide to OT exegesis stand out among similar books. Through these chapters, he manages to skillfully guide Hebrew students, both experienced and inexperienced, through the rugged terrain of exegesis (including the difficult work of lexical study and syntax) to the refreshing landscape of application. In so doing, the reader is equipped with the tools and skills necessary to take the text at face value

and see its relevance for practical life. After carefully reading and implementing the steps outlined in this central section, the intermediate Hebrew student will be well on his way to faithful Hebrew exegesis. These distinctive chapters in the book will supply readers with the tools needed to form an accurate text hierarchy by laying out the clauses and using the features of Hebrew text and clause grammar to trace the argument of the biblical author. Each of the steps presented in the book contribute to or flow out of this central grammatical process, making the strength of these sections invaluable to those seeking to better understand and apply the OT.

Students of the Bible can benefit from simply becoming familiar with the twelve chapter-titles (twelve steps) of the book found in the table of contents (p. vii). These twelve steps are practically identical to what is presented by Douglas Stuart in *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, furnishing the student, pastor, teacher, and scholar with a tried and true process for faithfully laboring in the Scriptures. After this, the difficulty headings will guide the reader to those parts of the book which are accessible to them depending on their level of Hebrew. DeRouchie will be especially helpful to students transitioning from elementary Hebrew classes into intermediate and advanced exegetical study of the Hebrew Bible. Even so, readers with little to no knowledge of Hebrew will find most of the book refreshingly accessible. Those only reading “easy” and “moderate” sections of the book are encouraged to journey through an Elementary Hebrew grammar such as *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* by Duane Garrett and DeRouchie, so they may go back to read the “difficult” sections.

While many books on the OT inform readers about what the OT says, DeRouchie takes the time to show readers how to study it for themselves. As a comprehensive guide to studying the OT from exegesis to theology designed for beginning, intermediate, and advanced students of the Bible, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* is a truly unique and invaluable resource.

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Griffiths, Jonathan I. *Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical-Theological Study*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017, pp. 153, \$22, paperback.

Jonathan Griffiths serves as the Lead Pastor of Metropolitan Bible Church and is on the council of The Gospel Coalition Canada. He has published a number of books, including *Hebrews and Divine Speech* in 2014. His latest contribution, *Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical-Theological Study*, examines the nature of preaching in the New Testament and asks whether preaching should function as a distinct word ministry in the post-apostolic church.

At the outset of the book, Griffiths states that his interest does not lie in discussing homiletics or dissecting New Testament sermons to inform contemporary sermon formation. The primary goal of the book is to determine if the New Testament mandates “preaching” as a distinct ministry of the word, and, if so, what might characterize and distinguish preaching from other word ministries. After a brief introduction, Griffiths divides his work into three parts.

The first section addresses two objections. It asserts a biblical theology of God’s word, and it surveys the three key terms used to describe the concept of preaching in the New Testament. Griffiths also includes a brief excursus that explores the identity of the preachers in Philippians 1:14-18. Griffiths concludes that the New Testament contains three semi-technical verbs to describe preaching, and these verbs are not “used anywhere in the New Testament to frame an instruction, command, or commission for believers in general to ‘preach’” (p. 36). Preaching, then, is a specialized ministry only to be performed by duly authorized individuals although, as chapter 3 explains, all believers should participate in other types of word ministries.

Griffiths seeks to ground his conclusions from Part I in a series of exegetical studies in Part II of the book. Chapters 4-9 form the heart of the book, and Griffiths surveys various passages from 2 Timothy, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, and Hebrews, with an excursus on the relationship between New Testament preaching and Old Testament prophecy. In chapter 4, Timothy emerges as an important figure for Griffiths argument because he represents both a model of non-apostolic preaching ministry and a bridge from the apostolic era to the post-apostolic era. Paul’s commissioning of Timothy with authority to proclaim God’s Word in the church indicates that preaching did not end with the apostles, but rather Timothy stands “in a line of continuity with [Paul] and his own apostolic preaching” (p. 60). Having established this crucial point, Griffiths then proceeds to unfold the nature of Christian preaching in chapters 5-8 by analyzing the preaching of the Apostle Paul. Finally, chapter 9 considers the book of Hebrews, the “only full-length sermon recorded in the New Testament” (p. 117). This chapter brings the book back to the beginning when Griffiths offered a biblical theology of the word of God. Significantly, Griffiths argues that this theology underscores the importance and even necessity of preaching in the post-apostolic church as exemplified by how the writer of Hebrews views his own preaching.

Part III consists of only one chapter where Griffiths offers a summary of the work and some conclusions, both exegetical and biblical-theological in nature. He concludes that “the public proclamation of the word of God in the Christian assembly has a clear mandate from Scripture and occupies a place of central importance in the life of the local church” (p. 133).

Griffiths generally solid work suffers from a few shortcomings. The title of the book might mislead the reader into thinking the book analyzes the preaching found in the New Testament to understand the characteristics of that preaching and

how that might impact contemporary preaching. The book is not so much about preaching in the New Testament as preaching *after* the New Testament in the post-apostolic church.

A second criticism involves the inclusion of chapter 1. While certainly the opening chapter is helpful in developing a sound theology of God’s Word, its contribution to this volume is questionable. Griffiths seems to include this chapter to guard the reader from “concluding that all the theological features we will find in the New Testament’s presentation of preaching are unique to preaching” (p. 9). Protecting readers from this false conclusion is a worthy goal, but it could have been done in a shorter space than an entire chapter that seems somewhat disconnected from the overall goal of the book. Griffiths does return to his assertions from the opening chapter when he discusses Hebrews in chapter 9. The connection, however, is muddled by a failure to show how preaching in Hebrews functions differently from all word ministries if all word ministries share the characteristics found in the Hebrews sermon. Perhaps the reader would have been better served if Griffiths had included an epilogue or a section in his conclusion making this point. Chapter 9 and the book as a whole would have been stronger. As it stands, the first chapter seems to stall the momentum of the book and feels out of place and out of context.

These structural concerns related to chapters 1 and 9 are part of a larger critique, which is the structure of the book as a whole. Reading the book feels repetitive as chapter by chapter Griffiths makes similar if not identical points to the ones made in the previous chapters, just from different texts. For example, excursus 2 connects New Testament preaching with Old Testament prophecy. Chapter 5 (on Romans 10) has a section where Griffiths argues that preaching “stands in a line of continuity with Old Testament prophetic proclamation” (p. 69). Chapter 7 (on 2 Corinthians 2-6) concludes with a section entitled, “New-covenant preaching ministry has affinities to old-covenant prophetic ministry” (pp. 93-94). Chapters 5 and 10 both argue that preaching must be done by commissioned or approved agents. The reader might be forgiven for thinking he is retreading already covered ground. The repetitive nature of the chapters, although covering different texts, can make it difficult to keep the reader’s interest, especially if earlier chapters or excursuses were convincing of the argument being made (or repeated).

Overall, these criticisms are minor and involve the structure of the book more than the content of it. Griffiths’ content on the whole is helpful and grounded in sound, biblical exegesis. He helpfully reminds readers that the preaching of the Word of God is not merely a public oration like a political speech or philosophical discourse, but the sending of an authorized agent of God to speak His Word to His people. In contemporary church culture where seemingly anyone who feels “called” to pastor a church can plant his or her own church and become a preacher, Griffiths reminder that preaching in the post-apostolic church was never meant to be a free for

all is refreshing and much needed. After all, James 3:1 warns against many becoming teachers, and Griffiths book is a poignant reminder of why such warnings were given.

Anyone who is interested in preaching as a discipline or in what the New Testament teaches about the ongoing ministry of preaching in the Christian church will find this book useful. It is academic in nature, yet it remains accessible to all students of the Bible, whether they are in the academy or laymen wanting to improve their understanding of this subject. Those looking for works to improve their homiletics will not find help in this volume, but they will be reminded of the significance of their task as they preach the Word to God's people.

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Bennett, Jana Marguerite. *Singleness and the Church: A New Theology of the Single Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 272, \$29.95, hardback.

In this fresh reflection on singleness, theological ethicist, Jana M. Bennett, provides both a strong critique and hopeful corrective of American relationship culture. She writes as a Catholic scholar yet engages the American Protestant context just as insightfully—identifying the ways the church has often mirrored negative cultural narratives about singleness. The overall goal of this book is to magnify relational experiences often overlooked by the modern Christian community, specifically those in impermanent single states, and to acknowledge the ways these persons may uniquely witness to Christ and the church. Simultaneously, she encourages ways the church can be more of a witness to this community.

To begin, she proposes that one of the main problems facing current conceptions of singleness is the tacit assumption that to be single is to be lonely. She calls upon the Christian tradition which affirms both marriage and singleness for what it means to be the church, and that being lonely is neither specific nor necessary to singleness. Here, she also sets up the structure of the remainder of the book, which will look at the variety of expressions of singleness while calling upon specific guides who both contemplate and model these states.

Her second chapter focuses on the “never married,” and the unique witness they bear to the church and world regarding choice. Since her attention is on American culture, including the church, she addresses the fixation on choice and freedom for understanding adulthood. In contrast, the Apostle Paul, the guide for this chapter, exhorts the believer to be bound to Christ. This binding makes one free to follow Christ, but not free to make whatever decision one so desires (p. 49). The focus for both singles and marrieds is choosing devotion to Christ and love for the other, not “whether to get married or to remain unmarried” (p. 54). Yet, marriage is often made the ultimate ideal for relational life, even in the church. However, this is not the most

important choice a person can make, and never-married persons can help witness to the more foundational choice of following Jesus single-mindedly.

The third chapter turns to those in uncommitted relationships. Bennett recognizes this state takes many forms, not all of which the church would endorse, but which still need to be witnessed to by the church. Simultaneously, they may be able to witness to the church, especially as it relates to sexual desire. The problem she highlights here is the idolization of the sexual relationship, which often reduces sex to a mere tool, commodifying bodies and persons. Instead, she argues via the guide of Augustine, that sexual desire reveals the longing for God. Instead of fearing desire, desire can be understood as a gift which exposes a deep need for God.

Next, she turns to committed relationships such as long-term dating, serious cohabitation, and engagement in the fourth chapter. Again, she recognizes the moral debates regarding sexual relations in these contexts, but since her focus is on the impermanent states of singleness, these states (sexually active or not) need to be discussed. Often these states of singleness are characterized by an anxiety to find “the One,” and yet Bennett reminds the reader that there is only *one* Perfect One (p. 89). Additional anxiety manifests in wanting to avoid divorce. However, these anxieties seem sourced in thinking that once a person finds his/her “soul mate” all will be well—instead, this expression of singleness can witness to the need for Christ's perfecting work instead of finding the perfect mate. John Wesley is the guide through this chapter.

The fifth chapter addresses the contentious topic of those same-sex attracted. Bennett does well to recognize the tensions both with language for the LGBTQ community and moral disagreements about same-sex sexual practices. She brackets this out, however, to move to the importance of this community for the church and how the church has often missed the gift of this group's witness. Learning from guide, Aelred of Rievaulx, she argues that this community can teach the church about the depth of same-sex friendships, especially. This pushes against Freud's over-eroticism of all relationships, the idolization of marriage, and the quest for freedom as independence from needing others.

Chapter six discusses widowhood in dialogue with Elizabeth Ann Seton. This community witnesses to the dependence believers should have on Christ, especially in the face of uncertainty and the sting of death. Bennett reveals the especial hiddenness of this group, as well as the clear scriptural mandate to care for the orphans and widows.

The seventh chapter moves into divorce which can teach Christians of the “nature of hope and the grace of God” (p. 157). She observes the lack of Christian writing on divorce, concluding that this is because it disrupts Christian idealization of marriage and because it assumes failure. Those who have experienced divorce, for whatever reason, can attest to God's mercy and grace. Stanley Hauerwas is the guide for this chapter.

The eighth and final chapter addresses single parenting with Dorothy Day as the guide. This chapter highlights the problems with a two-tiered parenting hierarchy in which those who parent perfectly are on the first tier and those who do not are beneath them. Since single-parents are already understood to be imperfect and less than ideal, they are automatically relegated to this second tier which is shame-laden. This is not only inaccurate, but this group can also teach the church about the need for God's sufficiency often even better than dual-parent homes.

The general strengths of this book are its accessibility, clarity, attention to nuance, and willingness to be prescriptive. Bennett writes so that an average reader can understand her arguments, often citing blog posts, statistics, and including narratives, especially of her guides. Her writing is clear and her structure within each chapter is consistent. She also pays attention to the additional disparities that race and gender (especially in single-parent and widowed contexts) introduce into these single states, helping reveal further complexities of singleness. Finally, while she uncovers many of the problems in American culture and in the American church, her project is still constructive. Each chapter concludes with practical endorsements for how to counter-act the prevailing cultural messaging and values.

The areas for improvement regard the theological aspects of this work. For instance, throughout the work the author refers to "being human," often connecting relationships to this anthropology. However, nowhere is the undergirding anthropology stated even though it is frequently assumed (pp. 19, 57, 65, 72, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 103, 106, 113, 116, 118, 125, 201, 205). Also, discussion of Jesus' singleness was surprisingly absent from the discussion and would have likely bolstered Bennett's argument. Further, the New Testament attestation to the importance of spiritual kinship over blood or marital kinship is only briefly discussed and would have strengthened a theology of singleness as well. Thus, for this work to be a "new theology" more needs to be said.

In conclusion, perhaps a more accurate subtitle would have been "theological reflections on the single life," but this should not minimize the importance of those reflections for both the individual or the church. I would recommend this for any Christian reader thinking through marriage or singleness.

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Collins, C. John. *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who They Were and Why You Should Care*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011, pp. 192, \$16.99, paperback.

C. John Collins is professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary in Saint Louis, Missouri. In *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist*, Collins uses his skills in Hebrew linguistics and biblical theology to discuss an issue that finds itself at the

intersection of science and faith. Collins has also published *Faith and Science* and a commentary discussing his linguistic and theological analysis of Genesis 1–4.

The traditional view of Adam and Eve throughout most of church history has been that they were actual people through whom all other human beings descended and through whom sin entered into the human experience. Modern scientific claims, however, have caused much skepticism concerning this traditional view and have led many Western Christians to abandon belief in a historical Adam and Eve. In *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist*, Collins argues that the traditional view (or some variation of it) does the best job accounting for the biblical materials and our everyday experiences as human beings. In doing so, his goal is to establish what he refers to as "mere historical-Adam-and-Eve-ism" (alluding to C. S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*) in which only the essential elements affirming the biblical depiction of a historical Adam and Eve are discussed. That is, Collins will only be establishing that the Bible and human experience demand that we understand Adam and Eve historically and will not proceed from this basic statement to discuss how he puts all the biblical and scientific details together (p. 13).

After a short introduction, chapter two establishes some foundations for the remainder of Collins' book. Collins discusses 1) the importance of literary and linguistic approaches to Scripture, 2) the differences between "myth" and "story" and how "story" often contains a vital historical core for worldview formation, and 3) key elements of the biblical metanarrative, including the idea that humankind needs redemption because something went wrong at the "headwaters." In chapter three, Collins discusses each biblical passage referring to Adam and Eve (he also discusses some references from intertestamental material). Collins concludes that while not every passage examined demands a historical Adam and Eve, some do. The manner in which Jesus (by way of the Gospels) and Paul invoke the biblical story and build upon it necessitates a historical Adam and Eve (pp. 76–90). In chapter four, Collins discusses theological convictions demanding a common origin for all human beings and argues that these convictions align with the human experience of both believers and non-believers. Collins specifically argues for the dignity of every human being because of their connection to the image of God in an original couple and how a common ancestor explains why all humans yearn for justice. In chapter five, Collins establishes four criteria for any acceptable scenario explaining human origins. Collins states that any acceptable scenario 1) must allow for the origin of the human race to go beyond a mere natural process, 2) allow for Adam and Eve at the headwaters of the human race, 3) allow for a historical and moral fall, 4) and allow for Adam and Eve to be at least the chieftains of a singular tribe if it were determined that humanity stems from multiple people. Collins then discusses several views which possibly fit within these criteria. Collins concludes by reiterating that the traditional understanding of Adam and Eve should be believed. He states five reasons why he believes this matters. 1) The goal of the Christian story is to help us

make sense of the world. If a foundational part of that story is abandoned, we give up all hope of understanding the world in which we live. 2) The idea that sin is an alien invader infecting the entire human race depends upon the story of an original human couple. 3) Failure to affirm a common origin for all mankind prohibits us from affirming the common dignity of all people. 4) The story of Adam and Eve will, sooner or later, determine how committed one is to biblical authority.

John Collins' expertise is in biblical interpretation and this expertise shows in chapter three in which Collins overviews all of the relevant biblical material pertaining to Adam and Eve. His discussions reveal his mastery of the material and leave the reader with no doubt that the Bible confirms a historical Adam and Eve. The subsequent chapter, in which Collins reflects theologically on the importance of a unified humanity, is also much appreciated. Even if one were to depart from Collins' exegetical views, he still provides a reason to affirm the importance of unified human origins.

Collins conceived of this work as an attempt to set the outer boundaries of what the biblical evidence could possibly allow concerning interpretations of Adam and Eve. Such an endeavor is of course valuable, but its usefulness for people trying to go beyond this basic issue will be limited. The scenarios which Collins discusses in chapter five illustrate the limited nature of the book. He surveys scenarios stemming from young earth creationist (p. 122), old earth creationist (pp. 122–128), and C. S. Lewis (pp. 128–130) and affirms that each one could conceivably fit within his presentation of the biblical evidence. Francis Collins, founder of BioLogos, affirms the view of C. S. Lewis. One could hardly find three more disparate views on any biblical subject. Since this is the case, it is somewhat unclear what John Collins has actually accomplished. One could make a similar critique of *Mere Christianity*, with which Collins compares his book. Lewis' book may identify some primary characteristics of Christianity, but it would be impossible for anyone to remain at that level for very long.

In conclusion, Collins' analysis of topics pertaining to biblical studies will always be welcomed. His insights into the biblical texts and linguistics will benefit any reader. Concerning the specific issue at hand, however, readers will need to supplement this book with the materials summarized in chapter five. Readers who do this may find themselves coming to different conclusions than Collins concerning what will fit within criteria derived from the biblical texts.

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Schreiner, Thomas R. *Covenant and God's Purpose for the World*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017, pp. 136, \$14.99, paperback.

Thomas Schreiner is the James Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is a Pauline scholar and has written numerous books and articles. This most recent book is in Crossway's series, "Short Studies in Biblical Theology." It is the fourth book in the series. The series is focused on giving a reading of the Bible that is unified and sees Jesus Christ as the culmination of the biblical story.

Schreiner begins his book carefully noting that his intent is not to argue that covenant is the "center" of biblical theology (p. 11). While covenant is an important notion in Scripture, Schreiner wants to avoid the language of center or heart when discussing biblical theology. While, for Schreiner, covenant is not the central theme of the Bible, he does go on to say, "we can't grasp how the Scriptures fit together if we lack clarity about the covenants God made with his people" (p. 12). Thus, before the study can go too far Schreiner proposes a definition of covenant: "a covenant is a chosen relationship in which two parties make binding promises to each other" (p. 13). He notes that this definition entails three aspects: first, covenant sets up a relationship (p. 13). Second, that relationship is a chosen or elect relationship. Third, that relationship brings promises and obligation.

With this proposed definition in mind, Schreiner proceeds to walk through the biblical covenants. Chapter one discusses the Covenant of Creation. Schreiner acknowledges that this is, admittedly, the most controversial of the covenants at which he will examine. In it he argues that though the word covenant is missing what is found in the opening chapters of Genesis is a covenant. Schreiner maintains that the elements of covenant are present in the Garden with God establishing a relationship with Adam and Eve that entailed blessings and curses.

The following chapters of the book walk through the rest of the Old Testament biblical covenants. Chapter two deals the covenant with Noah. Chapter three moves to the covenant with Abraham. Chapter four looks at the covenant with Israel at Sinai. Chapter five explores the Davidic covenant. Lastly, in Chapter six Schreiner discusses the New Covenant showing how it "represents the fulfillment of God's covenants with his people" (p. 89) to which he immediately notes "except...the covenant with Noah" (p. 90) because, in his view, it is not redemptive.

Overall, Schreiner's work is a well-constructed popular level introduction to the biblical covenants. He walks through each of the biblical covenants that are important for redemptive history. Schreiner explicates the covenants with thoughtful eloquence yet also at a level that is easily accessible for those who do not have any training in theology. His ability to show how each of the covenants plays a unique role in redemptive history proves helpful. The way in which Schreiner shows how the

covenants all point to Christ, who fulfills all of them, provides readers with a helpful grid when reading Scripture.

Schreiner's attention to the text of Scripture must be commended. He is a thorough exegete. Yet it is his unwillingness to read the idea of covenant theologically that leads to some of the critiques that must be leveled. Because Schreiner chooses to read the covenants from a biblical rather than theological perspective, his entire method produces more discontinuity than continuity. One example of this is in the opening chapter where Schreiner is unable to reconcile the *proto-evangelion* (Gen 3:15) with the rest of the narrative. Schreiner understands the opening narrative in Genesis to be a sort of covenant, but he cannot understand how Genesis 3:15 fits into this picture. If Schreiner read Genesis 1-3 in a light of a broader theological understanding of Scripture, he could see in those chapters two different covenants being enacted. Schreiner rightly sees the Covenant of Creation (or what is often called the Covenant of Works), yet he misses a second covenant being developed in chapter 3, a theological covenant, the Covenant of Grace. This covenant contains all of the parts of a covenant: a chosen relationship (the seed of the woman) and promises and obligations (he will bruise your head, you will bruise his heel). One could even argue that this covenant goes a step farther than the necessary parts of a covenant that Schreiner lays out with the covenant sealed being in blood in Genesis 3:21. (O. Palmer Robertson does this in his classic work, *The Christ of the Covenants*.)

Schreiner's inattention to theological covenants ultimately makes the entire book seem disjointed. If he read these covenants both theologically and exegetically, he could then see how each subsequent covenant coming builds on and expands the Covenant of Grace found in Genesis 3. Depending on how one reads the Noah narrative, it can be solely a recapitulation of the Covenant of Creation (Schreiner's reading) or two covenants: one as a republication of the Covenant of Creation (Gen 8:20-9:17) and another as an expansion of the Covenant of Grace (Gen 6:13-21). Reading the covenant with Noah as two distinctly different covenants seems to fit better with Peter's reading of the narrative in 1 Peter 3:18-22. Schreiner's commitment to read these covenants without regard to a larger theological structure in the background leads to more discontinuity between them than continuity, and ultimately makes his claim that all the covenants find their fulfillment in the New Covenant appear vacuous.

These critiques notwithstanding, the book is still worthwhile for people who want a clear and concise understanding of the biblical covenants. Schreiner's approach is systematic and gives a compelling account of the biblical covenants. While this text favors discontinuity over continuity, the reader should consider supplemental works like Michael Horton's *Introduction to Covenant Theology*, Geerhardus Vos' *Biblical Theology*, or O. Palmer Robertson's *The Christ of the Covenants*, to give a more balanced view of concept of covenant in all of Scripture. Schreiner's short

introduction to the topic of biblical covenants reminds everyone once again that he is a biblical scholar par excellence and always worth reading.

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Young, Edward J. *My Servants the Prophets*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, pp. 231, \$23.50, paperback.

The late Edward J. Young originally published *My Servants the Prophets* in 1952. He served as Professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary and was esteemed as a very able conservative scholar. Young's works exhibit his high view of Scripture and his adherence to the view of the inspiration of Scripture as reflected in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Young's other influential works include *Thy Word is Truth* (Eerdmans, 1957), *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Eerdmans, 1949), and a three volume commentary on the book of Isaiah (Eerdmans, 1965, 1969, 1972).

In his preface, Young states that the purpose of *My Servants the Prophets* is to defend "in a modest way" the claim that the prophets of the Old Testament received and delivered messages from God—a claim that the prophets made concerning themselves. Young notes from the outset that his defense of the prophets' claim "flies in the face" of scholarship in vogue at that time.

In each chapter of his book, Young concentrates on a particular issue regarding the prophetic institution in the Old Testament. In chapters 1 through 3, Young addresses the divine origin of the prophets, the relationship of the prophets to the Mosaic Law, and the terminology of prophetism in the Old Testament (נביא, נְבִיאָה, רֹאֵה, etc.). In chapters 4 through 6, Young answers three questions: Was prophetism in Israel was a gift of God or did it arise as the "product of various circumstances"? (p. 75); What is the meaning of "the sons of the prophets"?; Did the prophets stand in opposition to the Israelite religious cult or as officials of the cult? In chapter 7, Young addresses the issue of true and false prophecy in Israel: if both true and false prophecy originated from Canaanite prophecy or if true prophecy was from God and false prophecy found its origins in Canaanite prophecy. In chapters 8 and 9, Young delineates the scope of the prophets' messages (if the messages were only contemporary or reached future generations as well), and he sought to determine if the prophets' messages were of human origin or were divine revelation.

As he addresses each issue, Young allows Scripture to speak for itself. Young builds upon Scripture's claim to be divine revelation and contends that any serious investigation must take that claim into consideration (pp. 181-82). Furthermore, Young takes into consideration the bearing the New Testament has on the interpretation of the Old Testament. "Any interpretation," writes Young, "which God places" upon the words of Scripture "must be taken into consideration. . . , and the New Testament, we believe, is such a Divine interpretation" (p. 33). Young also evaluates the conclusions

of critical scholarship. For example, in his analysis of Numbers 12:1-8 and the relationship of the prophets to the Mosaic Law, Young critiques August Dillman's contention that a redactor worked two accounts—one from E and another from J—into one account. In chapter 6, Young contends that Scandinavian scholarship overly emphasizes the similarity between Israelite prophetism with prophetism in the Ancient Near East (ANE) without duly recognizing their vast differences (pp. 108-10).

While Young's work is scholarly, it is very intelligible. Young's defense of the biblical view of prophecy is clearly delineated and well organized. The reader is not overly burdened with highly detailed or extensive endnotes. However, the readability of Young's book does not diminish its scholarly contribution. It is evident that Young has done his research; throughout the book he ably interacts with numerous scholars. Furthermore, his defense of the biblical view of prophecy is substantive and deserves consideration by scholars of all viewpoints.

Young's demonstration of how his understanding of inspiration impacts his interpretation of Scripture is particularly insightful. For example, Young's view of inspiration influences his interpretation of Moses' prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:9-22. Taking the Old Testament at face value and assuming the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, Young asserts that Moses spoke the words of the prophecy to Israel (p. 20). Young's position is contrary to some critical scholars who contend that the book of Deuteronomy was written by a prophet(s) and was found and used by Josiah to make reforms (pp. 14-15). Young then contends that in Deuteronomy 18:9-22 Moses is establishing the "prophetic line" (p. 31). However, Young's view of inspiration leads him further: the New Testament is part of God's Word and has a bearing on the interpretation of Moses' prophecy. Verses such as John 1:20, 21; 6:14; 7:40, 41 clearly indicate that the Prophet—namely, Jesus Christ—is spoken of in Deuteronomy 18:9-22 (p. 34).

Young's view of inspiration also shapes his use of comparative information from the ANE. In his discussion of the relationship between the prophets of Israel and the Israelite religious cult, Young analyzes Alfred Haldar's contention that the Israelite prophets and priests—like the prophets and priests of the ANE—were cultic officials and were not to be "too sharply differentiated" (p. 104). Young, however, insists that although there may be similarities between Israel's prophets and priests and the prophets and priests of the ANE, the differences cannot be ignored. "To ignore these differences," writes Young, "is to close one's eyes to all the truth" (p. 110). When one considers the differences between Israel's priests and prophets and those of her neighbors, one will see that Israel's religion is revealed by God and that "the other is an expression of the sin darkened heart of the unregenerate man" (p. 110).

Some readers may argue that Young's book is dated; nevertheless, *My Servants the Prophets* is still a valuable tool for the Old Testament student, especially for those with a high view of Scripture. Young skillfully demonstrates how to use the teachings of Scripture regarding Israel's prophets and how to analyze critical

scholarship in light of the Old and New Testaments. Young's insistence that the Bible is the Word of God gives the reader confidence that Scripture is sufficient to answer critical scholarship.

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Cavanaugh, William T. and James K. A. Smith, eds. *Evolution and the Fall*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017, pp. 261, \$26, paperback.

A wide spectrum of twentieth century theology was marked by a revision of the doctrine of the origins of sin. In most cases, concern about evolutionary science, and especially the science of human origins, was a powerful motivation. The origins of sin were recast in various forms—either as mythopoetic, metaphysically inevitable, or the consequence of a certain sort of freedom—in a way that led the doctrine away from the problems posed by evolution, but also led it away from important traditional claims, for example, that all humans became sinners by the voluntary act of the first two human beings. Because of these novelties, or because of their perceived consequences, many evangelicals and other traditionally-minded theologians declined to follow many of the great twentieth century thinkers down this path. Yet the problems that prompted the revision of the doctrine have, if anything, grown in recent decades. There is thus a renewed urgency, but also a renewed spirit of openness from traditionally-minded thinkers for reconsidering if, and if so, how, to think of the Fall in light of evolution.

As traditionally-minded theologians increasingly come to think about issues related to natural science, there is a need for quality engagement from top scholars who can speak from and to their community. *Evolution and the Fall* offers a start at fulfilling this need by bringing together a largely (though not exclusively) non-specialist roster of authors to reflect upon this interesting and consequential topic in a compact volume.

The book has four parts which, besides the biblical theology section, are rather free gatherings of related topics which might have been arranged in any number of ways. The book begins by introducing the natural scientific basis of the problem and offering theological reflections. The second part centers around biblical scholarship on the relevant scriptural passages. The third part includes reflection on the Fall and culture, and the last section, "Reimagining the Conversation," includes two essays offering reflections more distant to the volume's center of gravity. Overall, the book's organization is slightly more distracting than helpful. Ten essays are distributed between four sections. With a collection this small, doing without sections altogether might have been better. Fortunately, this same short length means it is easy for the reader to find what they are interested in without reference to section or theme.

Two of the essays in this volume (Celia Deane-Drummond's "In Adam All Die?" and James K. A. Smith's "What Stands on the Fall?") deal mainly and directly with the theological difficulties evolutionary findings pose, and offer possible solutions. Both reflect on the problem from places of strength: Deane-Drummond from her Roman Catholic background, Smith from his Augustinian-Reformed background. Theologians interested in this topic should turn to these essays first. Smith's essay, in particular, offers a powerful and succinct case for the classic doctrine. Both offer imaginative retellings of the origins of sin, taking into account the evolutionary issues and the authority of their relative traditions. Whether either account is truly satisfactory, however, is up for debate.

For readers interested in detailed theological reflection on the Fall in light of evolution, the book ends here. The remaining essays are related, but not so specifically or pointedly. The biblical scholarship in part two is interesting but the principal conclusions are modest: the biblical texts, we are told, are underdetermined with respect to the Augustinian account. Further reflections in that and other sections include the suggestion that the Fall is a paradox that we should not attempt to understand but hold in tension, that the doctrine of the Fall has something important to teach transhumanists, and that there are limits to scientific authority in conversation with theology—all worthwhile theses in interesting essays, yet little help for the student or theologian wanting to explore or explain the difficulties and possibilities attending the doctrine of the Fall in light of evolution. If, on the other hand, these orbiting topics are of interest, this volume offers a number of accessible and worthwhile essays on a range of topics. What it lacks in focus or depth it makes up for in variety and breadth. For many readers that will mean greater interest.

The greatest strength of *Evolution and the Fall* is its tone, set in large part no doubt, by its germination in the warm soil of the Colossian Forum. The authors involved show remarkable care for the topic, for one another, and for their possible readership. Ideas are handled gently, differing opinions with respect, the project as a whole with a certain reverence. This makes the volume ideal for students, scholars, lay readers, and others who are new to the topic in its modern guise and who would benefit from approaching the topic from the comfort of cultivated piety.

On the other hand, aspects of this approach—for instance, the oft-repeated reference to engaging science "faithfully," and similar injunctions—might turn others off. Such mottos sometimes appear at precisely those points in the discussion that are least friendly to traditional accounts, suggesting perhaps that the limits of discussion have been set in advance, and within a rather limited scope at that.

This leads directly to what I take to be the volume's greatest weakness: that no author sufficiently engages, let alone advances, the theological claim that there was no Fall. Smith's essay is a possible exception, but while he offers a criticism of that possibility, he does not entertain its strengths, including its intra-theological and philosophical virtues. This major position cries out for consideration. Given the

ubiquity of this alternative in the last two-hundred years of theology, it is deeply disappointing that more reflection, even hostile reflection, was not devoted to it. I was not, therefore, convinced that the natural scientific, theological, and philosophical difficulties which attend the traditional doctrine of the Fall were considered adequately. As a result, the volume left me with the sense that the discussion did not, in the end, get to the bottom of things.

Because of its theological modesty and limited scope of engagement, theology and science specialists have fewer reasons than they might to turn to this volume. Because of its limited natural scientific content and, more importantly, because of its limited dealing with the systematic difficulties of the doctrine, systematic theologians, too, have fewer reasons to turn to this volume than they might. Last and most importantly, although traditionally-minded theologians will find its pages relatively cozy in both tone and content, theirs will be a false comfort since the greatest difficulties attending the doctrine have not really been pressed and so the true mettle of the various forms of the doctrine have been left untested.

Though reflecting a narrow set of initial commitments, I recommend this book to any who would find this angle of engagement a helpful introduction or illuminating perspective between conservative culture warriors and more radical modern theology. I would not hesitate to assign it to students, church study groups, or to converse with it in scholarship, though I would encourage that it be assigned as a conversation starter, not the final word. The volume's clear writing and potpourri selection makes it ideal for generating interest. Most of all, this volume stands for the courageous turn in traditionally-minded circles to potential problems posed by the natural sciences. And it accomplishes this important, difficult, and ground-breaking task with grace.

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Ellis, Fiona, ed. *New Models of Religious Understanding*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 256, £55, hardback.

Emerging out of research conducted by the Centre for the Philosophy of Religion in Heythrop College, London, *New Models of Religious Understanding* (ed. Fiona Ellis) offers reflections on a refreshing new approach to the philosophy of religion. Attempting to build bridges between the analytic and continental traditions, the contributors to this volume present a method of doing philosophy of religion which moves away from ontological and metaphysical questions about the existence and nature of God. This new approach is concerned with religious practice more than belief, the kinds of knowledge and understanding that are valuable in religious discourse, and the ways in which religious or spiritual realities might become accessible only to those who enquire after them in the right way. Religious understanding is not a matter

of what we know, but of what we do, how we do it, and how what we do opens up new facets or aspects of reality to us.

Despite containing contributions from eleven different authors, the book has a remarkable consistency of approach throughout; Fiona Ellis identifies two key themes in her introduction. First, the contributors to *New Models* are united in developing a new approach to naturalism. Ellis notes that naturalism is often interpreted to mean scientific naturalism, which in turn becomes scientism. On this view, all that exists is the scientifically measurable natural world; questions of divinity or transcendence, even value, are excluded at the outset. Ellis suggests an alternative “*expansive* or *liberal* naturalism” which allows the possibility that there may be “more to the natural world and more to our ways of explaining it that the scientific naturalist is prepared to allow” (p. 9). This is a conclusion to which all contributors would assent and is discussed explicitly in the first three chapters.

The second key theme is what Ellis (following John Cottingham) calls a “humane philosophy of religion” (p. 11). Humane philosophy of religion challenges the ratiocentric bias in much philosophy of religion, contending that truth is not wholly cognitive or intellectual. Rather, access to truth is often dependent upon the way in which one approaches something, or the stance one takes. This challenges the Enlightenment ideal that truth is accessible only to one who takes up a neutral and unbiased perspective; humane philosophy suggests not only that attempting to rid oneself entirely of bias is impossible, but that some truths require a certain commitment to be made before they can be accessed. The focus of the book, according to Ellis, is not how to understand religion, but “what it means to understand the world religiously” (p.14).

The volume succeeds on these two fronts. Cottingham excellently summarises the new approach to naturalism in his contribution (ch. 1), in which he criticises the “explanatory hypothesis” approach to religion – adopted by theists and atheists alike – according to which theism is one of various competing theories to explain the existence and nature of the world (p. 23). Cottingham is rightly sympathetic to those who are unconvinced by theism’s ability to fill in explanations where science fails, especially given the remarkable success of modern science on precisely this front. This does not admit defeat to scientific naturalism; rather, Cottingham avoids the temptation to place theism in competition with science and instead presents religious understanding as a new way of seeing the world. Echoing his earlier work (significantly, *The Spiritual Dimension*), Cottingham shows that the distinctiveness of religious understanding is found not in any particular content, but in a “certain *mode* or *manner* of understanding the world” (p. 29) which may not be the neutral and unbiased perspective of Enlightenment philosophy. This justifies the theistic claim made by many of the book’s contributors that achieving religious understanding requires taking up a certain starting point, posture or attitude.

This indicates the importance of a humane philosophy of religion, which Ellis describes as attendance to “the moral and spiritual sensibilities which shape religious belief” (p. 13). One of the virtues of *New Models* is that it displays various and complementary humane approaches to the philosophy of religion. For example, David McPherson proposes an involved epistemology of love as the starting point for a religious understanding which transfigures the world (ch. 4), and Eleanore Stump argues that we should regard theology as the pursuit of relational knowledge of God, rather than propositional knowledge about God (ch. 9). One benefit of a humane philosophy of religion is that it allows recognition of the importance of the practical and bodily aspects of religious life – aspects well known to theology and religious studies, but often neglected by the philosophy of religion. Particularly relevant here are the contributions of Clare Carlisle (ch. 5) and Mark Wynn (ch. 6). Carlisle offers a compelling analysis of the transformative power of practice and habit and skilfully integrates this with a theology of co-operative grace, while Wynn demonstrates the way in which the posture of one’s body and trained habits of perception can make visible spiritual virtues that are infused in the world. While sympathetic to the humane project, one might suggest that the book lacks a strong theoretical account of, to use Cottingham’s phrase, “the spiritual dimension”. One possible option would be to utilise Wittgenstein’s comments on aspect seeing in Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations*. The contributors to *New Models* are right to argue that engaging with or perceiving the world in different ways can divulge various moral, aesthetic and spiritual dimensions beyond what is available to the scientific, naturalistic viewpoint. There are clear commonalities with Wittgenstein’s comments on aspect seeing, and *New Models* would benefit from this kind of theoretical groundwork.

While the desire of *New Models* to move away from a philosophy of religion excessively concerned with cognition and belief is to be celebrated, there is a danger that this can go too far and undermine the significance that doctrinal commitments have for many religious practitioners. Kyle Scott (ch. 7) exemplifies this danger in his chapter, arguing that “religious understanding has greater epistemic value than religious knowledge” (p. 134). For Scott, this offers a response to scepticism concerning the reliability of religious knowledge and he concludes that “we should be willing to give up religious knowledge to achieve the greater epistemic good of religious understanding” (p. 150). While emphasising the value of understanding is a worthy task, many religious practitioners put stock in the ability for their religious understanding to reflect some true reality in the world. Even if one is convinced by Scott’s argument that understanding does not require knowledge, it is still reasonable to desire that one’s religious commitments can provide knowledge about reality as well as an understanding of one’s place within it. In a similar way, Keith Ward (ch. 10) responds to the challenge that the global and historical diversity of spiritual practice poses to religious belief by advocating an open and pluralistic approach to spirituality. Ward adopts a perennialist approach to religious experience and

advocates regarding all “religions as paths to an awareness of spiritual reality” (p. 204). While this hesitancy to describe precisely the nature of the spiritual dimension is laudable – and we must be alive to the fragility of our own understanding – the lesson of this volume must surely be that religious understanding is involved, practical and concrete. This means that religious practice involves making specific commitments – to communities, rituals, and doctrines. An open spirituality such as Ward’s, although appealing to liberal ears, will struggle to speak to any tradition which claims universal truth for its doctrinal commitments (including many mainstream moderate religious communities).

While not breaking significantly new ground, *New Models* represents developments that have taken place in the philosophy of religion over the past decade. While the traditional questions of classical theism remain important, there is much to be gained from approaching religion as an involved way of understanding the world. The volume benefits from the fact that all of its contributors are authoritative philosophers in their own right and many have published extensively on these themes. However, for the student looking to engage with this approach to the philosophy of religion, *New Models* offers an excellent starting point.

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Campbell, Douglas A. *Framing Paul: An Epistolary Biography*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. Pp. xxii + 468, \$39, paperback.

Douglas Campbell has achieved prominence through two monographs, *The Quest for Paul’s Gospel* (2005) and *The Deliverance of God* (2009), which place him broadly within the “apocalyptic” perspective on the apostle Paul, over against “Lutheran,” salvation-historical, or New Perspective views. He holds the position of Professor of New Testament at Duke Divinity School. He is also the resident provocateur in the field of Pauline studies, and this his third tome, *Framing Paul*, proposes a fresh chronology of Paul’s life and letters that differs in significant respects from the current consensus.

In his first chapter, “An Extended Methodological Introduction” (pp. 1–36), Campbell sets out a methodology to “frame” the apostle’s letters — that is, to give an at least provisional account of the contingent circumstances of all the books bearing Paul’s name (see esp. pp. 11–18) — that avoids the “vicious circularity” (p. 13) often present in such a project. Campbell criticizes the common practice of suggesting a particular doctrine (e.g., justification) as Paul’s “coherence” (utilizing J. C. Beker’s terminology) that is drawn particularly from a subset of his letters (in this case, Galatians, Romans, and Philippians), and then determining that other letters (say, Colossians or Titus) cannot be authored by Paul himself because they insufficiently fit the theme. If you say the essence of the color wheel is cool colors, based on a close

inspection of blue, green, and purple, then of course orange will not make the cut, but the initial subset chosen has determined the result. Campbell, therefore, approaches the Pauline epistles as “innocent until proven guilty” (p. 25). However, since many scholars doubt the reliability of Acts, he excludes it entirely from his project (hence “epistolary” in the subtitle). In this he is, by his own admission, following a method pioneered by John Knox, but doing so with much greater depth and with certain modifications along the way (pp. 19–36).

The fruits of Campbell’s process are generally plausible, always stimulating, and often novel. He begins in ch. 2 (pp. 37–121) with the “epistolary backbone” of Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 2 Corinthians. He chooses these because they are Paul’s three longest letters, and they all mention a collection Paul is raising for the poor in Judea. Campbell argues for the integrity of all three epistles, including the often dissected 2 Corinthians, and proposes (against the view of most) that 1 Corinthians is the “letter of tears” that 2 Corinthians mentions. This compresses the timeline of the Corinthian correspondence to three letters (including a now lost initial letter to Corinth) in two years. Campbell then “augments the backbone” (ch. 3, pp. 122–89) with Philippians and Galatians. He proposes a Corinthian imprisonment as the most likely situation for Paul’s epistle to Philippi, one that soon ends in release. Rather than turning to either the southern or northern provenance for dating Galatians, he instead uses Gal 2:10 to tie it into the collection effort and further notes that it fits into the “year of crisis” that Paul faces with his Jewish-Christian opponents. Campbell slots Galatians just prior to Philippians, itself just prior to Romans. It is at this point that Campbell’s timeline takes on a firm shape. Galatians 1–2 contains Paul’s most specific dating of his own life, so the developing frame is now put within a wider Pauline biography. More significantly, Campbell links the reference to Paul’s stay in Damascus, mentioned in Galatians, with an obscure event in 2 Cor 11:32–33. This event, Campbell avers, can be dated precisely. King Aretas IV of Nabataea could have been in control of Damascus during only a short window of time, from late 36 to 37, and so there is an absolute date within the Pauline corpus that anchors the thus-far relative chronology into history (pp. 182–89). The result is that Paul’s second visit to Jerusalem (the Jerusalem Council) is in 49/50, and his “year of crisis,” including the letters so far surveyed, all fall within the span of 51 to 52. This is not far off from one common date proposed for Galatians, but it locates Romans (as well as Paul’s apparently fateful third visit to Jerusalem) half a decade earlier than where most scholars put it.

Chapter 4 (pp. 190–253) defends the authenticity of both 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians, and Campbell locates them shortly after the effort by Gaius Caligula to install an image of himself as Jupiter in the Jerusalem temple, an event that occurred ca. 39/40. (If he is right, the first extant Christian document dates to within a decade of Jesus’s death and resurrection.) In ch. 5 (pp. 254–338) Campbell turns to the epistles associated with the province of Asia. He understands their

situation to be this: Paul is experiencing an otherwise unknown imprisonment in the year 50 in Asia Minor *en route* to his founding visit to Ephesus (he proposes the city of Apamea as a potential location), writing to churches he has not yet met. He begins with a summary of his gospel as it pertains to gentiles in our “Ephesians” (which he takes to be the Laodiceans of Col 4:16 — and he calls for Bibles to rename this letter!), when he is paid a visit by Onesimus, who informs Paul of certain false teachings present at Colossae. So Paul finishes up “Ephesians,” repurposes much of the material in writing Colossians, and then also composes Philemon, sending the three together as a packet. All of this occurs, in his view, before Galatians or the Corinthian correspondence are written.

In the final substantive chapter (ch. 6, pp. 339–403), Campbell attempts to locate Titus, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy individually (rather than as a unit, “the Pastoral Epistles”) in the developing frame. At the outset he gives each the presumption of authenticity, but ultimately finds telltale marks of anachronism, implausible accounts of Paul’s travel, or oddities of style that do not fit with the other letters. He is least certain about 2 Timothy, but in the end it, too, is deemed pseudonymous. Having disassociated these letters from the apostle himself, he finds evidence of anti-Marcionite warnings, and pushes them into the mid-second century. In a short conclusion (pp. 404–11), Campbell gives the main results of his study: the frame includes ten letters, with 1–2 Thessalonians in 40–42, followed by “years of shadow” of largely unsuccessful missionary activity, an Asian crisis around 50 (“Ephesians,” Colossians, Philemon), difficulties with the church in Corinth in 50–51, and his “year of crisis” (Galatians, Philippians, Romans) in 51–52. After this, Paul makes for Jerusalem, and as far as his epistles are concerned, we lose sight of him. In the last couple of pages, Campbell intimates an upcoming study of the Acts of the Apostles, in which he will use this frame to test the accuracy of Acts and supplement our knowledge of the apostle (pp. 410–11), a task he does not touch in this monograph.

Framing Paul is an important work from a well regarded scholar. Campbell’s ingenuity, if not idiosyncrasy, is an asset, and makes for an enjoyable, unpredictable read. An imprisonment at Apamea, with “Laodiceans” as genuine and pre-dating Galatians? Yet the Pastorals are anti-Marcionite tracts from around 150? Romans in the spring of 52? Paul is writing authoritative letters in the early 40s, not just recalibrating in Syria or Arabia after his visionary encounter with Jesus? Campbell is, to be sure, an independent thinker, and it is on clear display in this “epistolary biography” of Paul. His methodological reconstruction of Paul’s life is at every step engaging and plausible. Indeed, in many instances, I find his case cogent, such as locating Paul’s escape from Damascus in 36/37, and I think his objections to circular reasoning and selective use of evidence, particularly in regard to judging pseudepigraphy, are on target. The chronology Campbell ultimately proposes is self-consistent and at least possible.

Whether his reconstruction is compelling is another matter. For one thing, probability introduces an unavoidable fragility into any firm dating of Paul’s letters because uncertainty multiplies at every juncture (a danger Campbell is aware of; see p. 403), barring, of course, any later reconfirmations that boost the probability. For example, if there are two steps to a proposal, and each has a 70% chance of being true, the possibility that both are true is now under 50/50 (49%). Add a third step, also at 70%, and it drops to a one-in-three chance that all are right (34.3%). This problem is most acute for the early part of a logical progression, since any doubt will ripple through the remaining reconstruction amplified. And I have my doubts about Campbell’s conclusions at various points. For example, despite his arguments that Paul’s stated travel plans will not brook a separate, now lost, harsh epistle between 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, I have a hard time equating 1 Corinthians with the “letter of tears,” for the simple reason that 2 Corinthians seems far more likely to induce tears than 1 Corinthians. It would be odd for the more severe letter to refer to the gentler one as a causing sorrow. But even if we grant that Campbell has a 70% chance of being right, any subsequent, 70%-likely judgment that is based on this identification still means the overall scenario is more likely to be incorrect than correct. *Framing Paul* is a book with many steps that build on each other. Some have confirmatory evidence later, but on the whole, I doubt that we can sequence Paul’s life with such precision. A letter or event, here or there, might be dated independently with some exactness, yes, but I think the very concept of a highly developed “frame” like this one holding together is questionable. Remove a couple of bricks from the foundation, and the wall topples.

For another thing, at times it seems like Campbell’s thumb is on the scale as he weighs the evidence. This is most evident in the contrast between ch. 5 and ch. 6. Having (correctly, in my opinion) disputed the stylistic arguments often wielded against Colossians and Ephesians, style is used as part of the evidence against the Pastoral Epistles. Now, with Titus and 1 Timothy, Campbell has other evidence at the forefront, and stylistic differences come in secondarily, but with 2 Timothy two of the main arguments he employs differentiate the prescript and thanksgiving of 2 Timothy from the other Pauline letters. Also, throughout ch. 6 Campbell contends that 1–2 Timothy and Titus are unlike Paul’s other writings since they address individuals, not churches. However, even if Philemon is sent with Colossians and Ephesians, the majority of the letter is in the second person singular: it is written to Philemon, even if it is heard by the whole church at Colossae. A single addressee is not unprecedented for the apostle. For these and other reasons, I suspect that the major alternative Pauline chronologies will not be dislodged, despite Campbell’s spirited campaign.

I would also add here that *Framing Paul* is not advised for beginning or even intermediate students in biblical studies. Unless you are well acquainted with the academic debates surrounding Paul’s biography and corpus, this book will be

prohibitively difficult. It is a work meant for scholars, and it includes untranslated foreign languages (esp. Greek, but also Latin and modern languages) and various technical discussions occurring in dense commentaries and high-level journals. At almost 500 pages, it is also time consuming to read. Campbell does recapitulate his main points at the end of each chapter, and an appendix helpfully summarizes his key chronological dates (pp. 412–14). However, quick recourse to Campbell's conclusions does not do justice to the logical path he travels to get there.

These concerns noted, however, let me end with appreciation for *Framing Paul*. There are many incidental points and observations throughout this work that I cannot cover here but are valuable, irrespective of one's agreement (or not) with Campbell's specific proposals. More importantly, if only as an exercise in thinking through Paul's life and letter-writing, this book repays close reading. Campbell identifies the crucial issues at play, and by arguing often uncanny positions, he challenges us not to lapse into safe and perfunctory dating schemes. It is easy to adopt the general conclusions found in the literature on Paul. But processing through all the details, options, and hints in Paul's letters is not unlike a "treasure hunt," as Campbell promises near the outset (p. 15). For those with several years of academic study under their belt, this is a worthy book indeed.

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Goldingay, John. *A Reader's Guide to the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017, pp. 192, \$18.00, paperback.

John Goldingay is the David Allan Hubbard Professor of Old Testament at the Fuller Theological Seminary School of Theology and is a prolific author in Old Testament theology, as well as in Isaiah and Psalms studies. In *A Reader's Guide to the Bible*, Goldingay aims to provide his readers with an introduction to the main events, people, places, themes, and structure of the Bible.

Assuming that his readers know little to nothing about the Bible, the author highlights the Bible's key events (chapter one) and describes the geographical features of the lands of the Bible, primarily that of Palestine (ch. 2). He then breaks down most of the rest of the book into two helpful categories: "God's story" (Part II, five chapters long) and "God's word" (Part III, five chapters long) (p. 2). Since most of the Bible consists of the Old Testament, Goldingay focuses on discussing the story of God's dealings with the nation of Israel. However, for Goldingay, the story of God's relationship with his people culminates with the coming of Jesus Christ, his cross work, and the birth of the Church. Part III details the different literary genres that God used to instruct his followers: "law, prophecy, advice, letter writing, and visions" (p. 2). In response to God's spoken word, Israel worshipped God through prayer and praise (chapter 13) and questioned God when life did not make sense (ch.

14). After examining the Bible thematically, Goldingay concludes with an epilogue that explores how the Bible can speak to today's readers.

Goldingay's work is helpful to its readers because it provides them with a nuanced view of the nature of ancient historical writing. Goldingay argues that in the West, in order for a work to be considered "objective history," a historian must discuss "politics or culture or social developments for their own sake" (p. 34). If one judges the Bible's accounting of history in this way, then it falls short of modern, Western standards of history. However, biblical authors, though they reported on events that happened, were more "interested in what God was doing with his people, in how people were responding to God, and in the lessons that this story has for their readers" (p. 34). Goldingay urges his readers to be open to the fact that the Bible communicates history and its other contents differently than present writers do and that his audience must approach the understanding of scripture on its own rules (pp. 3, 173). Another satisfying feature of the book is the author's observation that the New Testament epistle writers did not seek to communicate complex theological truths with "abstract and theoretical language." Instead, epistle writers wrote "in picture language" (p. 122). For instance, when talking about the importance of Christ's atonement for Christians, Goldingay notes how "being a Christian is like being declared innocent when you were guilty, like being made free instead of being a slave, like being admitted to the presence of a great king" (p. 123). This quote also shows the writer's skill as a wordsmith. Most of his writing pops with precision, clarity, and vivacity.

Concerning problems with the book, there is one major possibility. Goldingay claims that in the prophetic books of the Old Testament that "not everything in each book was uttered by the prophet whose name appears at the head of the first chapter" (p. 100). In short, the prophet Isaiah did not write the whole of Isaiah; a "Second Isaiah" wrote some of it (pp. 100-108). Also, the author of the book of Daniel lived in the second century B.C. and was not the Prophet Daniel from the sixth century (pp. 141-144). The traditional view is that there is only one author of the book of Isaiah, Isaiah himself, and the Prophet Daniel predicts details that happened to the Jews a few centuries after he lived. Potentially, readers of a more conservative evangelical or fundamentalist theological persuasion with at least a passing familiarity with aspects of higher criticism may put the author in a moderate/ liberal theological box and neglect the valuable insights that he makes available to his readers. Additionally, a surprising number of typographical errors are present on page two of the book. The chapter numbers do not correspond with the descriptions of the chapters that they follow, nor do they match the chapter numbers listed in the Table of Contents. For example, the two chapters in Part IV in the Table of Contents are chapters 13 and 14, *not* chapters 14 and 15 (p. 2).

A Reader's Guide to the Bible does not cite any scholarly sources but provides a brief scripture index. These features make it easier for a general audience unfamiliar

with the Bible to read the book. Also, the book is ideal for an “Introduction to the Bible” class in Bible College and university settings for beginning theological and biblical studies students. If someone is seeking works of a more technical nature, Goldingay’s opus alone would supply them with numerous choices. Overall, this reviewer highly recommends this work as a creative and useful introduction to the Bible.

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Rainey, Anson F., and R. Steven Notley. *The Sacred Bridge: Carta’s Atlas of the Biblical World (Second Emended and Enhanced Edition)*. Jerusalem: Carta, 2014, pp. 448, \$120, hardback.

Anson F. Rainey was Emeritus Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Cultures and Semitic Linguistics at Tel Aviv University and Adjunct Professor of Historical Geography at Bar Llan University and American Institute for Holy Land Studies. Rainey was a student of Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, authors of *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*, and he co-authored the updated atlas, reissued as *The Carta Bible Atlas*. Rainey also worked extensively with the Amarna tablets, offering new readings and corrections to previous scholarship. R. Steven Notley is Professor of Biblical Studies, Distinguished Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins, and the Director of Graduate Programs in Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins at Nyack College, New York City. Notley has published extensively on the Jewish background to the New Testament and with Carta on various atlas projects, including *In the Master’s Steps: The Gospels in the Land*.

The Sacred Bridge is a self-described “historical geography of the Levant” emphasizing original research on the ancient written sources (p. 7). Though much of the volume pertains to biblical scholarship, the book utilizes more than the biblical texts, presenting relevant written materials from the earliest artifacts available (c. Fourth millennium BCE) through the Bar Kochba Revolt (135 CE). *The Sacred Bridge* aims to be a source of scholarly research and thus includes these written sources in the original language, the author’s translation into English, and references for additional information. Here, the book offers an innovative feature, using color coding to distinguish between these resources: light blue (original language), dark blue (English translation), and red (references). Each page contains three columns of dense text and numerous maps, illustrations, and photographs. Additionally, the 15-page index directs the reader not only to information in the text, but also to maps which show the location of specific place names.

Rainey wrote Chapters 1–16, first providing introductory information in Chapters 1–3, including a discussion of historical geography, physical geography, philology, and archaeology. These chapters provide background and methodology for

the in-depth analysis of the periods discussed in the remainder of the book. Rainey covers each period of the Bronze Age in Chapters 4–8, and then he moves to a century-by-century analysis in Chapters 9–16, ending with the Persian domination of the Levant. Notley wrote Chapters 17–25, beginning with the early Hellenistic period and moves through each era until the end of the Bar Kochba Revolt in 135 CE.

Each chapter is written in a narrative style, with references and written sources interspersed according to the color scheme described above. The authors provide sufficient source material to accurately describe the events and geography of the period covered and also include frequent citations of other works which provide more detailed study of the subject. These chapters frequently contain excurses addressing important artifacts, events, or historical details, e.g. the excurses in Chapter 14 (on the rise of Assyrian influence and domination in the Levant) study the *Via Maris* (pp. 250-51), royal wine jars (pp. 251-53), and the Siloam Tunnel Inscription (p. 253).

The Sacred Bridge is a significant scholarly resource, both as a source of detailed information, especially through its interaction with primary resources, and as a reference for more detailed studies of specific topics. For example, Rainey points the reader to nearly fifty important scholarly resources in his discussion of the Early Bronze Age (pp. 43-46). Later, he includes a table of over one hundred topographical place names given by Thutmose III, including their original hieroglyph, transcription, and alternate forms (pp. 72-74). In his description of the story of Deborah and Barak, Rainey includes a map of the region and the battle sites derived from the biblical account in Judges 4-5 and some parts of Joshua (pp. 137-38). This description includes an excursus on Harosheth-ha-goiim in which he discusses archaeology, philology, and topology to provide a reasoned alternative to the traditional sites (pp. 150-51). Notley works with the same precision, which undoubtedly will provide NT scholars with a substantive resource from which to begin detailed study of NT texts.

The authors clearly work with the goal of trying to describe objectively the history of the Levant from extant texts. One gets the impression that Rainey finds the biblical witness generally reliable but wants to let the evidence speak for itself. An example of this is in his description of the emergence of new cultural elements in the Cisjordan and Transjordan regions in the late thirteenth and early twelfth centuries BCE, particularly the appearance of small campsite-like settlements (pp. 111-16). He argues based on archaeological and linguistic evidence for a Transjordanian pastoralist origin for these settlements, indicating that there is no reason to doubt the basic assumptions of the biblical traditions (p. 112). Only then does Rainey provide a detailed discussion of the biblical texts (pp. 112-15).

Practically speaking, *The Sacred Bridge* is a large book (over 13 inches by 9 inches) and is nearly 450 pages long. There is no wasted space; even the end covers contain a helpful chronological overview of the ancient Near East! The text is small and arranged densely over three columns on each page, which might make it difficult for some to read. It is thus a desk resource and more than one needs for

simple reference of biblical geography. However, the information is arranged clearly, and with the Table of Contents and Index, readers should have no problem finding pertinent information. Additionally, though the text is small and densely arranged, the color-coding system works remarkably well, and future reference works could benefit from this feature. Readers will quickly adapt to the system, glancing only at the red text (references) when desiring to know more about the sources. As such, *The Sacred Bridge* manages to provide an efficient but substantial resource for historical geography.

The Sacred Bridge is expensive and contains a level of detail and description that likely precludes it from being a common required text for introductory biblical or historical courses. The *Holman Bible Atlas*, *Zondervan Atlas of the Bible*, or the *Crossway ESV Bible Atlas* fill that niche at a price point and level of detail appropriate to those kinds of courses. However, those atlases lack the significant interaction with primary sources and detailed discussion of pertinent matters which make *The Sacred Bridge* a legitimate scholarly resource for historical geography. As such, any serious Bible student or biblical scholar will want to turn to this atlas first. These two types of atlases are aimed at different audiences, but a wise instructor might consider how to incorporate *The Sacred Bridge* across multiple courses to make this resource accessible for any Bible student.

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DeRouchie, Jason. *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology*. Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017. Pp. 640. \$39.00, hardcover.

Jason DeRouchie, author of this volume, having taught at Gordon-Conwell, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and University of Northwestern-St. Paul, currently serves as professor of Old Testament & biblical theology at Bethlehem College & Seminary. In addition to *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, he has also co-authored *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* (B&H, 2009), *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus' Bible* (Kregel, 2013), and other books and articles. His location in and care for both the church world and academic world is apparent throughout this work.

As one might gather from the title, DeRouchie has organized his book around twelve steps that a student of the Old Testament might take in order to properly exegete the Scripture and apply its meaning. Its textbook format will feel refreshing to those who share its goals, yet it might disappoint one who had wanted more historical or critical exploration. This, however, is not to say that it is light or devotional—in fact, it is quite the opposite! Rather, to say that the volume does not deal with

historical or critical issues is simply to note that DeRouchie interacts with the text-level as contained in the Old Testament rather than the composition-history of the biblical text.

Each of DeRouchie's twelve steps is organized into one of five larger groups, labeled "Parts." Part 1 is Text—"What is the Makeup of the Passage?", Part 2: Observation—"How is the Passage Communicated?", Part 3: Context—"Where Does the Passage Fit?", Part 4: Meaning—"What Does the Passage Mean?", and Part 5: Application—"Why Does the Subject Matter?". These Parts contain one or more of the titular 12 steps, but each is also marked with a "Track." Using a pictogram of a mountain climber for easy identification, these tracks will orient students as to whether the section is **Easy**, aimed at material for all readers including beginning interpreters, **Moderate**, for intermediate interpreters including some modeling of the use of Hebrew, and **Challenging**, for advanced interpreters with some grasp of Biblical Hebrew themselves. The track system is designed to allow students to choose only material pertinent to them. Each chapter also includes a concluding section with Key Words and Concepts, Questions for Further Reflection, and Resources for Further Study. These additional components will certainly benefit those who want to use this volume as a foundation for their study and reflection, check their reading comprehension, or update their awareness of current works in exegesis and linguistics. At each of his twelve steps, DeRouchie guides the reader through an application of that particular method to Exodus 19:4-6. By using the same passage for each of his steps, a reader is able to build understanding of the methodology and see how each step benefits the others. The choice to use the same text throughout the book was one of the most helpful aspects of this work.

DeRouchie's introduction is a microcosm of the benefits and limitations of this work. He lays out four presuppositions that guide his work (3-5), ten reasons why the Old Testament is important for Christians (6-10), and four benefits of studying the original Biblical languages (12-14). This clarity is a hallmark of his writing throughout, with the list-based form one he returns to at length. Particularly notable was his forthrightness with his presuppositions, something that not many authors make so obvious. This directness allows his readers a fairer basis for following DeRouchie's interpretive judgments made later in the volume. It also reinforces the particular aim of the book: helping students who see Scripture as God's Word rightly understand and interpret it. In specific, DeRouchie sees the Old Testament as Christian Scripture whose full understanding and interpretation is found when viewed as part of a coherent whole alongside the New Testament. As such, this book is most valuable for those who share this particular presupposition and understanding of the nature of the biblical text.

The 12-step process employed in this work allows DeRouchie to be thorough without bogging the reader down in areas not pertinent to the task at hand. In his chapter on Genre (pp. 21-97), for example, DeRouchie discusses Historical Narrative,

Prophecy and Law, Psalms, and Proverbs. Each of these subsections is robust enough that they would be fruitful reference reading for a student exploring those areas, yet DeRouchie's arrangement of them together helps the reader appreciate the diversity of the Old Testament literature and understand the care that must be taken when exegeting any particular text. This over-arching attention employed in this book's composition is apparent when viewing the Analytical Outline (pp. xv-xix). Somewhat frustratingly, this analytical outline lacks page number references, so one must cross-reference this tool with the regular Contents (pp. vi-vii). Since a high-level detail is poured into even each small section of this work and therefore worthy of later reference, this difficulty of navigation feels like an unfortunate oversight.

DeRouchie has managed to occupy an intriguing niche with this volume. It feels quite heavy for an introductory volume or for one's first initiation to these concepts. By comparison, for example, Gordon Fee's *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth* might serve as a more approachable effort along similar lines. Yet, this book is also not as in-depth as some other volumes who attempt a narrower subset of the topics under exploration. Perhaps DeRouchie's chapter on Clause and Text Grammar is the best example of this. He begins by encouraging students to not leave their Hebrew knowledge at only the level of vocabulary and parsing but to push on towards analyzing texts, paragraphs, and pericopes (p. 186). This is of course an encouragement that his readers should follow, yet the space allowed in this chapter is only enough for a demonstration of the fruits of the method and not enough to actually teach the methodology to anyone unfamiliar with it. DeRouchie's own *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* would be better for that task, and indeed he borrows from it liberally throughout the book. The "track" system functions well here, however, and identifies the more difficult sections for students who may need to skip them. Readers who persevere with concepts they are not yet prepared for will benefit from DeRouchie's decision to err on the side of the comprehensive and robust.

This methodologically and textually robust approach continues throughout the book, yet part five contains only a single chapter: Practical Theology. This chapter is largely concerned with interpreting the Old Testament from a Christian point of view. While this approach fits well with the presuppositions outlined by DeRouchie in his introduction, his insistence that even the authors of the Old Testament itself were not privy to its full understanding (pp. 417, 421) will not be universally agreed with. Admittedly, he includes these statements to disprove the idea that the Old Testament is not valuable to Christians today rather than to argue that the revelation that the Old Testament contained was not valuable until Christ's coming. Perhaps some more expansion of what the value of the Old Testament was prior to Christ and the penning of the New Testament would have been helpful in articulating a full understanding of DeRouchie's approach. Likewise, some sort of guidelines for turning this practical theology into proclamation or preaching would have helped augment the book. DeRouchie continually stresses a proper cognitive approach to the

text; even this section on practical theology seems more interested in categorizations and interpretive approaches than on formational strategies or application steps. This should be expected in an academic work like this one, yet in such an avowedly Christian one these extra topics may not have felt out of place.

With so many choices in the field of biblical interpretation, it would be difficult to categorize *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament* as a necessary purchase for scholars or practitioners. However, it remains a worthy one for several reasons. First, the ambition of the project stretches beyond that of most other books. While DeRouchie was not attempting to produce a single-stop reference for exegetes, it is perhaps the closest any recent work in that vein comes to claiming that mantle. Any student of the biblical text wishing for an orientation to a particular methodology will benefit from DeRouchie's exploration, especially so due to his inclusion of robust bibliographies and next-steps for his readers. Second, the clarity of the writing is rare. Some of the more technical aspects and difficult concepts explored in this book are unraveled with an easy-to-understand, clear, and precise approach. Third, the organization of this book helps build a proper foundation for readers from the first chapter. This approach helps even a non-specialist engage the work, though it is likely a more helpful volume for a seminary student or someone with a level of Hebrew language facility. This is no surprise, as the volume was originally prepared as part of a course for students at the Logos Mobile Ed program (p. xxiv). For readers who have the baseline level of preparation to approach this work and the interest in going deeper in exploring the process involved in working from a text to theology, this volume is highly recommended.

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Kline, Jonathan G. *Keep Up Your Biblical Hebrew in Two Minutes a Day, Volume 1*. Hendrickson: Peabody, MA. 2017, 370pp. \$39.95.

In Hendrickson's *2 Minutes a Day Biblical Language Series*, Jonathan Kline has compiled and edited one year's worth of readings in the original biblical languages. Kline received his Ph.D. from Harvard University, and is the author of several key Hebrew resources, including his contribution to *Biblical Aramaic: A Reader & Handbook*, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: A Reader's Edition*, and *Allusive Soundplay in the Hebrew Bible*. Kline is currently the academic editor for Hendrickson Publishers in Peabody, MA.

In this volume, Kline provides biblical Hebrew verses "to help you build on your previous study of Hebrew by reading a small amount of the Hebrew Bible in its original language every day in an easy, manageable, and spiritually enriching way" (p. vii). To that end, Kline has produced a resource that many will find most helpful as a *guide* for short daily readings in the Hebrew Bible.

The book begins with a preface describing the goal of the book as well as how best to use it. In this preface, one finds the pertinent information for making the most of this work. Kline discusses first the format of each reading. Each day's reading includes the verse in English with a few Hebrew words in parenthesis following their corresponding English word. Kline points out that for those who may only have 10 seconds to 1 minute of the day to use this resource, reading the English translation alone may be helpful for learning and retaining some basic vocabulary by seeing these parenthetical Hebrew words (p. viii). One caveat to mention here is that these English translations come from a variety of contemporary English translations (CSB, NASB, NRSV, MLB, ESV, NIV, etc.) that may or may not best capture the Hebrew in a way that lends itself toward learning the Hebrew language.

The next element on each day's page is the vocabulary apparatus. In this apparatus, Kline lists one new word, and he includes its number of occurrences as well as the key number in Strong's Concordance. In addition to the new word, Kline lists two additional "review" words that have occurred in previous readings. In doing so, Kline argues that one will be regularly reviewing the vocabulary and "enabling you to build a robust vocabulary base" (p. vii, see also pp. ix-x for creative ways to use the vocabulary apparatus).

The third major element included with each day's reading is the Hebrew text. Within the Hebrew text, the vocabulary words are again highlighted so that the reader continues to reinforce those basic words.

The final element of each day's reading is a phrase-by-phrase breakdown of the text. In this section, Kline breaks the text into its respective phrases to show the reader how the English translations match up to the Hebrew phrases/clauses. This section is probably the most helpful for the novice Hebrew student since it shows the correspondence between the Hebrew text and English translation, allowing one to see how to move from text to translation. Kline points out that the correspondence is never perfect, and so it is important to realize that he has constructed phrases and translations in this section to best match what the Hebrew is saying rather than to give clunky and unhelpful word-for-word translations.

An overall assessment of this work would list it as minimally helpful for the novice student, and only marginally helpful for intermediate to advanced Hebrew students. First, for the novice Hebrew student, the primary benefit would be the vocabulary review and apparatus. However, there are other, more beneficial methods for learning and retaining Hebrew vocabulary than the assortment of words in this work. Even so, Kline's structure for learning and retaining vocabulary is creative and could serve introductory students well, especially by giving them the words in the context of the Hebrew Bible rather than in random lists.

Second, for the novice to intermediate student, this volume fails to include grammatical, syntactical, or exegetical comments about *how* to translate Hebrew. Likewise, there is no parsing information for verbs, one of the foundational (and

potentially more difficult) elements of Hebrew translation. For a first year Hebrew student, this volume would not help him or her develop parsing and translation skills; it would only show them how a Hebrew phrase leads to an English translation.

Third, for the intermediate to advanced student, this volume could serve as a guide for daily readings. However, I have to imagine that most intermediate students intend to move beyond the scope of what this volume offers, and most advanced students already read Hebrew daily, and perhaps in larger swaths than a single verse. Kline has certainly accomplished his goal to compile a year's worth of daily readings, but for students with enough Hebrew knowledge to use this volume proficiently, it would serve only as a format for daily reading, very likely less reading than they do now. Without parsing verbs and presenting Hebrew syntax, there is little in this volume that would move a novice student toward intermediacy, or an intermediate student toward a more advanced knowledge of Hebrew. Certainly, Kline did not set out to construct a Hebrew grammar, graded reader, or handbook. Even so, basic syntactic and parsing information would be more beneficial than vocabulary for what I would consider the target market for this volume.

Overall, Kline's *Keep Up Your Biblical Hebrew in Two Minutes a Day: Volume I* is a valuable *guide* for those wanting to maintain some Hebrew knowledge and need a "checklist" or format for doing so. The vocabulary apparatus will help solidify basic vocabulary, and Kline's translations of the text phrase-by-phrase demonstrates how an English translation derives from the Hebrew text in smaller chunks. I would recommend this volume to students and pastors who need a daily guide for Hebrew reading, and who have minimal time to invest in retaining their Hebrew. However, for the vast majority of Hebrew students, I would not recommend these daily readings primarily because handbooks, grammars, and graded readers are more helpful for advancing one's study of Hebrew.

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Gentry, Peter J. *How to Read & Understand the Biblical Prophets*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017, pp. 141, \$18, paperback.

How to Read & Understand the Biblical Prophets is a student oriented look at the unique hermeneutical issues at hand when interpreting the prophets of the Old Testament. Author Peter J. Gentry (PhD, University of Toronto) is the Donald L. Williams professor of Old Testament Interpretation at South Baptist Theological Seminary and director of the Hexapla Institute. His other academic works include *Kingdom Through Covenant* (Crossway, 2012). His expertise is clearly at the fore as he seeks here to make the prophets, major books of the Old Testament, approachable to the Christian student. *How to Read & Understand The Biblical Prophets* achieves in every way its titled purpose, and is an introductory work of the highest order.

Gentry sets out with a clear goal through *How to Read*. His stated purpose is to define seven central characteristics of prophetic literature that are vital for understanding. By understanding these prophetic literature characteristics, Gentry hopes that they “will help Christians comprehend these texts for themselves, perhaps for the first time with real understanding” (p. 14). Each of the characteristics of prophetic literature that Gentry outlines corresponds to a chapter of the book. Starting first, He shows that prophets seek to call the people back to covenant loyalty. To Gentry, this is “the first and perhaps most important... message of the biblical prophets” (p. 30). Second, prophets speak to judgment and restoration of the people. This is where Gentry classifies predictive prophecy in his work; it is given to call Israel to account for covenant disloyalty. Third, Gentry focuses on the use of repetition as marking emphasis in the writing of the prophets. Fourth, he examines how prophets speak to foreign nations in order to emphasize God’s sovereignty over them. Fifth, the book examines the use of typology and the eschatological idea of the New Exodus within the prophetic corpus. Sixth, Gentry seeks to provide the basis for understanding apocalyptic writing as being focused giving meaning over details. Lastly, the tension between the already and not yet of prophetic prophecy and writing is discussed with an eye towards meaning for modern application. The book closes with brief concluding thoughts from Gentry and an appendix on the “Literary Structure of the Book of Revelation” (pp. 125ff). Through all this, Gentry hopes that his readers will “consciously apply these principles” as they read from the Old Testament prophets (p. 124).

Gentry’s work excels in several key ways. Foremost of his successes is the crafting of a book that, simultaneously, is both scholarly and approachable. Gentry is able to include scholastic understanding and exegeting of the texts he engages with. He traces: thematic developments within a corpus, e.g. the theme of New Exodus in Isaiah (p. 79-80), the use of chiasm as a literary device (p. 47), and ancient Near Eastern metaphors as used in the text, e.g. creation and un-creation motifs in Jeremiah (pp. 102-5). While engaging in these discussions, however, Gentry does not lose the pastor or undergraduate reader. Several stylistic choices aid him here. He intentionally avoids putting Hebrew in the book either transliterated or raw. Likewise, his choice of grammar and terminology will not leave many behind. Jargon and technical terminology are used sparingly and always with ample definition. Any student with a cursory knowledge of biblical studies will be able to follow Gentry’s arguments throughout.

Also worthy of special note is Gentry’s chapter on apocalyptic literature. His description of precisely how apocalyptic literature works is phenomenal and perhaps worth the price of admission alone. Gentry employs an example of a traffic accident, and shows in concrete fashion how apocalyptic language works by describing an event in terms of its meaning rather than form (p. 101). This illustration, fortified with a quote from N.T. Wright on the matter, takes apocalypse from an esoteric and

mysterious genre to one that the student may begin to understand. This concrete, non-sensational approach to the text will serve new students and set them up for success as they advance in their hermeneutical knowledge and study.

Only one item from the book stands out as being out of place. In the sole appendix to the work, Gentry includes a short chapter and then an illustration from Andrew Fountain on the literary structure of the book of Revelation (pp. 125-132). While the material is well done, its inclusion in this book is anomalous. Certainly, a better understanding of the prophets can lead to a better understanding of other works, and clearly apocalyptic literature is discussed in this book. These facts, however, do not make a clear case as to why this appendix belongs here. Gentry seems to have landed on an unsatisfactory middle point with this inclusion. If the book wishes to tie the prophets to eschatology in Revelation, then it should embrace that goal and devote more time and space to that study. If, however, the book only seeks to better understand the prophets, then this addition is counterproductive and not germane to its purpose. The book would be better served by either dropping the appendix or expanding it fully into the purpose of the book.

How to Read & Understand the Biblical Prophets seeks to introduce Christian readers to the wonder and knowledge found within the prophetic corpus of the Old Testament. Peter Gentry brings brilliant scholarship to the table in a winsome and engageable manner. This book is best suited for the undergraduate Christian student or pastor seeking to sharpen and deepen their knowledge. This work would be well used as an undergraduate text for specific hermeneutical issues within the prophets. It can serve as an excellent introduction and gateway to further study. Masters students and those beyond should seek more comprehensive works on the subject, although it may retain some benefit as a quick refresher. Peter Gentry himself suggests Aaron Chalmers work, *Interpreting the Prophets: Reading, Understanding, and Preaching from the Worlds of the Prophets* (IVP, 2015) as a more academic work in a similar vein (p. 123). Altogether, Gentry’s present work is a resounding success that should open up the prophets to many students going forward. Any eager new student of the prophets will be well served by engaging with this work.

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Hasker, William. *Metaphysics and the Tri-Personal God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 269, £25.00, paperback.

In this impressive study William Hasker, the Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Huntington University, takes on the task of analysing the trinitarian three-in-one problem. That is, how we should understand the theological statement that “God is three persons in one being.”

Hasker seeks to establish, first, the foundations of the doctrine of the Trinity and, second, articulate and defend social trinitarianism (*ST*). Previous philosophical interactions with central Christian doctrines have often been accused of lacking historical and contextual awareness. It is Hasker's goal to show that this picture is mistaken, and to demonstrate how the emerging field of analytic theology is not only philosophically rigorous, but that it carefully considers the witness of Scripture and the importance of Church history.

The book is structured into three sections. The first section outlines the presuppositions for Hasker's analytical endeavour. As Hasker remarks, it is difficult to attribute the label "social trinitarianism" to any ancient thinker, given that the ontological model for *ST* grew out of modern categories – especially with regards to philosophy, psychology, and sociology (p. 24). Nevertheless, Hasker—equipped with Plantinga's definition of Persons as "distinct centers of knowledge, will, love, and action" (p. 22)—sets out to locate pro-*ST* themes in historical thinkers, such as Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine. Notable thinkers, including Richard Cross, have rejected a pro-social reading of Nyssa. Hasker, however, argues that Cross' misguided rejection of *ST* is based on a narrow understanding of divine simplicity (p. 39). Indeed, Hasker rejects the stronger notion of divine simplicity (p. 60). Similarly, some scholars have ruled out a pro-social reading of Augustine due to his usage of psychological analogies. Hasker contends, however, that the later developments in Augustine's *De Trinitate*, which portrays a dramatic interaction between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirits, seems to lend itself to a social understanding of the Trinity: three Persons sharing one nature.

What is this nature which binds the Trinity together? Here Hasker introduces the metaphysical notion of a *trope*. A trope is an instance of a property, and such property-instances have causal consequences. Applied on the Trinity, we might say that a trope of the divine essence is the divine essence instantiated in a divine being (p. 52). This is a complicated definition, which I will later return to in this review.

In section two, Hasker evaluates recent and contemporary explorations of the Trinity. Beginning with theological models of the Trinity, he evaluates the proposals of Barth/Rahner (ch. 12) and Moltmann/Zizioulas (ch. 13). Hasker argues (rather connivingly) from these modern Trinitarian models to his own *ST* model by suggesting that the most reasonable way to understand the fellowship within the Trinity and communion between the members of the divine nature is to say that there is a fellowship between persons, which is the core claim of *ST*.

The remaining chapters of this section (ch. 14-19) discuss several philosophical evaluations of the Trinity by Brian Leftow, Peter van Inwagen, Michael Rea, Jeffrey Brouwer, William Lane Craig, Richard Swinburne, and Keith Yandell. Hasker engages critically with these proposals and suggests that they either fail to adhere to Orthodox Christianity (Craig), fall short of monotheism (Yandell), or that they entail a problematic tri-theism (Swinburne).

The third and final section is devoted to Hasker's own proposal, and particularly the metaphysical notion of tropes and the role it plays in a robust philosophy of the Trinity. As Hasker says, the "three persons share a single concrete nature, a single instance or trope of deity" (p. 226). This leads Hasker to propose that the divine essence (trope) supports the ontological persistence of three distinct lives. How should we, then, understand the concept of "support" with regard to the three distinct lives of the Trinity? Hasker suggests, drawing on the metaphysical landscape of *constitution*, not that each Person is identical with the divine nature, but that each Person is constituted by the nature. A classic example of the relationship of constitution is a statue. A statue is constituted by a lump of clay, but the form of the statue is not identical with the material basis of the statue. This is because, the form of the statue can change (it can be destroyed or formed into something else) while still being the same lump of clay. Hence, we have constitution without identity.

It is at this point, however, that the philosophical and theological problems of Hasker's Trinitarian proposal emerge. I want to suggest that the metaphysics of constitution significantly challenges the reality and distinctiveness of the three Persons of the Trinity. The metaphysics of constitution – as formulated by Lynn Rudder Baker – is an attempt to safeguard a generally materialistic ontology from the charge that it collapses into reductionism (or identitism). Frequently applied on the mind-body problem, the constitutionist says that the mind is constituted by (ontologically supported by) the physical (the brain structure) without being reducible to purely physical stuff or neurochemical interactions. However, many critics of this view suggest that this metaphysical theory encounters significant problems regarding the causal efficacy of the mental. This is because, either everything is causally determined by the physical structure, which renders the causal contributions of the mental epiphenomenal. Or, the mental produces something ontologically above and beyond the physical, but then the relationship of dependency is broken between the mental and the physical; and this would invite dualism. Hence, the constitution view is intrinsically unstable.

Hasker's Social Trinitarianism seems to encounter a similar challenge. If a Person of the Trinity is truly dependent on the divine essence (the trope) then the causal efficacy of that Person is in jeopardy, because whatever the Person produces is already contained at the base level; in this case it is located within the trope. Conversely, if a member of the Trinity produces something which is not contained within the trope, then the relationship of dependency is broken. The constitution view is therefore undermined. This could in worst case scenario invite tri-theism. Indeed, given that Hasker clearly rejects the unification of the will between the three Persons of the Trinity (no "single act of willing", p. 205), a tritheistic entailment is made probable. Therefore, in order to avoid these conclusions Hasker needs to clarify his usage of *trope*, and how it relates to and can uphold the causal efficacy and distinctiveness of the members of the Trinity.

William Hasker has delivered an excellent defence of social trinitarianism. This is a well-argued and thoughtful book that will be of interest to those working at the interdisciplinary arena between philosophy and theology, primarily at a postgraduate and research level.

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Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan and Purpose*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009, pp. 252, \$19.86, paperback.

Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. serves as Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Old Testament and President Emeritus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts.

In *Recovering the Unity of the Bible*, Kaiser explores the connected questions of Scripture's unity and argues that "the case for the unity of the Bible...rests on two main theses: (1) the self-claims of the Bible and (2) the message of Scripture" (p. 24). He contends for a unity to the canon that also recognizes genuine diversity as the canon grows from one part to the next with a common plan, purpose, and story in an organic progression (p. 218) that emphasizes a link between the promises of the OT and their fulfillment in the NT. As such, he leads his reader through a surprisingly detailed analysis of apologetic and interpretive issues related to the canon's continuity and diversity that rejects imposing the NT upon the OT or adopting the common notion of *sensus plenior* (pp. 216–7). Kaiser seeks, instead, to thread an interpretive needle by keeping the meaning of OT texts bound to the intentions of their writing in grammatical-historical interpretation and also to the growing, progressive context of their placement within the canon by utilizing Hirsch's distinction between meaning and significance, even as he levels partial criticism of Hirsch (pp. 79–80; 196–200). Kaiser unites the Bible, therefore, by emphasizing the promise-plan of God that engages the individual moments of the Bible in light of a progressive series that enables the preaching of the whole Scripture around the gospel and all of revelation.

In chapter 1, Kaiser tackles critical claims against the Bible's unity by exposing how such assumptions of disunity mirror the prior eras' assumption of unity (pp. 12–13). From this point, he contends for a diverse categorization of unity along a multi-layered front: structural, historic, prophetic, spiritual, and kerygmatic unity (pp. 20–24). Such analysis leads to chapter 2's categorization of the corresponding types of diversity and chapter 3's general guidelines for the most common means of harmonizing such.

In chapter 4, Kaiser provides a focus on the structural unity of the Hebrew Bible, while in chapter 5 he provides the same analysis for the New Testament.

Kaiser employs leading scholarship to refute the most common apologetic arguments against the unity of each testament alongside its legitimate diversity.

Chapter 6, however, marks a subtle pivot towards the most important parts of Kaiser's project. Specifically, he examines OT messianic promises and contends for a *sensus literalis* to the OT texts that leaves no space for a distinction between the human and divine author's meanings but eases the resulting interpretive tension by partially accepting Hirsch's distinctions between meaning and significance. Specifically, he focuses "special attention to *what it was that connected*: (1) the ancient prediction and (2) the New Testament fulfillment" (82). In short, it was and is a planned and purposeful *series*. He binds the meaning to a series of texts and events that finds its ultimate significance and renewed meaning in the NT fulfillment of these promises in Christ (pp. 82–84). This series gives purpose and meaning to each of its points without invalidating individual uniqueness. However, Kaiser fails to articulate the nature of the series as a purely textually phenomenon or one that moves between the text of the canon and the events of salvation history.

Chapters 7 and 8, then, allow Kaiser to more directly address the relationship between the testaments, creating intellectual space for a common message by refuting the most common critiques of the OT's view of God and its primary human characters' moral failings. From these recalibrations, chapter 9 highlights the question of the people of God across the Bible. While he conceives of the biblical writers advancing only one people of God (p. 125), his nuanced answer rejects "all reports of Israel's death and demise as the people of God in every sense" (p. 125).

Chapter 10, therefore, moves to the consideration of God's Kingdom as His program in both testaments. Kaiser contends for the Kingdom of God concept in "seed" form in the OT and full form in the NT with the Davidic covenant serving as the main way to link the series that continues in a present and future form so that it "is both a soteriological as well as an eschatological concept" (p. 140). Such a connection paves the way for chapter 11's definition of Kaiser's promise-plan paradigm, relating the different parts of his series around the promise of a Messiah and His arrival that branches into other theological concerns: law and gospel, mission and kingdom. The thread of promise plan, therefore, becomes the primary way for Kaiser to unite the Bible while respecting its diversity because it "it is broad and wide enough to embrace the numerous strands of topics that flesh out its plurality in unity" (p. 155).

From this approach, chapter 12 unites the doctrine of law across the canons, while chapter 13 joins together soteriology across OT and NT. He sees unity in both instances as they stand in the promise-plan series with meaning and significance for those who lived before and after the NT. Having bound law and gospel to both testaments, chapter 14 digs into the mission of God and His people in the OT. In particular, Kaiser unfolds the OT's call for Israel and the nations "to hear about the Promised One who was to come and redeem the world from their sins" (p. 193).

Kaiser, then, turns to the question of unity in hermeneutical methods in chapter 15 and proclamation in chapter 16. Returning to earlier observations, he contends for principalizing OT texts through grammatical-historical interpretation that respects their ancient meaning and does not impose later meanings but does allow the natural growth of ideas within his promise-plan methodology (pp. 203–207). This approach, then, suggests that preaching itself must set its message in terms of the “overall plan, purpose and unifying story [of the Scripture]” (p. 218). He rejects finding Jesus in every verse, but he argues that one must apply each verse to the larger story so that it may proclaim all of the “revelation of God” (p. 218).

Kaiser’s argument builds cumulatively across many aspects of the interpretive dilemmas, but in the end he proves his thesis: the canon has a natural unity in what it claims of itself and its message, even if certain aspects of the unity prove contested and difficult. While he has not proven that his approach is the only or best approach to measure unity, his goal seems to be much smaller and more helpful. Indeed, the strength of the book is not a singular conclusion to how the Bible’s unity should be considered but in exposing how much of theology and interpretation hinge on how we consider this question. Kaiser shows, in other words, that the unity of the Bible impacts our assumptions, methods and conclusions. After reading this work, his readers will be far better prepared to hold the Scriptures together.

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Longman, Tremper, III. *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom: A Theological Introduction to Wisdom in Israel*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. 311 pgs. \$32.99.

There has long been a need for a focused, comprehensive treatment of the biblical theology of wisdom from an evangelical perspective. Tremper Longman III’s recent volume, *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom: A Theological Introduction to Wisdom in Israel*, fills this void. The book focuses on the theological dimensions of the concept of wisdom as it appears throughout the Christian Bible and the Second Temple literature. The approach of the book is synchronic—it examines wisdom as a concept in the final form of the texts that we have, rather than tracing the diachronic development of the theme through Israel’s history.

The book is divided into five parts. Part one examines the corpus of books traditionally understood as biblical wisdom literature—namely, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job, with Longman devoting a chapter to each. Longman surveys the literary contours of each of these books and unpacks their distinctive theological messages. These chapters provide a lucid summary of the wisdom books and lay out Longman’s approach to some of their interpretive challenges. Anyone familiar with Longman’s commentaries on these books will not be surprised at the conclusions

he reaches or the points he emphasizes in these chapters. Even so, Longman makes a fresh contribution, demonstrating that these three books, through all of their distinctive concerns, present wisdom in a similar way, as having its ultimate source in God himself and as accessible to humans who fear him and humble themselves before him.

In part two, Longman examines the appearance of wisdom in OT books not traditionally included with the wisdom literature. Chapter 4 focuses on Deuteronomy, the Prophets, Psalms and Song of Songs. An important topic taken up in this chapter is the genre of Song of Songs, which Longman does not discuss alongside Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job in part one. Longman concludes that Song of Songs does not directly address the topic of wisdom (as do the three books in part one), though the book does, in effect, offer instruction reminiscent of that found in Proverbs regarding sexuality. Chapter 5 offers a comparison of the stories of Joseph and Daniel, who receive wisdom directly from, God, resulting in their finding favor in the courts of Egypt and Babylon respectively. In chapter 6, Longman then turns his attention to Adam and Solomon, who, in contrast to Joseph and Daniel, exemplify the abandonment of wisdom. Wisdom is not permanent, but it can be lost when one ceases to live in fearful submission to God.

Part three is perhaps the most significant section of Longman’s volume, for it is where he articulates what he considers to be the distinguishing theological characteristics of Israelite wisdom. He begins part three with a chapter on the sources of wisdom, arguing that while experience and observation have a place in acquiring wisdom, they can lead to skewed understanding and folly if wisdom is sought solely from them to the exclusion of God’s revelation. Next, in chapter 8, Longman acknowledges that wisdom entails understanding the order and function of the world. Yet, to study the world without knowing God is to be ignorant of the most profound truth undergirding the universe. Accordingly, in chapter 9, Longman contends that surrounding ANE peoples had a measure of wisdom, and this explains the similarity between some of their wisdom writings to those of the Bible. However, in not knowing or submitting to the Lord, these peoples lacked the most necessary component of wisdom in its fullest sense (p. 161). In chapter 10, Longman challenges the notion that OT wisdom is not covenantal in nature.

In part four, Longman addresses some debated issues in the study of biblical wisdom. He devotes chapter 11 to the issue of retribution theology in the wisdom literature, concluding that to pit Job and Ecclesiastes against the teaching of Proverbs is to misunderstand Proverbs. In chapter 12, he takes up the issue of the social setting of OT wisdom, concluding that the wisdom literature is likely the product of a variety of social settings. One of the most unique chapters in the volume appears in chapter 13, where Longman explores the issue of gender and wisdom, with special attention to the book of Proverbs. There, wisdom is personified as a woman before a male

implied audience; in light of this, Longman takes up the question of how women can receive and appropriate the teachings of the book.

Part Five covers the presence of wisdom in the literature of the Second Temple period (ch. 14) and the New Testament (ch. 15). Among the most significant observations Longman makes about the former is that this literature makes even more explicit the connection between wisdom and revelation (particularly the Torah) already alluded to in the OT. With respect to the latter, Longman contends that the NT depicts Jesus Christ as embodying and exemplifying the wisdom of God described in the OT.

Two appendices conclude the book. Appendix 1 discusses how the modern day significance of biblical wisdom. In appendix 2, Longman weighs in on the contemporary discussion among scholars regarding whether it is proper to speak of wisdom literature as a genre. In particular, Longman responds to the recent work of Will Kynes, suggesting that “wisdom literature” remains a helpful category for classifying texts whose primary focus is the theme of wisdom.

This volume has numerous strengths and valuable insights. The scope of the book is remarkable from a biblical-theological standpoint; Longman rightly recognizes that wisdom is not a theme unique to the OT, but one that surfaces in significant ways in the NT. Longman’s discussion about the meaning of the fear of the Lord is theologically perceptive and thought provoking. The fear of the Lord as referred to in Scripture is often misunderstood. Longman clarifies that what the Bible describes is not terror that inspires retreat. Instead, the fear being referenced is more like a profound sense of “awe” that makes us tremble, for “He [God] takes our breath away and makes our knees knock together” (p. 13). Such a view of God is certainly necessary for living wisely in the world he himself made. Longman’s treatment of how the individual wise sayings in Proverbs function is perhaps the book’s most important section from a pastoral standpoint, as many in the Church today misunderstand these sayings as air-tight promises. Longman explains, to the contrary, that the truthfulness of these sayings depends on whether one applies them in the right circumstances. Additionally, I was pleased to see Longman articulate how biblical wisdom, grounded in the fear of the Lord, relates to other wisdom from the ancient Near East. Many have noted parallels between biblical wisdom and wisdom teaching from surrounding peoples, and many have noted that “the fear of the Lord” has covenantal connotations. Yet few have explained how these two aspects of biblical wisdom square with each other. Longman carefully and lucidly addresses this matter. The Bible looks favorably, to a certain extent, on the wisdom and understanding of Israel’s neighbors; however, this need not imply that the surrounding nations, who did not worship the Lord, were *wise* in the truest and fullest sense of the term as described in the wisdom literature. A final aspect of the book that I found to be valuable is Longman’s response to contemporary issues. Longman’s response to the question of wisdom and genre, found in Appendix 2, is one example of this; another

example is his critique of the so-called “Sophia Movement,” which arises from a misreading of the references to Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9.

I do not have many criticisms to offer regarding this volume. I wish Longman, in his overview of the canonical wisdom books, had interacted more with scholarship that had presented different interpretive approaches than those found in his commentaries. For example, nowhere does Longman respond to the approach to Ecclesiastes advocated by Craig Bartholomew or Ryan O’Dowd (the latter of which published a response to Longman’s treatment of wisdom in a separate volume).¹ Longman raises some significant hermeneutical questions, particularly about Proverbs, in chapter 13, where he discusses gender and wisdom. Yet, I wonder if the concerns about gender that Longman raises are overplayed at times. The personification of wisdom as an attractive woman (desirable to men) should not present much of an obstacle to female readers of the book. As Raymond Van Leeuwen has noted, the metaphor of the two paths (leading to wisdom and folly) found in Proverbs 1–9 is just as fundamental to the book’s message as that of Lady Wisdom.² The metaphor of the two paths is gender-neutral and readily grasped by *any* reader, whether male or female.

As a young scholar interested in biblical theology and the OT wisdom literature, I am indebted in many ways to Tremper Longman’s publications. Even when I am not convinced by his proposals, I always walk away from his books and articles feeling challenged and having grown in my understanding of the Bible. This book is no exception. *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom* is a welcome contribution to biblical scholarship by evangelicalism’s leading wisdom specialist. The book is theologically stimulating, attentive to contemporary approaches and pastorally useful. I highly recommend this landmark volume to professors, students and clergy.

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Todd, James M., III. *Sinai and the Saints: Reading Old Covenant Laws for the New Covenant Community*. IVP: Downers Grove, IL, 2017.

The relationship between the Old and New Testaments, and specifically the Mosaic covenant and the New Covenant, remains a perennial question in biblical and theological studies. James Todd has written *Sinai and the Saints* to bring clarity to this question. While he successfully describes the positions in the debate, his own position fails to convince.

1. Craig G. Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, BCOTWP (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); Ryan P. O’Dowd, “Wisdom as Canonical Imagination: Pleasant Words for Tremper Longman,” in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al., SHS 7 (Milton Keynes: Pater-noster, 2006), 374–92.

2. Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, “Liminality and Worldview in Proverbs 1–9,” *Semeia* 50 (1990): 111–44.

Todd writes *Sinai and the Saints* because it is difficult to understand the Bible without understanding how the laws fit in (p. 8). He limits his discussion to the laws of Sinai (pp. 21–22). He notes that law and covenant exist together both in the Bible and in the surrounding culture (p. 15).

After setting the stage, Todd reviews the different approaches to the relationship between the laws of Sinai and the New Covenant, acknowledging that there is much common ground between the positions (p. 31). He lists three different positions: 1) moral law Christians affirm the authority of some Old Covenant laws, 2) Ten Commandments Christians affirm the continuing validity of the Ten Commandments, and 3) No-Old-Law Christians deny any continuing validity of the Old Covenant laws. He describes his method as follows (pp. 42–44): he is a “No-Old-Law” Christian, with some nuances; i.e. the Old Covenant was a temporary, conditional covenant, while the New Covenant ended the Old Covenant and therefore the members of the New Covenant are under the law of Christ. However, the Hebrew Bible is Christian Scripture and the Old Covenant laws are a positive good. He seeks to interpret the laws according to authorial intent, which he claims we discover by examining the clues left in the text (p. 47). Todd proceeds to set the Mosaic covenant in the context of the broader storyline of the Pentateuch, arguing that this broader context helps explain the nature of the Sinai Covenant (Chapters 3–5).

Todd spends the next two chapters discussing the Ten Commandments and the Law of Christ. Todd argues that the Ten Commandments are no longer binding on Christians. He attempts to answer the charge of antinomianism by explaining how believers are under the law of Christ (p. 109), which he defines as the law of love (p. 110). He explains that natural law accounts for the ethical overlap between the Mosaic covenant and the New Covenant (pp. 112ff).

Should Christians be concerned to know the Mosaic covenant? Todd answers yes. The Mosaic covenant reveals God’s righteousness in space and time (p. 128). The sacrificial elements of the Mosaic covenant, such as the tabernacle and the sacrificial system, point ahead to the work of Christ (pp. 129–139). He points out a link between wisdom and law, arguing that knowledge of the specific Old Covenant laws provides a sense of God’s moral order (p. 143). Additionally, the whole law finds its fulfillment in the gospel.

Sinai and the Saints is a helpful book because Todd overviews some of the central problems which surround discussions of the Mosaic law. While summarizing these problems, Todd emphasizes the amount of common ground that adherents of the different positions have. This concession is important since discussions of the Mosaic law are often fraught with tension.

Todd follows the standard New Covenant Theology line of argumentation. The critiques that have been leveled at that system over the past several years apply to Todd’s work as well. A few of these critiques are worth noting, especially since Todd communicates his position so clearly.

First, Todd criticizes the standard moral, civil, and ceremonial distinction commonly held by proponents of covenant theology. He charges proponents with picking and choosing which laws apply and which ones do not (p. 36). He also argues that the moral, civil, and ceremonial terms do not appear in Scripture. These criticisms seem compelling at first glance. On further examination, however, they fall short. The tripartite distinction does not necessarily lead to “picking and choosing” which laws to apply, especially when certain laws in the “moral” category predate the Mosaic covenant (pp. 14, 143). Moral law Christians may be identifying a concept within the text and applying an extra-biblical label to it.

Todd rejects the tripartite distinction because it is an extra-biblical category without explicit textual warrant. However, Christian theology and hermeneutics often lack an explicit reference. For example, the doctrine of the Trinity consists almost entirely of inferences drawn from the biblical data. Additionally, it is commonplace for modern interpreters to see Genesis 3:15 as a reference to Christ, although Scripture never uses this verse in reference to Christ (my thanks to William R. Smith for this observation). Lack of explicit reference is insufficient grounds for rejecting the tripartite division position.

Second, the Sabbath command is a major touchstone for the critique of the Mosaic law’s applicability (pp. 95–103). This critique is a common trope of New Covenant Theology literature. This critique assumes the Sabbatarian position of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms (and the 1689 London Baptist confession which is based on Westminster). One immediate problem with this critique is that it assumes that many who hold to a moral law view or a Ten Commandments view of the law also subscribe to the Westminster position. A cursory reading of Reformed confessions and exegetes would demonstrate that the Westminster position is not the consensus position. Since the Ten Commandments only position does not rest on the Westminster interpretation of the Sabbath commandment, Todd’s argument falls short.

Third, Todd spent several chapters retelling the narrative around the events at Sinai. His description was accurate, but it was unclear how his retelling advanced his argument. It appears that he wanted to show how Israel’s interaction with the Mosaic law was negative. However, it is not clear how retelling Israel’s story informs this discussion. Todd’s argument works well if he is arguing against those who believe the law justifies, but I do not know of any Christian—evangelical, Catholic, or Orthodox—explicitly making such an argument.

Finally, Todd’s language about the law’s discontinuity runs into problems of theology proper. He makes a strong contrast between the law of Moses and the law of Christ, failing to mention that the law of Moses was written by the finger of God (p. 109). This contrast places discontinuity between God the Father and God the Son, not the Mosaic and New covenants.

Sinai and the Saints clearly summarizes different positions on the Old Testament law. It is a clear representative of New Covenant Theology. However, this book's argument is not convincing. The book contains problems that mar Todd's position. It may be valuable for those who want to understand New Covenant Theology better, but it will likely be persuasive only for those who already subscribe to Todd's basic premises.

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Mortenson, Terry. ed. *Searching for Adam: Genesis & the Truth about Man's Origin*. Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2016, 524 pp, \$24.99, paperback.

The debate over evolutionary theory and biblical history still stirs significant controversy in the American Church. Related topics like the age of the earth and the special creation of mankind factor into an ever-growing body of literature on the subject. But many readers struggle to understand why this debate matters and why Christians can't just "agree to disagree." The urgency of the "so what" question drives this new volume. Terry Mortenson (Ph.D., history of geology) has assembled a collection of fresh essays to address one issue: the significance of belief in a recent, special creation of Adam and Eve. His contributors hail from a wide variety of fields, from Bible, theology, and hermeneutics to biology, genetics, anthropology, and archaeology. Mortenson and his team seek to clear up misconceptions about the young-earth creationist perspective while offering a scientifically informed and fundamentally biblical apologetic for the supernatural origin of Adam.

This book launches a two-pronged advance of the young-earth understanding of the origin of mankind. First, chapters one through seven offer a biblical and theological presentation rooted in a historical-grammatical hermeneutic that holds to the inspiration, inerrancy, and supreme authority of God's word (p. 8). Second, chapters eight through fifteen present evidences from numerous other scientific disciplines like paleontology, genetics, anatomy, archaeology, and anthropology. While many aspects of these disciplines overlap across chapters, most remain neatly defined in one or two chapters. Chapter topics include: (1) Old Testament, with a focus on Genesis 1–5 [Barrick]; (2) New Testament, with a focus on 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5 [Croteau/Naylor]; (3) historical-theological perspectives [Nettles]; (4) a synthesis of biblical and theological thought [Merrill]; (5) historical narrative and the age of the earth [Mortenson]; (6) a critique of Walton's *The Lost World of Adam and Eve* [S. Ham]; (7) *imago Dei* theology in relation to special creation [Casas]; (8) fossils, apes, and hominin myths [Menton]; (9) DNA, fossil, and archaeology surrounding neanderthals [Lubenow]; (10) genetics as it relates to the biology, anthropology, chronology, and geography discussions [Jeanson/Tomkins]; (11/12) the uniqueness

of human anatomy [Burgess]; (13) evolution, racism, and errant views of mankind [Bergman]; (14) the amazing accomplishments of ancient human civilizations [Landis]; (15) common history of humanity represented in societal legends [Chaffey]; (16) human morality and the authority of Scripture [Mortenson]. Each chapter of this book builds a united case from across the scientific and biblical spectrum.

Throughout this book the editor and authors seek to maintain a distinction between "operation" and "origin" science. Mortenson defines the two disciplines this way:

[Operation science is] the use of observable, repeatable, experiments in a controlled environment (e.g., a lab) to understand how things operate of function in this *present* physical universe...[Origin science is] the use of reliable, eyewitness testimony (if any is available) and observable evidence to determine the past, unobservable, unrepeatable event(s), which produced the observable evidence we see in the present (pp. 10–11).

Many people also call the latter of these "historical science." Naturalistic, neo-Darwinian theory approaches historical events through the lens of uniformitarianism, that present rates and changes in the natural world exist now as they always have in the past. This evolutionary presupposition finds itself in the crosshairs of numerous articles. Chapters one through seven seek to elucidate the "eyewitness testimony" of the Bible regarding past events that do not always conform to present rates and changes. Chapters eight through fifteen seek to critique the data without the uniformitarian and evolutionary lenses. For example, chapter eight begins the comparison on anatomical features between humans and apes with a discussion Christian and naturalist assumptions (pp. 232–233). Similarly, chapter ten (genetics) and chapter fourteen (archaeology) also begin with methodological discussions related to biblical and naturalistic approaches to the same data. While the book focuses on the overall argument for the historicity of Adam, this presuppositional analysis offers readers an additional education in methodology.

Compilation volumes generally stand or fall based on two factors: (1) the strength of the individual essays; (2) the unity of the essays in contributing to the overall argument. On the second count this book receives a passing grade. Some authors tie their argument into the thesis more explicitly (e.g., chapter ten), others less so (e.g. chapter seven). But Mortenson has selected a strong slate of authors whose efforts each contribute to the overall goal from their respective angle. On the whole, each essay does a good job of not straying from the specific topic under consideration. The variable scope of chapters may prove difficult for some readers (e.g., chapter four covers all of historical theology; chapter six responds to Walton's book *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*). But regardless of length or scope, each chapter contributes clear argumentation towards the overall thesis. So, on both accounts, this compilation makes a strong contribution to the discussion surrounding the special creation of mankind.

Another common weakness of compilation works tends to arise in excessive overlap between essays. Too much overlap can reduce the effectiveness of an argument by bogging down readers. While the essays in *Searching for Adam* generally remained distinct, some overlap does occur: two in-depth studies on the various terms for “man” occur in different chapters (pp. 29, 132–133); chapter four reviews much of the content from the first three chapters; illustrations get shared across chapters on similar topics (pp. 247, 337); arguments from anatomy fill three separate chapters of this volume. Despite these instances of overlap, each author has generally maintained their unique contribution to the thesis. This creates an engaging volume with a wide variety of argumentation for a recent, historical Adam.

Perhaps the greatest value of this book for pastors and students lies not in individual evidences but in the ability of this book to connect the issue of a historical Adam to the gospel. Barrick begins this emphasis citing examples of how evangelicals have lost a “presumption of factuality” with regard to the biblical testimony and have instead accepted a hermeneutic of doubt (p. 44). Croteau and Naylor state outright that “the gospel itself is impacted by one’s view on Adam. If the historical Adam did not exist, then the historical Christ did not need to come to redeem a human race that inherited Adam’s sinful nature and guilt” (pp. 71–72). Nettles goes on to cite Dyson Hague saying, “without Adam’s fall the science of theology is evacuated of its most salient feature, the atonement” (p. 111). Indeed, most essays in this book offer some sort of answer to the “so what” question. Mortenson sums it up in the final chapter, “belief in a literal Adam and literal historical Fall is not a salvation issue. It is a gospel-consistency or gospel-coherency issue” (p. 497). One’s conclusion on this issue may not determine their eternal destiny, but it does significantly impact his or her ability to read the Scriptures in a coherent fashion.

Searching for Adam offers readers a useful compendium on the subject of the historicity of Adam from a young-earth creationist perspective. The authors fairly and deftly handle the critiques of their position while offering the best arguments from their specific discipline. The range of disciplines and depth of argumentation make this volume useful to pastors, students, and scholars. But most importantly, this book does the important work of connecting this debate to gospel defense and proclamation.

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Nagasawa, Yujin. *Maximal God: A New Defence of Perfect Being Theism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 256, \$60.

Yujin Nagasawa is a professor of philosophy at the University of Birmingham, and the co-director of the John Hick Centre for the Philosophy of Religion. He has published books on phenomenal consciousness, miracles, and the existence of God. In *Maximal*

God, Nagasawa examines the claim that God is a perfect being, and the role this plays in developing the ontological argument for the existence of God. *Maximal God* is comprised of 7 chapters.

Chapter 1 considers the conceptual, historical, and cognitive roots of perfect being theism. According to Nagasawa, perfect being theism affirms that God is the greatest metaphysically possible being. This entails that God is *value commensurate* with all other possible beings. In other words, the greatness of God can be *compared* with the greatness of all other possible beings such as humans, aardvarks, and escalators.

As Nagasawa notes, most philosophers and theologians assume that perfect being theism entails The Omni God Thesis. The Omni God Thesis says that God is an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent being. Throughout *Maximal God*, it is Nagasawa’s contention that perfect being theism does not need The Omni God Thesis. Instead, perfect being theism only needs a more minimal claim called The Maximal God Thesis. The Maximal God Thesis says that God has the maximal consistent set of knowledge, power, and benevolence. The Maximal God Thesis is consistent with, but does not entail, The Omni God Thesis. So, a perfect being theologian can affirm both theses; but she need not, if there are problems with The Omni God Thesis.

Nagasawa identifies three kinds of problems that face perfect being theism. Each of these three kinds of problems seeks to show that the existence of a perfect being is metaphysically impossible. According to Nagasawa, these three problems are really aimed at The Omni God Thesis, and not perfect being theism. What Nagasawa calls Type-A arguments focus on the internal coherence of one divine attribute. For example, someone might argue that omnipotence is incoherent because God cannot create a stone that is so heavy that He cannot lift it. If the property of omnipotence is incoherent, then the existence of an omnipotent being is metaphysically impossible. What Nagasawa calls Type-B arguments focus on the internal coherence of two or more of God’s attributes. A classic example is the apparent conflict between omnipotence and omnibenevolence. As omnipotent, God should be able to perform sinful actions. Yet, as omnibenevolent, God cannot perform sinful actions. This purportedly raises a question: is an omnibenevolent God really omnipotent? What Nagasawa calls Type-C arguments focus on the mutual consistency of God’s properties with certain facts about the world. The classic example here is the logical problem of evil, which seeks to show that there is a contradiction between the existence of evil and the existence of a God who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent. To be sure, there are replies to Type-A, Type-B, and Type-C arguments, but those must be considered on a case by case basis.

Chapter 2 of *Maximal God* examines the claim that God is the metaphysically greatest being. I found this chapter to be an incredibly important contribution to contemporary discussions on God’s perfection. In contemporary theology, it is often

asserted that God is the greatest, has eternal glory, and so on. Theologians will often assert that their doctrine of God is greater than their opponent's doctrine of God. However, there is rarely any explication of what this "greatness" means. Nagasawa offers a detailed discussion of what this means, and the theological world should take note.

According to Nagasawa, God is the greatest metaphysically possible being in that God is extensively and intensively superior to all other beings with regards to great-making properties. A great-making property is a property that, all things being equal, contributes to the intrinsic greatness of its possessor. A being is extensively superior to other beings if it has more great-making properties than other beings. A being is intensively superior to other beings if it has the great-making properties to a higher degree of intensity than other beings. Nagasawa considers different ways to understand this superiority, and how each can be used to develop the great chain of being—the hierarchical ordering of all possible beings according to their greatness.

In Chapter 3 Nagasawa examines the structure of Type-A, Type-B, and Type-C arguments in detail. As noted before, it is often assumed that perfect being theism entails The Omni God Thesis. Nagasawa explains that The Omni God Thesis has to consider Type-A, Type-B, and Type-C arguments on a case by case basis. He notes that there are good theistic replies to these arguments, but that it is inefficient to consider these arguments one by one. Instead, one can undermine all of these arguments in one fell swoop by adopting The Maximal God Thesis. Thus, The Maximal God Thesis offers a more efficient way to defend perfect being theism.

In Chapter 4 Nagasawa considers various objections to The Maximal God Thesis. For example, one might say that The Maximal God Thesis prevents God from being worthy of worship. Another might complain that The Maximal God Thesis undermines the uniqueness of God that is captured in The Omni God Thesis. Nagasawa assesses these objections, and finds them wanting.

Chapters 5 and 6 offer a rigorous examination and defence of the classical ontological argument developed by Anselm. Nagasawa does an excellent job at pinpointing the structure of the ontological argument. This allows Nagasawa to specify where objections to the ontological argument fail. One common type of objection to the ontological argument is to develop a parody argument. The parody arguments are intended to have the same structure as the ontological argument, but they have premises that entail absurd conclusions. A successful parody indicates that there is something wrong with the structure of the classical ontological argument. Nagasawa contends, however, that most parody arguments fail to parody the structure of the classical ontological argument.

In Chapter 7 Nagasawa turns his attention to the modal ontological argument. The success of the modal ontological argument rests on establishing the premise that it is possible that God exists. What is needed is to show that 'God is the metaphysically greatest possible being' is consistent, and thus it is possible that God exists. After

surveying various attempts to establish the possibility that God exists, Nagasawa concludes that each attempt is unsuccessful. However, Nagasawa assures us that all is not lost for the modal ontological argument. In order to establish the possibility that God exists, one should adopt The Maximal God Thesis. The Maximal God Thesis has the needed consistency already built into its concept of God. So, adopting The Maximal God Thesis is a huge advantage for the modal ontological argument.

Advanced students of theology and philosophy will find *Maximal God* rewarding because it contains clear arguments and rigorous analysis of important issues in the doctrine of God. For those interested in apologetics, Nagasawa's approach to the ontological argument should not be missed. For those who are brand new to theology and philosophy of religion, I recommend starting with Nagasawa's earlier book *The Existence of God: A Philosophical Introduction*.

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Davison, Scott A. *Petitionary Prayer: A Philosophical Investigation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 189, \$75.00, hardback.

Scott Davison is Professor of Philosophy at Morehead State University. His other writings on petitionary prayer appear in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, and *The European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. This monograph is his first full-length treatment of the subject.

Petitionary prayer is a practice which is central to Christian piety, yet, few Christians stop to ask, does prayer make a difference to God? One almost assumes that it does, or else prayer seems to be redundant. Scott Davison, in *Petitionary Prayer: A Philosophical Investigation*, poses this type of question as follows: "Assuming that the God of traditional theism exists, is it reasonable to think that God answers specific petitionary prayers? Or are those prayers pointless in the sense that they do not influence God's action?" (p. 8). In attempting to answer this question, Davison refrains from interjecting his own religious beliefs and seeks instead to "write as a philosopher trying to be responsible for what we know from reason about metaphysics, epistemology, and value theory" (p. 4). He explains that he will defend his conclusions "by appealing to philosophical reasons that could be appreciated by anyone, reasons that do not require accepting the teachings of any specific religion," yet at the same time he concedes that "specific religious doctrines are very important in connection with this topic" (p. 4).

Although Davison himself does not divide the book into parts, *Petitionary Prayer* could be read as having four parts. Part one sets the framework necessary for tackling the question of petitionary prayer (chapters 1-2). Here Davison addresses what counts as answered prayers. According to him, answered prayers are those prayers which God actually brings about the thing that was requested. But what

does it mean to say that God brought about the thing requested? Davison answers this question in chapter two. After finding Thomas Flint's counterfactual account and Alexander Pruss's omnirationality account wanting, he proposes what he calls the Contrastive Reason Account. According to this account a "petitionary prayer is answered by God if and only if God's desire to provide the object of the prayer just because the petitioner requested it plays an essential role in a true contrastive explanation of God's providing that object rather than not" (p. 163). With this account in hand Davison proceeds with part two.

The second part develops challenges to petitionary prayer (chapters 3-5). First, he addresses challenges that arise from various accounts of divine freedom. Then he turns his attention to epistemological challenges. Although there are various epistemological challenges, the primary challenge Davison addresses concerns how we would know if God answered a particular person's (S) petitionary prayer for a specific thing (E). After all, it seems as though E could be explained in numerous ways:

1. E was caused by natural forces.
2. E was caused by some intelligent person who is not God.
3. God brought about E because someone else prayed for it.
4. God brought about E because S prayed for it.

Even if (4) was the case, it seems as though, apart from direct revelation by God, S is not in a position to know which of these reasons explain E. S might correctly believe (4) but simply holding this true belief does not mean that S knows (4). According to Davison, the most reasonable thing to do in this case is to withhold belief as to whether or not E was an answer to S's prayer. Regrettably, Davison does not avail himself to theological resources which can help overcome the agnosticism that results from this challenge. Davison should not be blamed for this given his self-imposed philosophical constraints. But what if he did make use of these resources? What options would be available to him? One option would be to say that God in fact often directly reveals that he has answered a particular prayer. Christians in charismatic traditions often report such experiences. But if one doubts that God commonly reveals himself in this way today, there are other ways around this challenge. Consider the following example. Dexter asks his friend Ed to buy him a burger. Ed walks away. Five minutes later, someone walks up to Dexter and says to him, "here is your burger." What explains the appearance of a burger? Well the burger could have been purchased for Dexter by some other person, the burger could have been purchased for some other person and incorrectly delivered to Dexter, or Ed could have purchased the burger and had it sent to him. Dexter might correctly believe that this last option was in fact the case. But could he *know* this was the case? Surely the answer to this question depends on what one believes is required for a belief to count as knowledge. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that knowledge is warranted true belief. Might it be the case that knowing that in the past

Ed had promised to always buy burgers when asked warrants Dexter's belief that Ed bought the burger? If one grants this, might it not be the case that knowing, because it is revealed in Scripture, that God has promised to answer all prayers for S, warrants belief in (4)? If one believes this, then perhaps one does not need to withhold belief about (4).

In part three Davison shifts his attention from challenges towards defenses of petitionary prayers. Defenses, roughly speaking, concern arguments for why God would withhold certain goods from persons unless that person offers petitionary prayers (chapters 6-8). Here Davison critiques recent defenses of petitionary prayer including those offered by Richard Swinburne, Daniel and Frances Howard-Snyder, and Isaac Choi. However, his most significant contribution in this section is his development of The Autonomy Defense. Roughly, this defense claims that through petitionary prayer people authorize God to do things that otherwise might be inappropriate for God to do (p. 136). He further nuances this defense by making a distinction between "permission required goods" and "non-permission required good" (p. 138). The result is a plausible defense of petitionary prayer that fits both libertarian and compatibilist accounts of human freedom. Compatibilists will appreciate this, as compatibilist accounts of petitionary prayer have received little attention in philosophical literature. The final part of the book addresses various practical issues involved in petitionary prayer, the aims of prayer, prayer's relation to faith, and thanksgiving.

This book is a welcome contribution to philosophical discussions concerning petitionary prayer. Novices to the topic, including undergraduates, will find it helpful that Davison defines elementary concepts. They will also find it useful that he has cataloged many recent defenses and challenges to prayer. Readers who believe it is impossible to approach the topic from a purely philosophical angle will find his lack of engagement with theological sources frustrating. Nevertheless, anyone who reads this book will find something that stimulates further reflection on this perennially significant topic. I pray that this book gets the wide audience it deserves.

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James E. Dolezal, *All That Is In God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017, pp. 162, \$18.

James E. Dolezal is an assistant professor at Cairn University's school of divinity. He has previously published on the doctrine of divine simplicity. In his new book, *All That Is In God* (ATIIG), Dolezal offers a concise defense of classical theism. On classical Christian theism, the triune God is a necessarily existent being who is

simple, immutable, impassible, and timeless. ATIIG contains seven chapters that take the reader through these classical attributes and the doctrine of the Trinity.

ATIIG also offers a critique of contemporary evangelical attempts to modify or reject the classical understanding of God. Various contemporary evangelical theologians and philosophers have rejected this understanding of God in favor of a God who enters into a genuine give-and-take relationship with creation. Dolezal labels such thinkers “theistic mutualists.” Dolezal notes that theistic mutualism comes in a variety of forms such as process theism and open theism, but his main target in ATIIG tends to be Calvinists and social trinitarians. It is worth noting that the term “theistic mutualism” is a neologism of Dolezal’s own making. Since theistic mutualism applies to such a broad range of theological views, one might worry that the term is too course-grained to demarcate positions in theology. For example, the underlying metaphysical and theological assumptions within the process theology of Charles Hartshorne are quite different from that of Karl Barth, and yet they are both classified as theistic mutualists in Dolezal’s eyes.

Dolezal starts ATIIG by explaining that this is a work in contemplative theology, and not biblical theology. According to Dolezal, biblical theology is not well-suited for the task of theology proper because biblical theology treats God like a historical character in the narrative of redemption. Instead, Dolezal asserts that one must take the contemplative approach to theology which treats God as ahistorical (p. xv). At this point, one might worry that Dolezal is starting his project with the God of classical theism and then turning to the Bible for proof-texts. One might be worried indeed that this is Dolezal’s approach upon surveying the bibliography of ATIIG. In the bibliography, one will see a preponderance of references to works on Thomistic metaphysics, and yet only one reference to a biblical scholar—D. A. Carson. To be sure, Dolezal will not be offering any engagement with biblical scholars like Richard Bauckham, Walter Brueggemann, Terence Fretheim, John Goldingay, and R. W. L. Moberly. I gather that such biblical scholars are excluded from the conversation because they do not take the contemplative approach to theology.

This is unfortunate since the work of these scholars is a major motivation for believing that the God of the Bible is mutable, passible, and temporal. So one might wonder if Dolezal is ignoring these biblical arguments. Dolezal will deny that he is ignoring these biblical arguments. As he explains, the biblical passages that portray God as mutable, passible, and temporal are easily explained away as metaphorical and anthropomorphic (cf. pp. 85-86). In other places, Dolezal assures us that Thomistic scholars have the correct interpretation of passages like Exodus 3:14 (p. 46). Apparently, there is no need to discuss what Old Testament scholars think of the divine name in Exodus 3 because the contemplative theologians have it covered.

Throughout ATIIG, Dolezal complains that theistic mutualists are unable to maintain the absoluteness and infinite fullness of God’s being. I am not entirely sure what Dolezal means by the terms *absoluteness* and *fullness of being*, but these

terms play a large role in Dolezal’s argument in ATIIG. At times these terms seem to be interchangeable with divine simplicity and immutability (cf. pp. 7-8, and 137). However, in other places, these terms are meant to motivate these doctrines (chapter 3). Hopefully, fullness of being is not identical to divine simplicity and immutability. If it is, the arguments in chapters 2 and 4 are question begging. In these chapters, Dolezal argues that theistic mutualism is incompatible with divine simplicity and immutability. Yet a few of his remarks make it sound like he is arguing that theistic mutualism is incompatible with the absolute fullness of God’s being. A definition of these key terms would help a reader see if Dolezal is begging the question, or offering a substantive argument against theistic mutualism.

The term *infinite* is given a large role as well in Dolezal’s arguments for classical theism. Yet infinity does not receive a definition until page 87 when most of the arguments have already been given. On page 87, ‘infinity’ seems to mean that God is without limitations. Yet in several other places, Dolezal suggests that infinite has a meaning that is analogical to a transfinite mathematical concept (p. 136). These are very different conceptions of infinity, and neither clearly leads to classical theism. This is evidenced by the fact that the definition of divine infinity as “without limits” plays a key role in arguments for pantheism during the 17th and 18th Century pantheism controversy (cf. Philip Clayton, *The Problem of God in Modern Thought*). Further, the mathematical concept of the actual infinite does not obviously have any theological place here as evidenced by the fact that Georg Cantor (the father of transfinite math) did not predicate an actual infinite to God. Instead, Cantor says that there is a different concept of infinity that applies to God: perfection.

There is a further problem related to divine infinity. Dolezal continually claims that divine infinity is the classical understanding of God; but this is demonstrably false. Philosophers like Katherin Rogers, Philip Clayton, and Graham Oppy have pointed out that theologians were wary of predicating infinity of God prior to the scholastic era because of the negative connotations with infinity. Once scholastic thinkers like Aquinas and Scotus start predicating infinity of God, there is no clear agreement between them over the definition of this attribute. So Dolezal needs to offer the reader a clear explication of divine infinity in order to establish its proper place in classical theism. (For more on infinity, see Michael Heller and W. Hugh Woodin, eds., *Infinity: New Research Frontiers*.)

Whatever terms like *absoluteness*, *infinity*, and *fullness of being* mean, Dolezal thinks that theistic mutualists are incapable of maintaining them. Hence, Dolezal says theistic mutualism entails idolatry. The accusation of idolatry is a recurring theme throughout the book (cf. p. 6-7, 58). It is a curious accusation, since the God of theistic mutualism is a necessarily existent triune being who is the omnipotent and omniscient Creator of all contingent reality. Of course, the God of theistic mutualism acquires accidental properties like “being the *Creator*.” For Dolezal, this entails that the mutualist God is an idol. I must confess that this is a rather impressive idol.

Much more impressive than the idols that Isaiah rejected. However, Dolezal argues that such a God is an idol because this God acquires being and actuality from His creatures when He acquires accidental properties like “being the *Creator*” (p. 97).

At this point, it is worth noting two things. First, throughout ATIIG, Dolezal uncritically accepts Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics, and offers little explication of these philosophical concepts. One will need to read a further source, like Edward Feser’s *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*, in order to see just how much Thomistic metaphysics is being assumed in Dolezal’s work. Second, throughout ATIIG, Dolezal pays little attention to the essentialist metaphysics of his opponents. At times, the caricatures of his opponents’ metaphysics are painfully apparent. Allow me to illustrate.

According to Dolezal, contemporary theistic mutualists tend to say that God’s *being* refers to God’s *essence* or *nature*. Dolezal complains that mutualists just do not understand ontology because this is not the true, existential meaning of *being* that one finds in the scholastic metaphysical tradition. On this scholastic understanding, *being* refers to actuality or any participation in the act of existing (pp. 7-8). Much like with Dolezal’s handling of biblical passages, there is no need for debate with contemporary metaphysicians on these sorts of things because the Thomists clearly have the right metaphysical story. As Dolezal sees things, theistic mutualists have unwittingly embraced a rudimentary form of process theism instead of affirming the true notion of being (pp. 7-8).

To be clear, the theistic mutualists that Dolezal critiques do not unwittingly embrace a rudimentary form of process theism. For example, one of Dolezal’s targets is John Feinberg. In Feinberg’s *No One Like Him*, an entire chapter is devoted to critiquing process theism. Feinberg also articulates the essentialist metaphysics that he is working with in his theology. However, Dolezal shows no clear understanding of the essentialism his opponents embrace. Thankfully, Jay Wesley Richards’s *The Untamed God: A Philosophical Exploration of Divine Perfection, Simplicity, and Immutability* spends two chapters laying out an essentialist metaphysics before critiquing the doctrines of God found in process theology, Barthian thought, and classical theism. Readers who are interested in understanding the clear and widely acknowledged differences between theistic essentialism and process theology should start with Richards’s book.

ATIIG is intended for popular evangelical audiences. To his credit, Dolezal has given us a concise articulation of classical theism that can serve as a primer for students and pastors. This will be ideal for readers of this journal who are looking for an introduction to the classical doctrine of God and its place within evangelical theology. However, more advanced students will need to look elsewhere for a defense of classical theism that fully engages with opponents to the classical doctrine of God. For these advanced students, I recommend Katherin Roger’s *Perfect Being Theology*.

Pastors may also wish to find a more charitable introductory text to classical theism that does not accuse others of idolatry. To be fair to Dolezal, I have seen some of Dolezal’s Calvinist interlocutors accuse open theists of idolatry. I have also witnessed open and relational theists accuse classical theists of idolatry. So the charge of idolatry is being thrown around by all sides within contemporary evangelical theology. Perhaps evangelical theologians should lay off the idolatry card, and focus more on the arguments.

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Sailhamer, John H. *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995, pp. 327, \$21.99, paperback.

John H. Sailhamer (1946-2017) taught Old Testament at Biola University, Bethel Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Western Seminary, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Golden Gate Baptist Seminary. In 2000, he was elected president of the Evangelical Theological Society, and made major contributions to Evangelical Old Testament scholarship through his writing. Sailhamer recently passed away and a review of one of his significant contributions is merited as it has retained its value for over 20 years. He published over fifteen books, many articles and contributions to edited volumes, and left a legacy for appreciating the Old Testament that can inspire and continue to guide Biblical Studies students today.

Sailhamer’s classic work, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach*, is designed to provide a “student-oriented, comprehensive overview of the discipline” (p. 5). Additionally, Sailhamer sought to offer a fresh contribution to Evangelical Old Testament scholarship through his own canonical approach. His book has three parts: an introduction, historical and methodological overview, and a concluding section containing Sailhamer’s own methodological proposal for a biblical theology of the Old Testament. The appendices after his concluding chapter provide short examples of his canonical approach.

In part one, Sailhamer examines what is meant by the words Old Testament Theology, which he defines as “the study and presentation of what is revealed in the Old Testament” (p. 17). The Old Testament scholar’s task involves hermeneutics, language, translation, exegesis, and introductory questions (date, author, genre, form) as well as articulating the dynamic relationship of the Old to New Testament (making this a distinctly Christian enterprise), the Old Testament within the context of the Ancient Near East, and then presenting the conclusion of this process in a specific format.

Part two (The Methodology of the Old Testament) is the largest portion of Sailhamer’s book. In chapter two, he proposes a linguistic, taxonomical approach

(componential analysis) in order to evaluate the assumptions that drive the different Old Testament theologies. His binary (+/-) approach evaluates four general components that comprise scholars working assumptions: text or event, criticism or canon, descriptive or confessional, and diachronic or synchronic. These binary components are the subject of the four subsequent chapters.

Chapter three (Text or Event) considers whether an OT theology focuses on the Hebrew text or the historical events behind the text. Responding to the historical criticism of Modern critical scholarship, conservative (Evangelical) scholars have reacted by retaining the historical methodology of Modern biblical criticism to demonstrate the meaningfulness and reliability of the Old Testament. Sailhamer's proposed corrective is for Evangelicals to take seriously their own claim that revelation is tied to the *written* Word of God, with the result that claims to verbal inspiration should lead one to adopt a text-oriented approach to the meaning of the Old Testament rather than an event-oriented method, however useful for apologetic purposes.

Chapter four (Criticism or Canon) examines approaches to OT theology that either focus on the reconstruction of previous forms of the text or those that focus on the final form. These approaches can be further sub-divided by the previous question concerning text- or event-oriented assumptions to help the student situate the major critical sub-fields of biblical studies, including literary, source, form, tradition, phenomenological, canon, composition, redaction, text-linguistic, and historical criticism.

In chapter five (Descriptive or Confessional), Sailhamer considers methods which exclusively utilize scientific methodology so as to more objectively describe the theology of the Old Testament, and those which retain faith commitment intentionally. After a lengthy overview in which he attempts "to take all the current and past versions of the origin of biblical and OT theology into account" (p. 117), he concludes by contending that even confessional approaches must attempt to be as descriptive as possible in order to consider the meaning of the Old Testament to the original audience.

Finally, in chapter six (Diachronic or Synchronic), he examines the diachronic or synchronic approaches by which OT scholars choose to present their Old Testament theologies. Diachronic approaches are generally temporally ordered, but some are structured by logical connections while others are constructed by thematic connections built on a temporal sequence. Synchronic approaches, on the other hand, are organized by major topics or central ideas, and include synchronic-systematic, synchronic-synthetic, and synchronic-scriptural presentations. Although ultimately proposing a diachronic model, Sailhamer is sympathetic to other modes of Old Testament theological presentation and concedes their validity based on their usefulness in their specific context.

Part Three contains Sailhamer's proposal for his canonical theology of the Old Testament. In this chapter, he shows how his four basic assumptions (text, canon,

confessional, and diachronic) shape his specific approach. Sailhamer contends for a text-oriented approach because his view of Scripture as divine revelation in verbal inspiration leads him to find the meaning of the Old Testament in the history of God's acts with his people *as represented in the Hebrew text*, not in a reconstruction of the factual, historical events. Thus, he proposes a text-theory that takes seriously philology, in-textuality, inner-textuality, inter-textuality, con-textuality, narratology, and compositional strategy. As Sailhamer locates divine revelation in the final form, he finds value in tradition and text-criticism only in so far as they contribute towards helping understand the meaning of the final form of the canon. His confessional approach appreciates the apologetic usefulness of historical method for demonstrating the general truthfulness of the Old Testament, but does not utilize it for understanding the meaning of the final text. Finally, he proposes a diachronic approach that follows the structure of the Hebrew Bible (Law, Prophets, and Writings) because the nature of the Hebrew Bible lends towards a diachronic approach due to inter-textuality, canonical redaction, and con-textuality.

After his concluding proposal, Sailhamer includes four appendices that illustrate his approach. Appendix A evaluates the major themes and purpose of the Law in the Pentateuch. Appendix B applies compositional critical methodology to the Pentateuch in order to highlight the specific compositional strategies at work. Appendix C is a consideration of literary techniques in the narrative world of Genesis, while Appendix D is an exegetical investigation of the inter-biblical interpretation in 1 Chronicles 21:1.

Sailhamer's *Introduction to Old Testament Theology* still maintains significant value for the student in three ways. First, Sailhamer's taxonomical analysis of the assumptions driving different methods for Old Testament theologies will help every student, pastor, and even scholar quickly and insightfully situate Old Testament theologies by their assumptions. Second, his categorical distinctions will help the student in developing their own method for studying and presenting the theology of the Old Testament. The historical and methodological overview will help students to assess their own assumptions and intentionally choose their own approach. Finally, Sailhamer's own canonical approach offers a method that takes seriously divine revelation and yet does not become overly fixated with attempting to prove the historicity of the narratives. Rather, separating methodologically from the historical method, the text-oriented, canonical approach offers a confessional student of the Old Testament a diachronic method which takes the historical facticity of the text for granted, and focuses on compositional strategies in order to exegete the meaning of the Old Testament for the church today. Sailhamer's introduction belongs on the bookshelf of every biblical studies student, pastor, and Old Testament scholar.

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Seevers, Boyd. *Warfare in the Old Testament: The Organization, Weapons, and Tactics of Ancient Near Eastern Armies*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2013.

Warfare in the Old Testament by Boyd Seevers documents the reality of warfare in the history of the six most prominent nations of the Old Testament, specifically: Israel, Egypt, Philistia, Assyria, Babylon and Persia. Each nation is examined through the events, duties, weapons, and battles from a historical background of known conflicts. The discussion of military organization, weapons, strategy and tactics allow Seevers to guide the reader by providing details of these armies through stories, historical information, military artifacts, drawings, sketches and maps. Through the eyes of a civilian, Seevers tells the story of a native Israeli who comments in an interview, “I can’t imagine life without the army” (p. 19). Warfare affected the lives of the people. The idea of people desiring, “that we may be like all nations, and that our king my judge us and go out before us and fight our battles” (1 Samuel 8:20) is brought into context, “in the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle” (2 Samuel 11:1).

Seevers’ writing engages the reader to consider the details of Israel’s war involvement and the sovereignty of God is emphasized in His aid to the nation merging the biblical narrative with application of the history of war. Biblical and extra-biblical accounts are woven together providing a picture to the reader. Scripture references allow one to refer to the specifics for themselves. For example, in Joshua, the details of the entrance into Canaan and the battle of Jericho are magnified as the significance of physical protection by the Lord during the time of healing from circumcision. This biblical story is paralleled with a modern soldier’s story from Seevers’ life experience. Israel’s five major enemies, although there were other nations, are highlighted in the different eras of their history. Egypt was a large empire to the West where the Israelites escaped by the hand of God through Moses. However, they continued to exert influence throughout the region. The Seafaring Philistines troubled Israel during the period of the Judges and early monarchy. The Assyrian’s cruelty destroyed the northern Kingdom of Israel while turning Judah into a vassal state and laid siege upon Jerusalem. Babylon’s attack on Judah carried its people into exile also with the spoils of war. The Medes and Persians later overthrew the Babylonian empire. Seevers illustrates the unique features of each culture by describing battles from the perspective of one of its military commanders along with organization, weapons and tactics.

Old Testament scholars seek to avoid relegating Scripture to secondary status. As theologians, one seeks to understand the hermeneutical construction of the biblical texts claiming that God is the first source initiator and sustainer of events. War in the Old Testament does not have a simple solution. Seevers provides an excellent basis for focusing on Scripture and allowing it to enlighten one’s theology. God’s

ideal judgment of Israel’s enemies is left to Yahweh as a warrior. Israel fights with Yahweh under the rule of the judges and Saul; again under David; while Yahweh fights against Israel’s disobedience by sending the nation into exile. Security against external threats is grounded in the warrior of Yahweh and not the armies of the people. One cannot understand the Old Testament without reference to war. Bethel, an important city to ancient Israel, was destroyed four times in the two-hundred year period from the time of the Judges to the establishment of the Davidic monarchy. The differences between Israel and their enemies point to different value systems. The focus of obedience to Yahweh is reflected in that the Israelites did not glorify warfare as did their neighbors. Israel did not engage in hero worship or erecting monuments commemorating battles as did the Assyrians. Such focus is found in Isaiah, who prophesied during military crises by exhorting the nation to trust in God alone to meet these military needs (Isaiah 19:1-3; 30:15-18; 31:1-5). God alone has the right to destroy and kill. For example, in Joshua 5:13-15, Joshua asks the army commander of the Lord whether he is for us, or for our adversary? Neither! The Lord is for those who follow His command. The book provides an excellent background and context for the biblical text. Seevers’ synthesis and summary of Ancient Near East provides a resources for pastors working to exegete a text, even though Seevers writes expositively. The book may also be an opportunity for a Bible study, military Chaplin, or anyone seeking to view the Old Testament through a lens that is not often considered as it spans the whole of Israel’s national, military history and how weaponry, armor and military structure changed over the centuries as the Lord led.

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Oliphint, K. Scott, *Thomas Aquinas (Great Thinkers)*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017, pp. 145, \$14.99, paperback.

Scott Oliphint serves as professor of apologetics and systematic theology at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. He studied directly under Cornelius Van Til, the father of present-day presuppositional apologetics. Oliphint champions Van Til’s view in the twenty-first century through his publications, such as, *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles and Practice in Defense of Our Faith*; *Revelation and Reason: New Essays in Reformed Apologetics*; as well as the editor for numerous books on Cornelius Van Til, including: *The Defense of the Faith*; *Christian Theistic Evidences*, and *Common Grace and The Gospel*. His latest contribution, *Thomas Aquinas*, is one book in a series of publications reviewing “Great Thinkers,” which seek to understand and evaluate influential theologians and philosophers throughout church history.

At the outset of the book, Oliphint states his interest in this book is to argue that Reformed Thomism cannot be reconciled with historic Reformed theology. “Whatever ‘Reformed Thomism’ might be,” says Oliphint, “or might mean, in our current context, it cannot be a synthesis of biblically foreign Thomistic teachings and a consistent, biblical theology” (p. 3). He believes Reformed theologians either cannot incorporate Aquinas’s views into their theology, or, if incorporated, Thomism must be “reworked and reoriented—‘reshaped,’ as it were—in order to be consistent with a Reformed theological context” (p. 2). Moreover, since Aquinas’s literature is so vast and voluminous, Oliphint narrows the scope of his analysis to two topics: “the foundation of *existence* (*principium essendi*), which is God himself, and the foundation of *knowledge* (*principium cognoscendi*), which is God’s revelation” (p. 2). After a brief overview and introduction, Oliphint divides his work accordingly, offering one chapter on each *principium* and a conclusion.

Oliphint addresses the *principium cognoscendi* by outlining Aquinas’s view of reason and revelation, the problem of self-existence, epistemology and metaphysics, and the *praeambula fidei* (preambles of the faith). For Aquinas, there is a twofold truth of divine things. The first is by way of natural reason, and the second by way of revelation. “Thomas thinks that natural reason forms the foundational structure of which revelation is the superstructure, in part because of his understanding of certain biblical passages” claims Oliphint (p. 13). In particular, Aquinas bases his natural theology on Romans 1:19, arguing, “It is written (Rom. 1:19), *That which is known of God, namely, what can be known of God by natural reason, is manifest in them*” (p. 13, emphasis in original). Thus, Aquinas believes natural reason is able, by itself, to demonstrate God’s existence and obtain knowledge of him (p. 13). Oliphint’s primary critique of Aquinas in this chapter is epistemological. He claims that Aquinas has an anemic view of the noetic effects of sin and the proper function of “natural reason.” Oliphint quotes one person, noting, “Whereas the medieval doctors had assumed that the fall affected primarily the will and its affections and *not the reason*, the Reformers assumed also the fallenness of the rational faculty” (p. 33). Therefore, Oliphint responds to each level of Aquinas’s argument, namely, he addresses: 1) the relationship between the noetic effects of sin and natural theology; 2) faults he finds in Aquinas’s exegesis of passages such as John 1:9 and Romans 1:19, namely, he believes they do not allow for natural theology; and 3) the self-evident knowledge of God *via the sensus divinitatis* (i.e., Oliphint believes the rebellious natural man reject this third type of knowledge because it is the only sure form of knowledge, not a form of knowledge derived from natural theology or natural reason, since he considers both of these modes unsure forms of knowledge). Oliphint continues this critique throughout his chapter on the *principium essendi* where he discusses God’s existence, nature, knowledge, and attributes (pp. 55-77). He also evaluates the classical attributes of God (e.g., the prospect of affirming classical theism), in

particular Eleonore Stump’s models of simplicity. We will now proceed to a brief evaluation.

First, Oliphint interacts significantly with classic texts by Aquinas and demonstrates a thorough knowledge of secondary literature in Thomistic studies. Conceivably, some Thomists will be concerned that Oliphint has not read a sufficient amount of primary and secondary literature in Thomistic studies. Such a Thomist need not be concerned; for Oliphint demonstrates a noteworthy depth in the primary and secondary sources, including his remarkable breath of knowledge concerning sundry scholarly debates amongst Thomists. For example, Oliphint interacts well with a debate over the *praeambula fidei*, noting that one camp believes Aquinas offers a *purely philosophical* “preambles of the faith,” and those following Gilson, who argue that Thomas’s philosophical theology is primarily *theological* (p. 26). Therefore, critics of Oliphint should not dismiss his criticisms at the level of insufficient knowledge or improper dedication to the plethora of primary and secondary Thomistic resources.

Second, Oliphint seems rightly to understand significant differences between Aquinas and numerous Reformed theologians. However, in the conclusion of Oliphint’s book he offers an inadequate understanding of the primary differences between Thomism and Molinism and the nature of God’s knowledge. He claims that Molina’s view of middle knowledge (*scientia media*) is based upon a Thomistic understanding of God’s knowledge of future contingent things (p. 125). Unfortunately, this is a misreading of both Aquinas and Molina. Aquinas did not claim, contrary to Molina, that God’s knowledge of future contingents is based upon actual persons or events, and the way those individuals would freely act in a given situation. Namely, Aquinas’s view does not fall prey to the grounding objection leveled against middle knowledge. For Aquinas, God knows himself perfectly; therefore, God knows his causality perfectly (including future contingent events and beings) and his knowledge is in no way dependent upon future contingent free choices. Therefore, unlike Molinism, Thomism does not fall prey to the grounding objection because God is the ground of his knowledge. Second, Molinism allows for a discursive element to God’s knowledge, even if it is a logical discursiveness, because of the *way* middle knowledge functions and the *means* God obtains his foreknowledge of the actual world. Aquinas would reject this view of God’s knowledge, first, because God is Pure Act and lacks the ability to change. Second, since God’s being is the proper object of his knowledge (which lacks the ability change), not mutable future contingent objects, his knowledge is not grounded on mutable beings and does not require any change in the act of cognition. In brief, these differences between Aquinas and Molina on this topic are not one of degree, but of kind.

Nonetheless, Oliphint offers a strong reminder to theologians that our view of God and revelation must first and foremost be grounded upon Scripture, not philosophical reasoning. His consistent interaction with the primary and secondary

literature of Aquinas demonstrates that Reformed theologians in particular, whether they embrace Aquinas or not, must filter Thomas’s thought through biblical theology and the confessional standards of Reformed thought (p. 126). In that sense, Oliphint provides not only a clear and throughout explanation of Aquinas, but a reminder that Scripture must be our source-criterion and ultimate authority for all Christian theology, philosophy, and apologetics.

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