JBTS

EPHESIANS AND THE POWERS

Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies

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Introduction: Ephesians and the Powers

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The Epistle to the Ephesians is a masterful work of inspired, canonical biblical literature that contains numerous famous scriptural passages and significant theological themes. Ephesians teaches us that, although we were "dead in our trespasses and sins "(2:1), God, in his mercy, has made us "alive together with Christ" by grace through faith apart from our own works (2:6–11). We learn, likewise, that in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God has made Jews and Gentiles "one new man" (2:15) by the "blood of Christ" (2:13), reconciling us to himself " in one body through the cross" (2:16). Drawn together as one by the Spirit, states the author of Ephesians, God has made us into a temple and a dwelling place for himself (2:18–22).

It is sometimes claimed that Ephesians is the epistle of "ecclesiology," since its focus on the church is so glorious and frequent. Yet, the theology of Ephesians is as much about pneumatology, christology, and soteriology as it is about ecclesiology. In fact, in Ephesians, all of these theological concepts are masterfully integrated into a coherent systematic whole in a concise and clear manner that is unique among the documents of the New Testament.

Most pertinent to the topic of this volume is the proposition that the author expounds in Ephesians 3:10–11, namely, that it is through the church that the truth of the Gospel is made known to "the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." When the author finally gets to his famous teaching on spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6:10–20, the claim of Ephesians 3:10—and of the entire epistle—is further illuminated. The church is not depicted by the author as consisting of a collection of individual salvation solo projects standing side by side in the same location. Rather, in Ephesians, the church is cast as a covenantal community of integrated co-communicants who together participate in the divine life of God (4:18; cf. Col 3:1–4; 2 Pet 1:4) "in Christ" (Eph 1:1–14) as the "one new man" in whom exists "the fullness of God" (Eph 2:15; cf. Col 3:19).

The various chapters of this volume come from different cultural and theological perspectives from within the global Christian tradition spanning geographically from Arizona to Australia and theologically from Arminianism to

Calvinism. With a diverse set of contributors and theological perspectives, there is no doubt that every reader will be challenged and strengthened in the faith as they assess, critique, and integrate the various arguments set forth in this book to their own theology and praxis of spiritual engagement with the Powers. What is striking, however, from an editorial standpoint, is that while the volume is truly theologically diverse, each piece still sits comfortably underneath a broad, orthodox evangelical tent. The common thread that binds the chapters together into a coherent whole is obvious from the title of the volume, *Ephesians and the Powers*. Yet, it is worth noting another thread of coherence in advance. Each chapter offers new and unexpected perspectives on the Powers while remaining firmly within an orthodox framework. One might suspect that reckless innovation would be required in order to bring something new to the table on the topic of spiritual Powers. Typically in theological studies, innovation in this area has involved creedal or doctrinal deviation. Specifically, on the topic of the Powers, innovation has historically included a denial of their existence or arguments that advocate for some form of demythologization. However, it is refreshing to see that new perspectives on the Powers can be arrived at without transgressing the boundaries of the historic Christian faith in ways that contribute to and strengthen orthodoxy and orthopraxy rather than assault them.

In Dan Darko's chapter, "'The Ruler of the Power of the Air' in the Salvific Story of Ephesians 2," a helpful critique is offered in which the common soteriological emphasis on salvation as a "metaphorical visa for eschatological bliss in heaven" is corrected by setting Ephesians' soteriological teachings in their proper context in relation to the Powers. Ephesians, Darko argues, is of course about salvation, but a salvation that is rooted in the reality of God's triumph over the "prince of the power of the air." Thus, reading Ephesians' soteriology in light of its pneumatology delivers a significantly more theocentric—rather than the more typically encountered anthropocentric—theological understanding of salvation in the epistle.

Soteriology gets "spatial" in two of the contributions of this volume, introducing readers to the cosmological background to the language of "the heavens" in Ephesians. In "'You Have Been Raised with Christ': Investigating the Spatial Portrait of New Creation in Ephesians," Luke Hoselton links the soteriology of Ephesians with the Pauline spatial framework of the Powers together with the theme of New Creation. Providing an entirely different, but related, perspective is Eric Covington in his contribution, "Power and the 'Powers' in Thomas Aquinas' *Lectura ad Ephesios*." Covington draws our attention to recent translations of Aquinas' exegetical work in his biblical commentaries. In his chapter, he outlines some of the key features of Aquinas' interpretation of Ephesians and the Powers, including providing a helpful overview of Aquinas' interpretation of the detailed medieval hierarchies of malevolent and benevolent spiritual forces and their relation to the soteriological arguments set forth in Ephesians.

The chapter will surely leave many (especially Protestant) readers wondering: "If Aquinas is a doctor of the Church and one of the premier theologians in Church history, why have I not read more of his commentaries?" Given that Aquinas lived before the Protestant Reformation, his brilliant work—like the work of Augustine and other luminaries from church history—belongs to the whole church. There should not be a Protestant or Catholic who gets through seminary without serious engagement with the works of Aquinas.

Three separate chapters in this volume deal directly with Ephesians 6:10–20, and each one offers a unique exegetical and theological analysis and application of the passage. First, Mark and Nancy Kreitzer offer a comparative exegesis of Pauline and Johannine texts on the themes of spiritual warfare and spiritual growth in "Three Cycles of Growth: Warfare and Spiritual Metamorphosis in John and Paul." The Kreitzers identify a shared three-fold pattern in 1 John 2:12–14 and Ephesians 6:10–24 related to spiritual growth which has evangelistic and missional implications.

Joshua Greever, in his chapter "The Armor of God, the Gospel of Christ, and Standing Firm against the 'Powers' (Ephesians 6:10–20)," argues, on the basis of a careful and skillful grammatical-historical exegesis of Ephesians, that Ephesians depicts believers as being clothed in the armor of God himself in virtue of their union with Christ by faith. This divine empowerment and protection ensures that believers rely entirely on Christ in order to stand firm against the evil, supernaturally powerful, spiritual beings—the Powers. Greever's christological reading of the Divine Armor motif through the lens of the Divine Warrior intertexts of the Old Testament leads him to clearly articulate Ephesians' focus on the necessarily divine foundation of salvation. In this regard, Greever's exegetical and theological insights resonate with Darko's earlier emphases on God's own action in the victory over the Powers and in the salvation of believers.

In "Ephesians and Evangelical Activism: The Covenantal, Corporate, and Missional Components of the Ecclesial Armor of God," John Frederick, like the Kreitzers (and later Gomersall), detects a missional component to the armor of God metaphor. The majority of his treatment of the passage is aimed at correcting individualistic, gnostic readings of the Powers that envision the metaphor to be an extension of the ethical paraenesis in Ephesians 4:17–6:9. By recalibrating the metaphor around its corporate and covenantal context, and reframing the Powers according to Walter Wink's phenomenology of the Powers, Frederick offers a new framework for evangelical social activism as spiritual warfare. He argues that a corporate view of both the armor of God and the Powers results in the church's Spirit-empowered, missional engagement in the spiritual battle against the Powers as they work through human structures, systems, persons, and ideologies.

Simon Gomersall and Vicky Balabanski, both writing and working from Australia, continue the focus on contextual readings and applications of the Powers, expanding the focus to include a much-needed attentiveness to multi-cultural

exegesis and mission. Both are careful to beware of Western-centric readings that prefer to discount and dismiss the experiences and interpretations of indigenous and Global South Christians' theological affirmation of the existence of real demonic beings. In this regard, both chapters can serve to highlight a model for theological engagement that incorporates diverse cultural perspectives as a part of the faithful, global development and understanding of biblical, systematic, and practical theology.

In "Considering the Impact of Missiology on Contemporary Understandings of 'Principalities and Powers,'" Gomersall traces the trajectory in modern theology to demythologization and from demythologization back to a more comprehensive, biblical view of the Powers. The chapter then offers a unique analysis into the impetus for this re-empowerment of the Powers, so to speak, from a much needed global, missiological perspective.

Vicky Balabanski offers a valuable comparative exegesis—essential for any study of Ephesians and the Powers— in "Reading Ephesians in Dialogue with the Powers in Colossians." Noting the close connections between Colossians and Ephesians, Balabanski analyzes the Powers in both texts through the lens of a cultural comparison between indigenous Australian Christians and non-indigenous Australian Christians. The pneumatology and cosmology of Ephesians and Colossians is then read in dialogue with other ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman works thus situating the biblical text within its literary and historical context. The results provide an illuminating discourse on the Powers in Ephesians and Colossians in their theological, literary, and historical context, and a fascinating picture of Australian culture and spirituality.

In "Bonhoeffer and the Way of the Crucified: *Methodeia*, Doctrine, and the 'Powers'" Jonathan K. Sharpe and Jerry Pillay apply the concept of the *methodeia* in Ephesians 4:14 and 6:11 to doctrinal deviation as a work of demonic spiritual Powers. The chapter offers a theological interpretation of Ephesians in which this reading is applied as a critical framework through which to critique the "pyrotheology" of Peter Rollins as a form of *methodeia*.

Thus, this volume includes a collection of essays that explore the Powers as they relate to soteriology, spatial themes and cosmology, spiritual warfare, culture, and mission. Finally, the book concludes with Sharpe and Pillay's unique and important expansion of the topic of the Powers to the area of Christian doctrine.

It is a credit to the forward thinking folks at the *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* (JBTS) and Grand Canyon University/Grand Canyon Theological Seminary that volumes like this current book can be organized around a common topic, thus making the potential scholarly and ecclesial impact, as well as the theological coherence to each volume, substantially greater. The open source platform of JBTS, combined with print and theological database components, make this journal series an innovative trailblazer in the world of peer-reviewed biblical and theological publications. With easy access, a quick editorial turnaround, and

a collaborative team, we are delighted to see JBTS setting the new standard for scholarly possibilities in a manner that exudes effectiveness and excellence. The editors for this special edition volume are exceedingly grateful and satisfied with the professionalism of JBTS. We are particularly impressed with the collegial and scholarly excellence of the work of Dan Diffey, for his gracious assistance and clear direction as the preparation of the manuscripts were underway. It is with sincere thanks as well, to you the reader, that we offer this volume as a means of exploring the important implications of spiritual warfare and the Powers in the life of the Christian faith, the Church, and the mission of God for the life of the world.

And so, wherever you are on your spiritual journey, we pray that you would lean into the sovereign protection of the Spirit of the living God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ his Son, who is himself our spiritual armor, our strength, our shield, our rock of refuge, our salvation, our joy, our hope, our peace, and our perfect righteousness, now and forever, world without end.

The LORD bless you and keep you: The LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you: The LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. In the name of God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

'The Ruler of the Power of the Air' in the Salvific Story of Ephesians 2

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Abstract: Post-enlightenment theological articulations of what salvation entail often ostracize Satan in the process and limit the experience to a transaction between God and humans. The idea of 'salvation by grace' is however borrowed from Ephesians 2 where pre-conversion life was purportedly lived under the domain of Satan. The human condition is engineered by diabolic influence. Thus, people are saved from satanic influence and its attendant consequences of sin, social breakdown, fleshly impulses etc. to belong to a people of God. Spiritual warfare is meant to curb pressures from evil powers to maintain faithful standing in God. Salvation would be incomplete, according to Ephesians 2, if it did not include deliverance from the control of 'the ruler of the power of the air.'

Key Words: Ephesians, salvation, Satan principalities, Spirit

Introduction

The Christian concept of salvation has increasingly become nebulous in the ecclesial and mainstream theological reasoning of our time. What Christians mean when they suggest that the non-Christian needs to be saved varies from place to place. One recurrent feature of various articulations across the denominational spectrum is the notion of "salvation by grace."[1] The post-sixteenth century Reformers and John Newton's eighteenth-century composition of "Amazing Grace" have undoubtedly reinforced pedestrian theology in this regard. However, the condition from which people are saved by grace and the question of to what they are saved remains contested.

Existential theologians resist the idea of salvation as the transformation of the soul or as a metaphorical visa for eschatological bliss in heaven and argue for more pragmatic overtures. Rudolf Bultmann,[2] who championed this notion of salvation, argued for a disavowal of selfish ambitions, pursuit of material things, and a false

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1. Modern trends in Pauline scholarship and interest in "justification by faith/faithfulness" is rather divorced from the theological concerns of mainstream Christian discourse.

2. See Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Scribner, 1958), 39–45 and Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth,* ed. H. Bartsch (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 9–38.

sense of security in order to place one's faith in God alone. In this frame, "faith means abandoning the quest for tangible realities and transitory objects . . . to the opening of our hearts to the grace of God, allowing him to release us from the past and bring us into his future."[3] As Erickson puts it, it calls for the "fundamental alteration of our *Existenz,* our whole outlook and conduct of life."[4] Liberation theology and various ideological theologies take it further, locating the human condition in the need of salvation from systemic injustice and inequities that engender oppression, bigotry, and despise human dignity. They argue that true salvation reorders society to be fair and just, thereby contending that salvation must alleviate human suffering caused by poverty, social inequalities, and injustice. These theologies argue that "[t]he salvation of all persons from oppression is the goal of God's work in history and must therefore be the task of those who believe in him."[5] Conversely, traditional Roman Catholic soteriology takes a mystical bent in the way sin and the human condition is viewed. Salvation from the fallen condition of the human race is by grace, but grace may be accessed only by members of the church via the sacraments. In other words, "outside the [Roman Catholic] church there is no salvation."[6] Recent amendments to this position, however, allow for some Christians who do not belong to the tradition—even some non-Christians—the possibility of being able to access God's grace.[7]

Protestant traditions[8] emphasize sin as the cause of a broken relationship with God that may be remedied in salvation by the substitutionary atonement of Christ Jesus.[9] Believers find salvation in what Jesus did on the cross to atone for their sins. All of these soteriological views focus on the individual person/soul or on a social issue; it is not about God's agenda. Moreover, apart from Ransom Theory, a view of atonement that is largely dismissed, the devil features scantly in the portrait of the human condition that necessitates God's intervention in salvation nowadays.[10]

3. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998)*,* 911–912.

4. Ibid.*,* 912.

5. Ibid. 909.

6. Cyprian of Carthage, *Epistle* 73.21 as cited in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: DoubleDay, 2003), 224, CCC846.

7. Erickson, *Christian Theology,* 917.

8. It is broad to refer to Protestant traditions but here I use the expression to characterize Protestant and non-denominational churches, some of whose members do not even know the core of their theological convictions.

9. Erickson, *Christian Theology,* 918.

10. Carol Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 155. The Ransom theory is no longer held by any mainstream Christian denomination. The main thesis of the theory is that the just God required justice for the sins of humanity. Appealing to Mark 10:45, proponents advocated that Christ died as a ransom paid to Satan in order to secure salvation. Early Christian figures like Justin Martyr, Origen, Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa were all proponents of versions of this view. In light of this work, it is important to note that this is the only view that placed Satan at the center of the condition of the unsaved. Today, Catholics lean towards the Satisfaction theory of atonement (after Anselm) while Protestants typically promote Substitutionary theories of atonement.

Theories of salvation have otherwise focused principally on the faithfulness of God, social welfare, and/or salvation in the form of a transaction between the individual and God *en voyage* to heaven.[11]

As a letter, Ephesians features "principalities and powers" prominently both in its portrait of pre-conversion life and in the efforts of the powers to destabilize Christ followers in their current standing with God (Eph 4:27; 6:10–14). This study endeavors to show the role of "the ruler of the power of the air" in what salvation entails in the letter, especially in chapter 2. The work examines the ruler of the air's role in the human condition that prompted and warranted the gracious act of God in salvation. I examine the Greek text closely against the backdrop of ancient spirit cosmology. Methodologically, the focus is on how the text portrays the role of the spiritual being in salvation. It highlights certain pitfalls in prevailing contemporary soteriological formulations and underlines the framework within which "salvation by grace" ought to be conceived. It will become apparent that humans are not the main actors in salvation; rather salvation occurs as God's triumph over "the ruler of the power of the air" in a custody battle over the lives of human beings in God's unfolding mystery. To ostracize Satan in the salvific framework, as if God is working for humans, would be to misconstrue what salvation entails in Ephesians 2.

The aphorism "salvation by grace"[12] is like a crutch for many in modern Christianity. The phrase appears only in Ephesians 2. Ironically, popular claims to being saved by grace have been insufficient to attract critical studies or biblical theological analysis. For example, recent works on New Testament theology do not provide adequate space to the exploration of salvation in Ephesians.[13] The best effort surfaces in Matera's brief mention of Ephesians 2 in his discussion on justification and reconciliation relative to Torah observance.[14] Meanwhile, no other letter in the corpus of Paul puts χάρις ("grace") and σῴζω ("to save") in close proximity to describe the matrix, means, or nature of salvation. Unlike Romans, Ephesians does not use δικαίωμα ("justification") to describe salvation but χάρις. Ephesians frames what it means to be saved in a particular spirit cosmology to underscore the wretched conditions of the past and God's gracious intervention.

11.   J. M. Vorster, "A Case for a Transforming Christology in South Africa," *JRT* 7 (2013): 310–326. Observations from theological discourse amidst the social ills of South Africa showed that misguided Christology and Soteriology—Reformed, Arminian, and Liberation theologies—gave an impetus and even a rationale for apartheid and subsequent violent reactions to it. Theology was employed to justify resistance to apartheid or fueled divisive socio-political causes with parties claiming to be advancing the kingdom of God.

12.   The phrases "salvation by grace" and "justification by faith" are purported to encapsulate Pauline soteriology, to a large extent.

13.   See Ben Witherington III, *New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 385–442; Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 392–407; Frank J. Matera, *God's Saving Grace: A Pauline Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012) and I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 379–395.

14.   Matera, *God's Saving Grace,* 111–112.

The object of inquiry, "the ruler of the power of the air," features only in the first sentence (2:1–7) of Ephesians 2. However, it is important that his role be located in the broader portrait of the salvific story. Here, I devote a substantial amount of space to examining the first sentence, and then proceed to show what the author seeks to convey about salvation in the rest of the chapter. I suggest that any artificial break at 2:10 and 2:11 is misleading in regard to what is being espoused (see below). The role of the "powers" in the rest of the letter makes sense only when one comes to terms with the function of the two main spiritual actors in salvation, namely God and the devil.

The State of 'Spiritual' Death in the Pre-Conversion Past

Ephesians 2 opens with an articulation of the human condition in need of salvation. The long sentence indicates that salvation is required because of humanity's state of spiritual death marked by sin and trespasses (cf. Luke 15:24, 34) along with associated social, mental, and moral conditions. The absence of chapter divisions in the original manuscript shows the obvious continuum with the preceding discourse about the death and exaltation of Christ over the principalities and powers.[15] Ephesians depicts a people in a hopeless condition—lacking any ability or vitality—that needed an external figure (God) to mitigate their plight. It will become apparent that salvation as spiritual resuscitation accords liberation from the diabolic domain unto a reconciled relationship with God.

Ephesians 2:1–7[16] as one sentence has significant soteriological import. First, its portrait of the human condition—"dead in sins and trespasses"[17] and the attendant verdict (by nature … objects of wrath)—conveys crucial aspects of Christian salvation that would later become a debated matter in early Christianity.[18] Second, the alternate use of 'you' (pl) and 'we' pronouns in the sentence has prompted questions in regard to the implied human subjects, that is to say, whether the Jewish author sought to differentiate between the conditions of Jews and Gentiles or not? In other words: Were Jews *also* dead in their "trespasses and sins" and thereby subject to the control of "the ruler of the power of the air" in the same way as the Gentiles?

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15. I use "principalities and powers" in this essay as a technical term comprising all evil spiritual powers.

16. The NA28 keeps Ephesians 2:1–7 as one long sentence as also Westcott and Hort, Tischendorf and Holmes. The Textus Receptus (TR) however has a longer sentence from 2:1–9. Tyndale makes significant departure from the rest in breaking the sentence into three, namely 2:1–3 as one sentence, 2:4–5 and 2:6–7. I follow the NA28 for my analysis and literary observations in this essay.

17. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical translations in this chapter are the author's own.

18. Early Christian thinkers debated issues such as the nature of the sin. They asked: Is it original (inherited) or moral (committed) sin? If inherited, then when was it inherited? At birth, during pregnancy etc.?

The first issue belongs to and is addressed in the field of systematic theology whereas the second is currently heading in the direction of a general consensus. Most recent biblical scholars argue that 'you' (pl.) and 'we' here do not suggest a differentiation between Jews and Gentiles but rather display a stylistic feature being employed for rhetorical effect. To limit the "desires of the flesh" and living according to "the ruler of the power of the air" to Gentiles would be a misreading of the sentence.[19]

The opening καί ("and") functions syntactically as continuative particle connecting the present verses to the previous pericope (Eph 1:15–23). It indicates a conceptual linkage to God's activity to resuscitate the "dead" and place them in an exalted position with Christ. The death–resurrection–exaltation pattern for Christ followers and Christ is instructive in the salvific story. Apparently, God's power was made manifest when he raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him above the principalities and powers. Ephesians 2:1 sets the stage for how God dramatically rescues humans under the devastating predicament of sin and elevates them to share in the privileges of Christ. The divine agent (God) is the one who brings life and exalts/raises those who were hitherto dead. To be "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1) is akin to being spiritually irresponsive and morally bankrupt.[20] They were incapable of exercising control over their own lives and affairs.[21] The two words, "trespasses" and "sins," may be taken as hendiadys[22] or as referents to moral and spiritual violations of sorts. The word "trespass" denotes the violation of moral boundaries or legal codes. Literally and metaphorically, it is "slipping off track" or defaulting in debt payments in classical Greek.[23] Moreover, sin denotes "missing the mark or failing to meet a purpose"[24] in the sense of depriving other humans or deities of their due. Sin is a breach of sacred and social boundaries. Muddiman indicates that in Paul, "trespasses mean acts of disobedience to known commandments, while 'sins' are intrinsically evil acts which can be committed even in the absence of law (Rom 5:13)."[25] The portrait of sin as a condition of "spiritual death" in religious parlance is also found

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19. Best, *Ephesians,* 208.

20. BDAG, 667 [*A Greek - English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature.* Third edition. Revised and edited by Frederick William Danker (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1979)] and Bultmann, *TDNT* 4.893 [Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* TDNT. 10 Vol (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974)]. See Ezekiel 18:20; 4 Ezra 3:25; Baruch 54:15 and the New Testament use of the metaphor in Matthew 8:22 and Luke 9:60.

21. Best, *Ephesians,* 198.

22. Frank Thielman, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 120–122. Thielman indicates that the import of the word "trespass" is usually transgressing God's law whereas sinning refers to activity that occurs directly against God himself. Thielman, however, characterizes the use of the two words here as hendiadys.

23. H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon with Revised Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 1322.

24. Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 77.

25. J. Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Continuum, 2001), 102.

in Stoic philosophy.[26] These terms have both social and spiritual implications. They connote a violation of the norms of the social order with attendant consequences—all of which are in breach of the *order* put in place by the divine *order-er.* Sin mars our relationship with God and consequently affects humanity's ability to deal kindly with fellow bearers of the image of God. The two terms feature here, perhaps, to indicate the undesirable spiritual and moral conditions experienced prior to conversion.[27]

The Social, Moral, and Mental Condition of the Spiritually "Dead"

Ephesians 2:2 derives its main point from the preceding articulation of the condition and sphere within which the "dead" conducted themselves. The description does not suggest three categories or locales of human existence but underscores the social and spatial dimensions of human existence. Ancient cosmologies[28] interfaced the material and spatial dimensions of the cosmos as inseparable aspects of universe. The three prepositional phrases in Ephesians 2:2 are particularly crucial in the quest to understand the condition from which people are saved and the role of the devil therein. First, Christ followers are characterized as a people who hitherto conducted themselves ethically[29] and socially κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ("according to the age of this world," Eph 2:2). Whether αἰών ("age") refers, in this phrase, to a personal spiritual power or to a temporal idea, is a debated matter. Some have argued that the consecutive κατά ("according to") phrases in Ephesians 2:2 ought to be read as a rhetorical redundancy meant to accentuate the role of the evil spirit. For example, Robinson suggests that it should be taken as an allusion to the early Christian belief that the world has been subject to the control of evil forces since the Fall (Gen 3). Consequently, all evil spiritual forces under the auspices of the devil/Satan have exerted control in the world in rebellion against God.[30] The "Aion of Aions" who is also the known as the "Master of all" in the *Greek Magical Papyri* (*PGM*) is appealed to in support of the reading that αἰών here refers to an evil spiritual power.[31] For Best, "the devil had many names in contemporary Judaism and early Christianity

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26. Epictetus, *Dis.*, 1.3.3; 9.19; 2.19.27; 3.23.28.

27. See Ernest Best, "Dead in Trespasses and Sins," *JSNT* 12 (1981): 19–20.

28. Cf. Epictetus, *Ench.* 31.1. Ancient philosophers were religious and held beliefs in the activities of the gods or spirits in human affairs. Epictetus represents the traditional Stoic view when he indicates that, "true philosophy and piety are one and the same thing." Gods and spirits were able to bless or bring judgment upon people. In the words of Seneca, "God is near you, he is with you, he is within you. This is what I mean, Lucilius: a holy spirit indwells within us, one who marks our good and bad deeds, and is our guardian. As we treat this spirit, so are we treated by it. Indeed, no man can be good without the help of God" (Seneca, *Ep.* 41.273).

29. Περιπατέω ("to walk") features in Ephesians consistently with this ethical connotation.

30. J. A. Robinson, *Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1922), 49.

31. *PGM* IV. 2190.

and the adoption of the name of a pagan god or evil power would not be unexpected, especially since 'this aeon' already possessed an evil connotation."[32] Αἰών is thus the supreme evil spiritual power otherwise referred to as the devil. Scholars supporting this reading include the likes of Best, Schnackenburg, Lindemann, and Conzelmann.[33] According to Markus Barth, the phrase indicates that there is diabolic activity in the inhabited world of unbelievers. Αἰών is thus translated as "World-age" to capture its holistic import. Accordingly, the αἰών is viewed as the spiritual "antagonist of God's good creation and of God himself."[34]

The second view of αἰών emerges from its ordinary usage in the New Testament and in Ephesians in particular. The same word appears in the second half of the sentence (Eph 2:7) with a temporal connotation. Moreover, it is never used elsewhere in the New Testament to denote a personal spiritual agent. The appearances of αἰών outside of the biblical texts in reference to a personal spiritual being suggests that either the early Christians did not know about the personal usage or sought to avoid its use in preference to overt terms that point unambiguously to the devil. As Lincoln puts it, "in Ephesians 2:2 good sense can be made of αἰών with a temporal force without having to resort to a reference to the god Aion."[35] The temporal use is the most common use of the term among early Christians, as we find in *Shepherd of Hermas*.[36] However, the temporal usage does not preclude spiritual activity in the cosmological framework. "The age of this world" would be perceived as a sphere in which divine activity in human affairs is still a reality. If we accept the consistent usage of the term in the NT and Ephesians then αἰών plausibly refers to the "human society and culture insofar as they oppose God in the present period before his kingdom comes in fullness."[37] To conduct oneself according to "the αἰών of this world" would be tantamount to following modes of conduct apart from God. As Arnold puts it, "the age of the world" is "organized evil in the form of peer pressure, ideologies, systems, and structures that provide us with a script of living life totally apart from God and his purposes."[38]

Furthermore, κόσμος ("world") appears three times in Ephesians (1:4, 2:2, 2:12), two of which are in our passage of inquiry as the sphere of unbelievers outside

32. Best, *Ephesians,* 204.

33. Best, *Ephesians*, 204 and Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Epistle to the Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 90–92. Best provides a good summary of this particular view.

34. Markus Barth, *Ephesians* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 214. Cf. Thielman, *Ephesians,* 122–125, 128–130.

35. Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians.* Word Biblical Commentary 42 (Waco, TX: Word, 1990), 95.

36. *Shepherd of Hermas* 66.2 and 77.3. It features here in the phrase ἐπιθυμίας τοῦ αἰῶνος ("desires of the age").

37. Peter S. Williamson, *Ephesians.* Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 57.

38. Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians.* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2010), 143.

the realm of Christ. Generally, κόσμος is perceived to have physical, spatial[39] and social[40] dimensions. The physical world is the ordered world or the earth, which is created by a divine agent (e.g. Zeus).[41] According to Kahn, "Κόσμος in the social sphere may denote an arrangement of some particular kind, rather than good order in general. It is contrasted not only with anarchy and disorder, but with a constitution in which things are disposed otherwise."[42] The spatial dimension, often referred to as heaven(s), is the habitat of spirit beings such as angels, demons, spiritual powers, and the sphere from which they influence human affairs in the material world.[43] In this sphere, "[t]he universe and all individual creatures, the invisible and the visible, nature and history, humanity and the spirit world, are all brought under the single term κόσμος."[44] The word is used earlier in Ephesians 1:4 to establish the *timing* or *timeline* of God's salvific plan. God chose the readers/hearers not as an afterthought, but he preplanned their selection even before the foundation of the cosmos. However, the two additional senses of κόσμος have a negative connotation, referring to the sphere of life for unbelievers. Elsewhere, I have described this area of the semantic domain as follows: "It is the world in which [believers] once lived and the current domain of unbelievers (2:2). Spatially, it is dominated by the evil spiritual forces (2:1–3) and morally corrupted by disobedience and ungodly passions. It is also the arena of spiritual depravation, alienation and hostility in 2:11–15."[45]

The phrase κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου denotes physical and social conditions within which humans conducted (περιπατέω, "to walk") themselves prior to conversion. It refers to a world that is now subject to the κοσμοκράτωρ ("cosmic power," Eph 6:12).[46] It was a common belief in the ancient world that "the *kosmos* is made up of the combination of raw, inert matter, and primal forces or potentials, which were often personified, at work within that matter."[47] It is noteworthy that the portrait of the social, spiritual, and moral conditions of the age/world serves as an important backdrop to the essence of salvation. Here, there is no suggestion that

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39. Sasse, "κοσμέω etc.," *TDNT* III. 871–878.

40. C. H. Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 219–230. The word was also used for 'adornment' or 'order.'

41. G. Johnson, "OIKOUMENH and KOSMOS in the New Testament," *NTS* 10 (1963/64): 352–355.

42. Kahn, *Anaximander,* 221.

43. Cf. Kahn, *Anaximander,* 227.

44. Sasse, κοσμέω etc. *TDNT* III.893.

45. D. K. Darko, "Spirit-Cosmology in the Identity and Community Construction of Ephesians 1–3," *Pleroma* 15.1 (2013): 67.

46. The word κοσμοκράτωρ is a *hapax legomena* in the NT. The word features in the *PGM* in reference to spiritual beings (*PGM* III.35, IV.1599; XIII.620–640).

47. Chris Forbes, "Paul's Demonology and/or Cosmology? Principalities, Powers and the Elements of the World in their Hellenistic Context," *JSNT* 85 (2002): 55. Forbes indicates that the language for principalities and powers in Ephesians are found with similar connotations elsewhere in Philo, Plutarch, and other Greek literature (p. 71). Cf. Philo, *Pos Cain,* 20; *Gig,* 16–17; *Spec. Leg.* 1.66; *Plant.* 14; *Conf. Ling.* 171–175.

unbelievers are experiencing cognitive dissonance or lacking the ability to choose (or not to choose) their salvation; rather they lived according to powerful social, moral, and mental conditions superintended by a spiritual force in the cosmos.

The second κατά phrase names the spiritual actor in the world of unbelievers. According to Ephesians, the pre-conversion life was conducted κατὰ τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος ("according to the ruler of the power of the air," 2:2).[48] The ordinary meaning of ἄρχων ("ruler") equates with a ruler or leader in English. It is sometimes used to refer to the devil as the head of all evil spirits, which is the sense it conveys here and elsewhere in the NT.[49] The general consensus is that "the ruler of the power of the air" refers to the devil or Satan.[50] This figure is also called "the ruler of demons"[51] and "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31) elsewhere.[52] Jesus Christ, the one exalted above all powers, is the instrument God used to liberate fallen humanity from the world controlled by the devil. The devil has not yet been eschatologically defeated at this point in salvation history, and neither has he been incapacitated and rendered powerless. Conversely, the devil remains active in power but has lost control over those who have experienced God's salvation in Christ Jesus. The devil's role in the life of human beings prior to and after becoming Christ followers must not, however, be underrated.[53]

Post-enlightenment ostracizing of the devil in theological discourse departs from an early Christian cosmological framework. Human beings are not the center

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48.   Best, *Ephesians*, 202.

49.   Williamson, *Ephesians,* 57. The NT also depicts this sphere as a place of darkness from which believers are saved (Matt 12:26; Acts 26:18; Col 1:13).

50.   Timothy G. Gombis, "Ephesians 2 as a Narrative of Divine Warfare," *JSNT* 26.4 (2004):410; R. H. Riensche, "Exegesis of Ephesians 2:1–7," *Lutheran Quarterly* 2.1 (1950), 72; Paul D. Simmons, "The Grace of God and the Life of the Church—Ephesians 2," *Review and Expositor* 76 (1976): 476.

51.   Matt 9:34; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15.

52.   The preferred translation of ἄρχων consistently in these verses undermines the notion that this is the highest spiritual authority of all evil spirits. It must be translated with the usual meaning of ἄρχων as "ruler" or "leader." Michael W. Holmes, ed., *Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007). Both Holmes and Lightfoot translate the word in Ignatius' reference to τοῦ ἄρχοντος τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου as "Prince" (*Eph.* 17:1; 19:2; *Mag* 1:3). The prince is subordinate to the ruler (King, Queen etc.). Satan is the head, or the "most high" of evil spiritual powers, subordinate to none.

53.   Best, *Ephesians*, 207. The notion that the devil exists and is capable of influencing human behavior has been unsettling for some scholars. This explains why evil or the devil is often demythologized and characterized in terms of social problems or socio-political woes. For example, Ernest Best could not resist such explanation when he opined that, "he (author of Ephesians) appears to be claiming that the life of pagan society is dominated not only by a personal will towards sin but also by supernatural forces driving it to evil. Such forces still exist, though we may not term them supernatural. They are the pressures of society, which if not wholly evil are not wholly good: poverty, upbringing and environment, genetic constitution, physical disability, economic decisions taken at a distance. These are wider than the spiritual atmosphere of a culture and they exercise a compulsion on those who are subject to them so that the end result may seem the same as for those who believe they are trapped by supernatural forces. Only those who wear the armor of God (6.12ff) can resist them," 207.

of attention in God's salvific story. God is reclaiming the custody of his creatures, thereby empowering believers to mitigate the influence of malevolent forces and terminally frustrating their quest to sabotage human flourishing. A good standing with God involves a departure from living according to "the ruler of the power of the air." God's central role in salvation (Eph 2:4) is thus crucial to comprehending the conditions from which salvation ensues and the privileges it accords to be part of God's household vis-à-vis person-centered[54] soteriology. The author of Ephesians insists in later passages that Christ followers need to put on the full armor of God in the battle against evil spiritual powers that seek to undermine their ability to stand firm with God (Eph 6:11–14).[55] Ephesians goes as far as indicating that prolonged anger could provide a gateway (τόπος, "place") for diabolic influence (4:26–27). Members are therefore admonished to adhere to the praxis commensurate to their new identity and status with God.

The conception that the devil operates from the air, that is, the atmosphere, was commonplace in antiquity.[56] The ἀήρ ("air") is the unseen world from which the devil exercises dominion over human affairs.[57] For Philo, the air is the realm of the soul, demons, and other spiritual entities.[58] The spatial habitat of the devil in "the air" does not suggest that he has ceased to be active in the material world. On the contrary, the devil exercises dominion and influences human conduct at all levels (Eph 2:2). According to Ephesians, this is the spirit currently "at work in the sons of disobedience." Some scholars read this phrase as a further elaboration of the activity of "the ruler of the power of the air" and take "spirit" to be referring to the devil. Others posit that "spirit" in Ephesians 2:2 refers to the human spirit, which is the immaterial part of the person. It is important to note that neither of these readings negate the instrumentality of the devil. As Hoehner explains, "if 'spirit' refers to [the] immaterial or inward part of a person, then Paul is saying that the devil rules over [the] inward person, a function he now performs in the sons and daughters of disobedience."[59] I opine that the natural rendering is one that takes it as

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54. Here I mean an emphasis on human ability to respond or not to respond, and the portrayal of salvation as a protocol that merely ushers individuals into a social network along with the benefit of a lifetime "visa" to heaven.

55. Paul T. Eckel, "Ephesians 6:10–20," *Interpretation* 45 (1991): 288–293; David Seale, "Ephesians 6:12: Struggling Against the Rulers, Against the Authorities," *Evangel* 14 (1996): 68–71 and Raymond Hobbs, "The Language of Warfare in the New Testament," in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context,* ed. Philip F. Essler (London: Routledge, 1995), 259–273. Eckel and Hobbs acknowledge the worldview in which spiritual forces existed and exerted influence in human affairs. Hobbs, however, casts doubt on the reality of evil spirits, questioning whether they existed in the imagination of ancient societies or if in fact they actually existed in reality.

56. Robinson, *Ephesians*, 49.

57. Cf. Plutarch, *Mor.* 274b and Diogenes Laertius *Vit. phil.* 8.32.

58. Philo, *On Dreams,* 1.134–135, 141.

59. Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 315.

a qualifier or elaboration of the preceding clause. Clinton Arnold notes: "The devil is thus depicted as the 'arch-power' among a host of 'powers' sufficiently equipped to lead and keep individuals in a life of disobedience."[60] "Sons of disobedience" is a Semitic expression denoting a people living in, or characterized by, woeful defiance or disobedience in their relationship with God.

Moreover, the phrase τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ νῦν ἐνεργοῦντος ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς τῆς ἀπειθείας ("the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience," Eph 2:2) implies that those who are spiritually "dead" live in a different sphere where they conduct themselves by the agency of an evil spirit. "Death," then, denotes life that has ceased to be empowered by or rooted in relationship with God. The devil currently works in unbelievers as he once did in the lives of Christ followers. This statement explains the force behind the fleshly impulses, moral bankruptcy, and corrupt mindset associated with the pre-conversion past (Eph 2:3). In other words, a spiritual agent is partly responsible for engineering and energizing unbelievers in acts of rebellion against God. The idea that spirits could influence human conduct was commonplace in Greek, Roman, and Jewish antiquity. In this letter, vulgarity may aggrieve the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:29–30) whereas prolonged anger could engender exposure to diabolic influence (Eph 4:26–27). The Jewish author makes the inclusive assertion that this was the predicament of all human beings, including Jews.

The state from which people are saved by grace is not one that places the onus on individual ability or inability to respond to the Gospel (contra Augustine or Pelagius). The human condition is one that was subject to the "age of this world" and the control of the devil. Essentially, the "ruler of the power of the air" exercises dominion and works in unbelievers in a world where mental, physical (flesh/body), and moral sensibilities contradict the wishes of God. Thus, the verdict is that "they were by nature children of wrath" (Eph 2:3).

God's Dramatic Intervention

The second half of the first sentence (Eph 2:1–7) provides an account of God's gracious intervention instead of punitive retaliation. God counteracts the work of the devil and saves the readers both from the devil's control and God's own wrathful judgement (Eph 2:3). God assumes central stage as the main actor in the salvific story from here on. His initiative, motivation, and character are presented as a radical reversal of the conditions of the age and the causes being advanced by the devil, manifesting the riches of his mercy in redeeming love and grace. The imagery here is that of a supreme spiritual actor (God) overpowering a subordinate spiritual agent (the devil) in order to rescue enslaved subjects from unsavory conditions. Salvation ensues, more or less, as a custody battle over human lives among these two spiritual

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60. Clinton E. Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1989), 62.

agents. God demonstrates his power when he reaches out to save humans. Salvation, then, ushers in a new *modus vivendi* in the form of a loving relationship with God. Consequently, any deviation from life with God makes members susceptible to diabolic influence. For they are saved/called to a new identity and to the unity of the Spirit (Eph 4:1–3). Christian living is spiritual warfare that requires the full armor of God to mitigate the stratagems of the devil (Eph 6:10–17). Believers are not the center of attention in this story and neither could they have obtained salvation by any merit on their own. As Lincoln points out: "Just as humans contributed nothing to their own creation so also they contributed nothing to their new creation; both are God's work."[61] They are God's workmanship (ποίημα) "created in Christ Jesus for good works."

The "dead" are resuscitated with vitality to share in the privileges of Christ; they are "saved" (Eph 2:5), "raised up" and "seated" in an exalted position with Christ (Eph 2:6). This is both initiated and executed by God. Salvation does not come about by human effort lest anyone should boast or lay claim to entitlement. God acted from the abundance (πλούσιος) of his mercy and "love" (τὴν πολλὴν ἀγάπην)' to "save" a people under a guilty verdict who were liable to chastisement. That is, "His nature as a holy God warranted vengeance yet his wrath gave way to the deepest expression of his character in love (1 Jn 4:8)."[62] The imagery is that of an injured victim going out of his way to reach out munificently and from a heart full of mercy to extend "love" to his own perpetrators. To be saved is to benefit from God's rescue. Consequently, their very existence in solidarity as God's community signals defeat to the principalities and powers in the heavenly realms (Eph 3:9–10). The "heavenly realms" here is not a place reserved to inhabit after death. It is rather the spatial dimension of the cosmos.[63] The word ἐπουράνιος ("heavenly") appears consistently in the plural form in Ephesians to denote the locus of spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3), where Christ exercises his lordship (Eph 1:20), and here, as the sphere from which believers share in the exaltation of Christ (Eph 2:6). In Ephesians 3:10, ἐπουράνιος is the realm from which God's manifold wisdom is made known to the powers through the existing church. The echoes of salvation as deliverance from and triumph over "the ruler of the power of the air" is strongly implied in the notion of believers' exaltation with Christ in the heavenly realms.

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61. Lincoln, *Ephesians,* 114.

62. D. K. Darko, "What Does it Mean to be Saved? An African Reading of Ephesians 2," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 24 (2015): 50. Cf. Rom 1:18; 2:5, 8; 3:5; 9:22; 12:19; 13:4, 5.

63. R. Martin Pope, "Of the Heavenly Places," *Expository Times* 23 (1911–1912): 366 and Christopher J.A. Lash, "Where Do Devils Live? A Problem in the Textual Criticism of Ephesians 6:12," *Vigiliae Christianae* 30 (1976): 161–174; Andrew T. Lincoln, "A Re-Examination of 'the Heavenlies' in Ephesians," *NTS* 19 (1972/73): 468–483. These scholars suggest that ἐπουράνιος refers to the "celestial realm" or the "unseen world." They do not necessarily equate ἐπουράνιος to eschatological hope and bliss in heaven.

By God's Grace—Not of Human Works

The condition of humanity under "the ruler of the power of the air" was radically altered as a result of God's intervention. A subsequent change to the human disposition and condition occurred as effects of the new status owing to a better and much more powerful spiritual overlord. Human beings are now saved by and live under God's headship in a kinship relationship. Ephesians 2:8–9, as one sentence, buttresses the point of divine agency; it came about as God's initiative and grace extended to a people subject to and influenced by the devil. Salvation is a votive gift of God (Eph 2:8–9).[64] Unlike περιπατέω in Ephesians 2:2, here God is the one who gives those who are saved the ability to conduct themselves in a befitting manner (Eph 2:10), as if to say the previous way of life was a deviation from the creator's design. In other words, ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς ("good works") is antithetical to the previous way of life (Eph 2:2–3). The paragraph division of Ephesians 2:1–10 from 2:11–22 obscures the holistic portrait of conditions from which people are saved and the reality toward which they are saved.[65]

The Devil's Defeat and the Emergence of God's New Community

The good works (ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς, Eph 2:10) associated with salvation are elucidated to the effect that they are exhibited in relationship with God and in mutuality with fellow believers. Prior social, moral, and mental conditions are reordered as converts become members of the household of God (οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ, Eph 2:19). Salvation ushers in future eschatological goals as believers experience the microcosm of life with God that will ultimately be realized at the macro scale in cosmic unification (Eph 1:9–10). This soteriological framework undercuts an escapist neglect of social and moral responsibilities in the hope for a better life in heaven after death. There is a direct continuum in what God is currently doing, the conduct of the "saved" and God's ultimate goal (Eph 1:9–10). The church stands as the microcosm of God's macro vision for the world. The inferential διό ("therefore," Eph 2:11) recalls the conditions that necessitated God's gracious act of salvation.[66] Gentiles were hitherto labeled verbally by Jews as the uncircumcised "other," those who lived apart from the messianic promises and a people without a relationship with the true God (Eph 2:11–22). Socially, they were stereotyped as the excluded "other" from τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραήλ ("the commonwealth of Israel").[67] According to Jewish social

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64. Cf. Demosthenes, *Cor.* 18: 109; Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.,* 55.5.

65. Darko, "What Does it Mean to be Saved?," 44–56. I made this case in this article where I also challenged the notion of individual-centered soteriology in modern western theological reasoning.

66. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 135. The OT shows a similar pattern where God's people recall precedence as the basis for conduct in the present and/or future (e.g. Exod 12:14; 1 Cor 11:25).

67. Lincoln, *Ephesians,* 137.

demarcations, they were strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope and ἄθεος ("without God") in the world.[68] The term ἄθεος denotes ignorance or lack of insight into the character of the true God, not atheism. Roman literature[69] and Josephus[70] (in reference to Jews) similarly employed ἄθεος as a descriptor for those who abstained from fundamental religious obligations or rites that were important to the community as a whole.

The opening of Ephesians 2:13 with νυνὶ δέ ("but now") contrasts ποτέ ("at one time") in Ephesians 2:11 to make another dramatic reversal from the pre-conversion past to the current standing with God. The ποτὲ – νυνὶ δέ formula was previously utilized in Ephesians 2:2–3 to distinguish the past of Christ followers from the current state of unbelievers. It is instructive that there, ποτέ was associated with social conditions and diabolic activity (Eph 2:2), followed by the contrasting δέ (Eph 2:4) to indicate God's intervention. Here, the clause νυνὶ δὲ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ὑμεῖς οἵ ποτε ὄντες μακρὰν ἐγενήθητε ἐγγὺς ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ ("but now in Christ Jesus you who were at one time far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ," Eph 2:13) contrasts the previous condition marked by sin—distancing from God—and alienation to indicate the means by which they were brought near, namely in (or by) the blood of Christ. God is the implied subject who brought them near, and Christ is the means by which he carried that out. Christ is the embodiment of peace, who broke down the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles. Ephesians 2:13–18 is full of powerful descriptors underscoring the role of Christ in bringing God's plan into effect. In fact, this framework of salvation finds echoes in other NT correspondences associated with Asia Minor. For example, 1 John captures this idea in the line, "whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8 ESV).

It is noteworthy that in Ephesians 2 "reconciliation" occurs between people and God, that is, the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles to God and not inter-ethnic reconciliation. Christ followers are reconciled to God through Christ. Believers are not being admonished to unite in a church plagued with divisions. The issue is fundamentally salvific in nature; it is about their initiation into the community of faith and what that entails. Consequently, to belong to the new community is to become a member of the multi-ethnic household of God. Ethnic differences are not absorbed or obliterated; rather the church is made up of an amalgam of people from various ethnic or racial backgrounds.[71] When people found new life with Christ, there ceased

68. The plural τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ("the covenants of the promise") may be an allusion to repeated covenants and accompanied promises between Yahweh and his people (cf. Gen 15:7–21; 17:1–21; 26:2–5; 28:13–15; Exod 24:1–8; 2 Sam 7).

69. Margaret Y. MacDonald, "The Politics of Identity in Ephesians," *JSNT* 26.4 (2004): 430.

70. Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.146–149.

71. See Benjamin H. Dunning, "Strangers and Aliens No Longer: Negotiating Identity and Difference in Ephesians 2," *HTR* 99.1 (2006): 16. This point is made rather forcefully by Dunning.

to be room for social distancing, stereotyping, and religious prejudice in the ingroup. Christ came to preach peace to those far and near so that they may have access "in one Spirit to one Father" (Eph 2:18).[72] Lincoln asserts: "Access to God as Father through Christ and in the Spirit is the ground of the peace proclaimed to both Jews and Gentiles, but it is also true that the exercise of this new privilege by both groups in the one Spirit is the sign of the peace between them."[73] The triune God works in concert to bring about this new life with horizontal and vertical ramifications—members gain access to the Father in one Spirit by the instrumentality of Christ, and consequently they are able to live at peace with one another in the community of faith (cf. John 10:10). Solidarity in the ingroup resulting from salvation is quite different from the notion of salvation espoused in liberation theologies. The scope is narrowed to ingroup mutuality that is supposed to serve as a witness even to the "principalities and powers" (Eph 3:9–10).

Saved to Belong to the Household of God

Salvation transfers members from the domain of "the ruler of the power of the air" (cf. Col 1:13–14) to a true relationship with God. Gentiles are no longer ξένοι (strangers) and πάροικοι (resident aliens)[74] in relationship to God. As explained elsewhere,

> The term ξένοι refers to *immigration status* in relation to the *polis* whereas the second πάροικοι implies temporary status in a family home (one who does not have a permanent place in the household) . . . the author is here prompting a new self-understanding and awareness of an important change of status that ushers gentiles into a new relationship with Jews in the household of God (5.5).[75]

Unity is not uniformity. Appreciation of difference is a moral necessity for Christ followers then and now.

72. Another way of explaining this would be that Christians or others who struggle to embrace other people groups do so for lack of a relationship with God.

73. Lincoln, *Ephesians,* 150.

74. See Lincoln, *Ephesians,* 150. As a black native of Ghana who has spent about half on my life among whites in Croatia, England, and the United States, I find ethnic differentiation in America to be particularly instructive. Despite being a citizen of the United States, my white friends and external family members who know I am a citizen would often prefer to introduce me as a Ghanaian when we meet other white Americans. Implicit bias becomes apparent in the assumptions and stereotypes of interlocutors, as they subtly demarcate between "them" and "me." In the case of Ephesians, Gentiles were in their homeland, yet diaspora Jews stereotyped them in vitriolic parlance and treated them as the "other" on religious and ethno-racial grounds. However, salvation in Christ Jesus abrogates these differences and accords shared identity in God's polis and belonging in his household.

75. D.K. Darko, "Adopted Siblings in the Household of God: Kinship Lexemes in the Social Identity Construction of Ephesians" in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament,* ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 340.

Salvation offers a new status as συμπολῖται τῶν ἁγίων ("fellow citizens with the saints") and belonging into οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ ("members of the household of God") with all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto. All previous social and religious appeals to differentiation have been abrogated in Christ. The relational tone of solidarity is antithetical to the social disparities of the pre-conversion past (Eph 2:2; 2:11–14). Jew and Gentile believers are not only sharers in the privileges of Christ (Eph 2:6), but equal members in the household of God (Eph 2:19). The use of an architectural metaphor[76] further underlines the integrity of the apostolic and prophetic foundation undergirding God's new community, which is solidified by Christ who is the metaphorical cornerstone (or keystone) of the edifice,[77] namely the church.[78] It is in Christ that all the constituent parts join together and grow to become a Holy Temple (Eph 2:21), where God would make his dwelling (Eph 2:22).

Conclusion

Ephesians 2 portrays the human condition prior to God's intervention as a domain under a spiritual overlord called "the ruler of the power of the air." Human conduct therein is described as that which was lived according to the "age," in rebellion against God's design for humanity. The devil controls living conditions, personal lives, and subordinate spiritual forces in this domain. It is not only the state of persons enslaved by or living in sin, but also a people subject to the spiritual control of the devil. They live according to the whims of the "the ruler of the power of the air"—a spiritual agent that currently works in and among unbelievers. Thus, Satan exercises dominion over the domain outside of Christ and he operates in the lives of the people. Subjects follow the passions of their flesh with unrestrained impulses along with corrupt mindsets (Eph 2:3; 4:18–19).

Salvation ensues as a release from the dominion of "the ruler of the power of the air" and the realm in which he exercises control. This is not total defeat of the devil, but the deliverance of people who were subject to his control in order that they might belong to the household of God, the domain where God presides. Though human beings are trespassers deserving punitive retaliation, God showed immense mercy, love, and grace in saving believers from their wretched condition. Salvation transfers subjects of diabolic influence to the realm where God reigns. The change of spiritual overlord then leads to a radical change in regard to identity (Eph 4:24),

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76. Barth, *Ephesians,* 270–271. The origin of the architectural metaphor is a debated matter among some scholars. Some find allusion to the tower of Babel, the Jerusalem Temple, or the construction of a royal palace. Building metaphors were commonplace in the ancient world. I do not think that it is necessary to determine the exact referent in order to follow the point here.

77. Herschel H. Hobbs, *New Men in Christ* (Waco, TX: Word, 1974), 51. See more discussion

on the import of the keystone or cornerstone relative to the integrity of a building structure.

78. Cf. Arthur G. Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 202. See Mark 12:10; 1 Peter 2:7; and Acts 4:11.

mindset (Eph 4:17–19; 4:23–24) and group dynamics (Eph 2:15–22). The readers could have done nothing on their own to attain their current standing with God; they were "dead in trespasses and sins." However, salvation renders the ability to exhibit good deeds that God had prepared beforehand for them (Eph 2:10).

Consequently, God's saving grace makes it possible for Christ followers to participate in God's vision for the cosmos—to ultimately unite all things under Christ (Eph 1:9–10). The effect is immediate and ought to be evident among Christ followers in Asia Minor. Life with God ought to impact life with fellow members in concrete ways (Eph 4:24). Spiritually, people are saved, reconciled to God, and belong to the household of God, barring all ties to the "ruler of the power of the air." Social and mental demarcations between "us" and "them" have been nullified in Christ Jesus. The labelling, stereotyping, and social distancing of the former evil realm have given way to a shared identity with Christ as members of God's household. Moreover, members of the body—both Jew and Gentile—can no longer live to satisfy the impulses of their flesh, their corrupt mindset, and the cravings of their physical bodies (Eph 2:3; 4:17–19). The salvific story of Ephesians 2 sets God's vision of cosmic unification in motion among God's people. Living as a Christ follower is not a life reserved for life after death. Conversely, it is the new life that God makes possible in current relationship with him and with fellow members who were hitherto branded the outside "other" in vitriolic terms. In this frame, the only basis for which people would have problems with fellow members would be due to the fact that they fundamentally lack a good relationship with God. God opens believers' eyes, hearts, and minds to see other people as bearers of his image and equal beneficiaries of his grace.

The "ruler of the power of the air" is not dormant in relation to Christ followers. The unfolding mystery of God's salvific plan dealt a big blow to the workings of the cosmic powers. It is in that vein that the unification of Jews and Gentiles heralds defeat to the principalities and powers (Eph 3:9–10). However, believers need to be aware of who they have become and the spiritual covering that they have in God. The forces of evil continue to lurk in the lives of believers, exploring avenues of moral failings and disbelief as opportunities to negatively influence their standing with God. Thus, a good self-awareness, dependence on God, and dedication to sound morality are imperative to mitigate diabolic influence.

The issue here is not the individual person but a condition in which people find themselves. Diabolic control impacts human ability and sensibilities in a variety of ways. In salvation, God redeems people into a realm of his reign where members are free to live in righteousness. They are now able to develop right mental attitudes and, by disciplining the passions, deal cordially with fellow members. Escapist eschatology, individualistic soteriology, or salvation in the frame of social activism may only have partial correlation to what we find in Ephesians. Analogies are usually incomplete but perhaps my analogy here may help vivify the Ephesian portrait

of salvation to some extent. Imagine a group of people in prison under difficult conditions. They are confined even if they do enjoy occasional freedom during mealtime, games, or if they are allowed to use the prison library. In all of these cases, however, they are still incarcerated. True freedom comes when they get out of jail and live normal lives in society. Until then, prison officers represent the government in exercising control over their lives while the facility serves as their dwelling place.

Imagine "the ruler of the power of the air" and his agents controlling the lives of unbelievers. The moral failings, corrupt mindset, and inter-ethnic disparities are not the *cause* of their condition but *symptoms* of a life being lived according to "the age of the world." The spiritual overlord determines people's conditions, but God's salvation releases the imprisoned and accords them permanent membership in his household through Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 1:5). The Holy Spirit seals (Eph 1:13–14), empowers (Eph 1:17; 2:18) and fills (Eph 5:18–21) Christ followers to be able to conduct themselves in a manner that befits their calling (Eph 4:1–3). Salvation is, however, incomplete until the believer is freed from the control of the "ruler of the power of the air," the spirit now at work in the "sons of disobedience."

Ephesians espouses a salvific concept that places the devil as a primary opponent of God's work in his creation. To relegate the devil to the background, relative to salvation, is to ostracize the main figure that is being dealt with in the salvific story. While post-enlightenment philosophy and scientific advancement continue to promote anti-supernaturalism, readers of Ephesians must interpret this letter in its own terms and worldview. The interpreter may not share the worldview of the letter, but academic integrity requires that good analysis be devoid of anachronism. According to Ephesians, the devil and his forces seek to undermine the relationship believers have with God. Evil spiritual forces are real threats requiring the utmost vigilance and preparedness to guard against their schemes (Eph 4:26–27; 6:10–17). In a nutshell, "the ruler of the power of air" does not have a stronghold over Christ followers but he exerts control over unbelievers until they find salvation in Christ Jesus.

"You Have Been Raised with Christ": Investigating the Spatial Portrait of New Creation in Ephesians

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Abstract: The theology of Ephesians comprises a number of distinctive features. Among other things, the letter portrays a unique relationship between the temporal and spatial aspects of its soterio-eschatology and displays significant attention to the powers. This essay explores the soteriology of Ephesians with reference to its spatial framework, the powers, and the new creation concept.

Key Words: Ephesians, new creation, resurrection, cosmology, powers

Introduction

Ephesians is well known for its references to "the heavenlies" (1:3, 21; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) and for its attention to a host of inimical powers. However, the question of how these two features function in the soteriology of the letter is not altogether clear. How can Christ, believers, and the hostile powers all be located "in the heavenlies" as Paul[1] maintains? This essay investigates the soteriology of Ephesians by examining the letter's spatial portrait of eschatology in light of the Pauline concept of new creation. It begins by outlining recent research on new creation to demonstrate the value of its framework for this discussion. It then turns to delineate (1) the contours of eschatology and cosmology in Ephesians and (2) the depiction of the powers. Finally, key descriptions of salvation which involve the readers, the heavenlies, and the powers are examined. The result, I will endeavor to show, is that Ephesians provides a richly textured portrait of new creation that expands the scope of the concept in Pauline studies due to its vertical emphasis that involves heaven and earth, believers, and the powers.

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1. The debates regarding the authorship of Ephesians and the relation of Ephesians to the *Hauptbriefe* are outside the purview of this essay. I will refer to the author of the letter as "Paul" and treat Ephesians as a Pauline text without any attempt to defend the veracity of either position.

New Creation

The new creation concept operates at a significant intersection of ideas in Paul's theology. Though the phrase καινὴ κτίσις ("new creation") occurs explicitly only twice in the Pauline corpus (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17), the concept describes the influence of the Christ event on the apostle's anthropology, ecclesiology, and cosmology. Indeed, while a brief overview of the history of research would demonstrate that each of these theological facets (e.g. anthropology) could be taken as the central force of the phrase,[2] the more recent trend has been to regard the concept to be interweaving all three and thereby to avoid separating categories that would have been interrelated in Paul's thinking. Jackson is representative of this position, for example, when he argues that new creation articulates Paul's "eschatologically infused soteriology which involves the individual, the community and the cosmos."[3]

While the majority of research on new creation has prioritized the *Hauptbriefe*, in large part because this is where the phrase occurs explicitly, recent studies have turned to explore the concept's existence and implicit influence within the so-called deutero-Pauline epistles. Of particular note is the recent monograph of Mark Owens, which includes Ephesians alongside Galatians and 2 Corinthians in his examination of the new creation concept.[4] Owens argues that new creation is depicted in anthropological, ecclesiological, and cosmological terms in all three letters. With regard to Ephesians, Owens endeavors to delineate the intertextual links between Ephesians 1–2 and Isaiah's New Exodus motif and argues that new creation fits within the Jewish pattern of an eschatological Urzeit-Endzeit typology, particularly through its evocations of temple-building.[5] Though the scope of the investigation is limited to the first two chapters of Ephesians, Owens makes a valuable contribution by providing the first focused study of the concept in the epistle.

The following essay will examine the new creation concept with a different approach. The value of the concept for this essay is in the way in which it provides a heuristic lens for examining soteriology in a cosmological framework, and particularly

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2. On new creation as an anthropological concept, see esp. Moyer V. Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul's Letters and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 133–232. For arguments for new creation as an ecclesiological concept, see e.g. Wolfgang Kraus, *Das Volk Gottes: Zur Grundlegung der Ekklesiologie bei Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 250–51. Taking new creation as cosmological, see esp. Ulrich Mell, *Neue Schöpfung: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Studie zu einem soteriologischen Grundssatz paulinischer Theologie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 316–24.

3. T. Ryan Jackson, *New Creation in Paul's Letters: A Study of the Historical and Social Setting of a Pauline Concept* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 83. See also e.g. Edward Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 235; G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 172.

4. Mark D. Owens, *As It Was in the Beginning: An Intertextual Analysis of New Creation in Galatians, 2 Corinthians, and Ephesians* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015).

5. See Owens, *As It Was in the Beginning*, 121–170.

with reference to the powers. That is, new creation provides a lens through which we can examine the features of salvation, resurrection, eschatology, cosmology, and the powers within a single construct.[6] I would contend that the connection between new creation and resurrection is central and fundamental to this. Indeed, though this correlation of resurrection with new creation is by no means unique to Ephesians,[7] nor a new observation,[8] it is pivotal for this essay to state at the outset because it anchors the implicit operating of the new creation concept to the text at numerous points. We will return to this below.

Mapping the Eschatological-Cosmological Landscape of Ephesians

An exploration of the eschatological and cosmological landscape of Ephesians embarks the reader of Paul on a journey into new frontiers. There are many features to account for. Indeed, even a cursory reading of the letter would glean a list that included the phrase "the heavenly places" (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12); reference to heaven and earth (1:10) and also to the lower regions and the heavens (4:9–10); the cosmos (1:4; 2:2, 12); the ages (1:21; 2:2, 7; 3:9, 11, 21); "the day/days" (4:30; 5:16; 6:13); and the recurring locative use of "in Christ/him" (e.g. 2:6).[9] As a comprehensive examination is not possible, in this section I will primarily seek to delineate the unique balance between the temporal and spatial features that is maintained in Ephesians in order to set the stage for the subsequent discussion of the powers and salvation.

Ephesians evidences the common Jewish understanding of time as consisting of two successive, temporal ages: the present age and the age to come (e.g. *4 Ezra* 6:7). While this understanding of the ages is discernible throughout Paul's writings (see e.g., 1 Cor 1:20; 10:11; 2 Cor 4:4; Gal 1:4; Rom 12:2), Ephesians 1:21 provides the

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6. While I am in agreement with Owens and others that there are anthropological, ecclesiological, and cosmological facets to new creation in Ephesians, due to space restrictions my focus will be limited primarily to some of the cosmological features. However, it will become clear that one cannot discuss the cosmological features without reference to humanity or the church in Ephesians.

7. The connection between resurrection and new creation has antecedents in the OT (e.g. Isa 25:8; Dan 12:1–2) but comes to the fore in Second Temple Jewish literature. At times resurrection is associated with the inauguration of the new age (e.g. *T. Job* 4:6–9; *1 En.* 71:15; *2 Bar.* 44:8–15), at other times resurrection is associated with the created order (e.g. Ps. -Philo 3:10; *Sib.* Or. 4:181–191). While most often new creation is implicit, at some points this connection is made with the explicit use of the phrase "new creation" (e.g. *Jub.* 1:29; 1QS IV: 7, 25).

8. Interpreters as far back as Irenaeus have noticed the link between resurrection and new creation; see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies,* 5.36.1. See also Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology,* 121–22, 227–32; N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 1092–94, 1476. With particular attention to Ephesians, see Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology,* 277–81; Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 107.

9. For a helpful visual overview of the dative classifications of "in Christ/him/whom" in Ephesians, see Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 173–74.

clearest depiction of a full contrast between the ages anywhere in the Pauline corpus when Christ is declared supreme "not only in this age but also in the age to come" (οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι).[10] The ages are contrasted again in Ephesians 2:2 and 2:7. The former age is depicted in 2:2 with the language "the age of this world" (τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου), a phrase that characterizes the readers' former lifestyle of trespasses and sins (see below). Significantly, the contrast between the ages pivots from "this" age to the future age on the basis of the readers' participation in resurrection ("God . . . made us alive together with Christ," 2:5) and results in the promise of manifold blessings "in the ages to come" (ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσιν τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις) in Christ (2:7).[11]

It is in this latter contrast between the ages in 2:2 and 2:7 that we are able to observe that the ages are imbued with spatial significance and function as more than a temporal category in Ephesians.[12] Put differently, we find that Paul's eschatology and cosmology are interrelated in a crucial sense.[13] This is not unique to Ephesians, of course, for the terms αἰών and κόσμος serve as overlapping concepts elsewhere in Paul (e.g. 1 Cor 1:20; 2:6; 3:18). However, what is notable in Ephesians is the way in which Paul displays the full vertical axis of his eschatological framework by explicitly drawing repeated attention to the heavenlies.

We noted above how the contrast between the ages in Ephesians 2:2 and 2:7 pivoted on the readers' experience of resurrection in 2:5. Here we observe that the readers are described in 2:6 as having been "raised" (συνεγείρω) and "seated" (συγκαθίζω) with Christ "in the heavenly places" (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις). The phrase "in the heavenlies" occurs five times in Ephesians (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) but nowhere else in the NT. It is best to take ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις as a dative of location in each of its five occurrences and ἐπουράνιος as synonymous with "heaven" (οὐρανός).[14] In Ephesians 1:3, believers are described as blessed in the heavenlies "in Christ" (ἐν Χριστῷ). Ephesians 1:20 describes Christ himself as seated in the heavenlies, far above the powers *who themselves are also in the heavenlies*. In Ephesians 2:6, as we

10. Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), 108. All citations of scripture will come from the NRSV unless otherwise stated.

11. The plural form of "ages" may be a liturgical way of describing eternity (i.e. the age to come), or a general way of describing the countless periods of time of which eternity is comprised. See Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 138. Compare e.g. 1 Corinthians 10:11.

12. See Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 95.

13. See esp. Rainer Schwindt, *Das Weltbild des Epheserbriefes: Eine religionsgeschichtlich-exegetische Studie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 379–83. See further e.g. Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2014), 2:733; Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Phillipsburg, NT: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994), 12–18, 42–61; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God,* 476–77.

14. On ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις as a dative of location, see e.g. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 169; William J. Larkin, *Ephesians: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), *passim*. On ἐπουράνιος, see M. Jeff Brannon, *The Heavenlies in Ephesians: A Lexical, Exegetical, and Conceptual Analysis*, LNTS (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 204.

have seen, it is the readers of the epistle who are described as seated in the heavenlies in Christ. That the powers are located in the heavenlies is reiterated in 3:10 when Paul explains that God makes his wisdom known to the powers through the church in the heavenlies. And finally, Ephesians 6:12 describes that the readers are involved in an ongoing struggle with the host of inimical powers *in the heavenlies*. The cosmological portrait that is taking shape in Ephesians, then, is best understood to be a two-tiered cosmos, composed of heaven and earth (1:10; 3:15; 4:9–10).[15] Brannon notes that Paul's conception of heaven is dependent on the background of the OT and can be expressed as a single heaven or as a plurality: "within Paul's basic OT framework, 'heaven' could refer to the atmosphere (Ps 147.8; Matt 6:26), the firmament (Gen 1:7, 14), or the dwelling place of God (Ps 2:4; Matt 6:9) and it is probable that these three basic Old Testament divisions comprised Paul's view of heaven."[16]

The significance of this for the present interest is threefold. First, the readers of the letter are depicted as presently participating not just in the future temporal age/world of salvation but also in the heavenly places, which they inhabit in some spiritual sense in Christ. Thus the already/not-yet in Ephesians has a crucial above/below dimension and the letter's soteriology cannot be understood without this emphasis on the vertical and spatial aspect of salvation.[17] Second, the various uses of the phrase ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις make it evident that in the temporal/spatial eschatology of Ephesians heaven (in addition to earth) is involved in the present evil age as well as in the age to come.[18] Related to this, thirdly, when Paul pulls back the curtain, as it

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15. Brannon, *The Heavenlies in Ephesians*, 199–200. See further Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*. ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 118, 384; Andrew T. Lincoln, "A Re-Examination of 'The Heavenlies' in Ephesians," *NTS* 19 (1973): 479–83; Robert L. Foster, "Reoriented to the Cosmos: Cosmology and Theology in Ephesians through Philemon," in *Cosmology and New Testament Theology*, ed. Jonathan T. Pennington and Sean M. McDonough (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 110. The reference to τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς ("the lower regions of the earth") is best taken as a partitive genitive or an epexegetical genitive, either of which refer to the lower tier of the earth. See Benjamin L. Merkle, *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament: Ephesians* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 125.

16. Brannon, *The Heavenlies in Ephesians*, 207.

17. The unique emphases found in the eschatological program of Ephesians have been misunderstood on two levels. First, some have taken the vertical emphasis here to have completely replaced the temporal. However, the presence of the "once/now" contrast (e.g. 2:2, 13) and future ages (e.g. 2:7) indicates it is better to see the temporal and the spatial as both operating, with the latter serving to emphasize the decisive break and transfer of dominions believers experience in salvation (see Clinton E. Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 150–51). Related to this, secondly, there is a noticeable emphasis on what is often referred to as "realized eschatology" in Ephesians since, for example, the audience is portrayed as "already raised." However, it is clear that Paul's already/not-yet is retained since future eschatology exists in Ephesians (1:14; 2:7; 4:30; 5:5, 27; 6:8, 13). See further Andrew T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 167.

18. According to Lincoln (*Paradise Now and Not Yet*, 172–73), both heaven and earth were similarly included in "this age" and in "the age to come" in apocalyptic literature.

were, and displays the involvement of heaven and earth in the eschatological overlap in Ephesians, we find that Christ, believers, *and* the powers are all residents of the heavenlies at the same time. In this we arrive at a core issue from a soteriological and cosmological perspective. To spell this out further, we turn now to examine how the powers are portrayed in Ephesians.

Identifying the Powers

The frequent attention to the powers in Ephesians is one of the most striking features of the epistle. They are mentioned approximately fifteen times total using at least nine different designations across the letter (1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 4:27; 6:12, 16). By sketching the contours of how the powers are portrayed, we will be able to understand with greater clarity the nature of how salvation operates in Ephesians.

One pair of powers—the ἀρχή and ἐξουσία—is highlighted at three different points in Ephesians (1:21; 3:10; 6:12). The term ἀρχή can mean "ruler," "authority," or "principality." It should be taken to designate "angelic or transcendent powers" in the present texts.[19] Though ἐξουσία can refer to a sphere or domain, it also can denote powers of the spirit world as "transcendent rulers and functionaries,"[20] often with the translation "authority" or "authorities." While these powers feature once in the LXX (Dan 7:27), they appear frequently as angelic powers in Judaism (e.g. 1 En. 61:10; 2 En. 20–22; T. Levi 3; T. Abr. 13:10; 2 Macc 3:24). They are mentioned elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, both as a pair (Col 1:16; 2:10, 15) and independently (Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24). In Ephesians they are best seen to represent angelic powers. The pairing of these terms "represents a sort of hendiadys for powers, rulers, spheres of control, authorities . . . which exercise their influence throughout the entire cosmos."[21]

The two other powers listed in Ephesians 1:21 are the δύναμις and κυριότης. The term δύναμις is connected with angelic powers in the translation of the "Lord of Hosts" and "hosts of heaven" in the LXX (e.g. 2 Kgs 21:5) and Second Temple Judaism (e.g. *1 En*. 61:10; *4 Ezra* 6:6). In addition to the present text, it is found in the Pauline literature to portray inimical angelic beings in Romans 8:38 and 1 Corinthians 15:24. Meanwhile, the term κυριότης is rarely found outside of the NT. It occurs in 2 Peter 3:10 and Jude 8 with reference to the Lord's power, but it is only found here and Colossians 1:16 in the NT with the sense of the "dominions" or a "special class of angelic powers."[22]

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19. BDAG: 138 [*A Greek - English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*; 3rd ed.; rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1979)]. See further *TDNT* 1:483–84 [Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, TDNT, 10 Vol (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974)].

20. BDAG: 353.

21. *EDNT* 1:162 [Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, ed., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI:1990–1994)].

22. BDAG: 579. See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 278.

In addition to the struggle against the ἀρχή and ἐξουσία, Paul indicates in 6:12 that readers also face "the cosmic powers of this present darkness" (τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου) and "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις). The term κοσμοκράτωρ is not found elsewhere in the NT or in the LXX. However, the later second century AD work *Testament of Solomon* employs the term twice and in both cases in connection with "darkness" (κοσμοκράτορες τοῦ σκότους, in 8:2; οἱ κοσμοκράτορες τοῦ σκότους τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, in 18:2).[23] The term is fairly common in astrological writings and Hellenistic religions employed a view of gods who controlled aspects of the universe, but these were seen as evil spirits in Jewish religion.[24] Κοσμοκράτωρ translates woodenly as "world-rulers" but can also be rendered as "cosmic powers" (NRSV). It here refers to these "rulers of the world" who are forces of evil "in order to bring out the terrifying power of their influence and comprehensiveness of their plans."[25] Their sinister nature is further emphasized by the genitive "of darkness."[26] Rather than another distinct category, lastly, the final phrase "spiritual forces of evil" (τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας) functions as a comprehensive designation for all of the classes of hostile spirits and summarizes all of the previously mentioned powers.[27]

The devil is also mentioned at multiple points in the letter. We find, for example, that clear reference is made by the title διάβολος ("devil") in 4:27 and 6:11. The noun ὁ διάβολος is employed in the LXX to translate שָׂטָן ("Satan") and serves as the title of the "principal transcendent evil being."[28] In both cases the Ephesians are warned against his sinister and comminatory nature ("do not make room for the devil," 4:27; "stand against the wiles of the devil," 6:11).[29] Another appellation used to depict the devil is "the evil one" (ὁ πονηρός) in 6:16. The devil is characterized vividly as a hostile antagonist, an archer who flings flaming arrows at the people of God.

The most evocative language used to describe the devil, however, is found earlier in the letter in 2:2, where Paul describes him as "the ruler of the power of the air" (τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος). While the term ἄρχων is often used in the LXX to depict figures who exercise authoritative influence, such as tribal or national

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23. This text may well have been influenced by Ephesians. Arnold argues that such later uses indeed reflect the use current in the first century or before. See Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 65–68.

24. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 827.

25. *TDNT* 3: 914.

26. Larkin takes this as a genitive of subordination, a "metaphor for the spiritual and moral state controlled by sin" (Larkin, *Ephesians*, 158). On the issue of darkness and light as a significant soteriological contrast in Jewish literature, see Ester A. G. D. Petrenko, *"Created in Christ Jesus for Good Works": The Integration of Soteriology and Ethics in Ephesians* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2011), 48–49, 52–59.

27. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 448.

28. BDAG: 226.

29. The noun μεθοδεία, which is often translated here as "wiles" or "stratagems," is employed in Ephesians 4:14 to characterize the "scheming" or "craftiness" of deceptive teaching.

leaders, it can also denote the heavenly beings or "powers" (e.g. Dan 10:13; 12:1 LXX); meanwhile, in the NT it is used occasionally to refer to the devil (e.g. Matt 9:34; Luke 11:15; John 12:31; 16:11) as it likely does here.[30] The ἄρχων is modified by the genitive ἐξουσία, which is best taken as an objective genitive to describe the ruler's "realm," "domain," or "kingdom." Indeed, this is specified further by the epexegetical genitive "the air" (τοῦ ἀέρος),[31] which was regarded as the dwelling place of evil spirits and abode of demons in antiquity.[32] The force of this description communicates that the devil has a host of evil spirits at his command, including those already delineated in this section. The inimical nature of the devil's work is clarified by the final clause of 2:2. The devil is described, significantly, as being "at work among those who are disobedient."[33] As Arnold explains, "the devil is thus seen to exercise effective and compelling power in his work of inspiring disobedience among humanity" with a force "so entirely effective in retaining its subjects that the author can describe these victims as 'sons' of disobedience."[34]

In summary, we find that Ephesians maintains a symbolic worldview that reflects the prevailing Jewish and Hellenistic belief in the reality of evil spirit-beings.[35] In Jewish traditions, such beings once held positions of authority and served as God's regents in the ordering of world, but in their rebellion they have become sources of chaos and destruction for humanity and creation.[36] That the powers are inimical in nature is substantiated consistently by the evidence of Ephesians. The four powers listed in Ephesians 1:21 are portrayed as enemies of Christ through allusion to Psalm 110:1.[37] Ephesians 2:2 depicts the devil as an "arch power" over a host of powers which are sufficiently equipped to lead and keep individuals in a life of disobedience.[38] The summary description "spiritual forces of evil" in Ephesians

30. See further *TDNT* 1:488–49; Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 60.

31. See BDAG: 353. See also Larkin, *Ephesians*, 28.

32. See Brannon, *The Heavenlies in Ephesians*, 208–209; John Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, BNTC (New York: Continuum, 2001), 104; Philo, *De Gigantibus*, 8–18; *2 En.* 29:4–5.

33. The genitive translated "the spirit" (τοῦ πνεύματος) is best taken in apposition to ἄρχοντα and thus refers again to the devil. See further Larkin, *Ephesians*, 28.

34. Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 61, 62.

35. Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 69. This, then, is contra interpretations that downplay the inimical nature of the powers in favor of other readings. For example, see Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning and Development of the Pauline Phrase HAI ARCHAI KAI EXOUSIAI* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 1981), which interprets the powers as good entities. For a wide-ranging interpretation of the powers that demythologizes them and takes them to refer to "heavenly *and* earthly, good *and* evil" (emphasis original), see Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 39.

36. See Timothy G. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians: Participating in the Triumph of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 36–48. On their original role, see e.g. Deut 32:8–9; 1 Kgs 21:23–20 (LXX); *Jub.* 2:2; *2 En.* 19:4; on their corrupting influence on creation, see e.g. *1 En.* 7:4–6; 9:1–2.

37. E.g. Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 56.

38. Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 62. Gombis (*The Drama of Ephesians*, 409) describes it this way: "In Ephesians, the powers are portrayed as leading humanity astray from the path of obedience to

6:12, meanwhile, supports the sense that throughout the letter the powers should be conceived as hostile.[39]

Salvation in Ephesians

In this section we turn to explore the soteriology of Ephesians. In light of the previous two sections, our study gives particular attention to how salvation operates in the eschatological-cosmological framework of Ephesians and in relation to the powers. It is also here that we will assess how the new creation concept is operating.

Our survey begins in Ephesians 1:20. Here Paul expounds on the power first mentioned in 1:19 that is "for us who believe," contending that God manifested this great power by raising Jesus from the dead and seating him in a position of authority in the heavenlies. At the mention of resurrection in Ephesians 1:20, this text is operating within the framework of new creation. Christ has been raised as the firstfruits of the new physical order (1 Cor 15:20–23; Col 1:18) and has inaugurated the eschatological age to come. As we have seen, this verse also highlights the vertical aspect of cosmology in Ephesians since Christ is depicted to be reigning in the heavenlies "high above" (ὑπεράνω) all of the inimical powers listed in 1:21 (πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος) in both ages. The term ὑπεράνω is quite important for it gives insight into the relation between the resurrected Christ and the powers, likely in two senses. The adverb can be used to denote superior rank, power, and authority.[40] This meaning fits well with the idea of a victory won over defeated foes and therefore is supported further by Paul's allusion to Psalm 109 LXX. As Owens summarizes, Paul is using Psalm 109 LXX "in order to connect Jesus' Messiahship with his defeat of cosmic evil . . . Jesus is the ultimate Davidic king whom God grants victory over not earthly enemies as in Ps 109 LXX, but over the spiritual forces of evil."[41]

The other sense that ὑπεράνω may be conveying relates to the spatial positioning of Christ above the powers. We have noted that one of the theological issues in Ephesians is how we are to understand that Christ, believers, *and* the

God. They rule the present evil age, ordering it in such a way that humanity is enticed to continue in transgressions and sins, remaining spiritually dead."

39.   Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 64. See also Muddiman, *Ephesians,* 90; J. Gnilka, *Der Epheserbrief*, HTKNT 10.2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1971), 175. Such a threat, as Rudolf Schnackenburg ([*The Epistle to the Ephesians: A Commentary,* trans. Helen Heron (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 274]) puts it, is "explained by the accumulation of concepts: the whole of human existence comes under the pressure of powers which act disastrously or a concentrated power of evil (personified in the 'devil') against which human beings seem powerless in their earthly state."

40.   BDAG: 1032. Louw & Nida: 737: "a marker of superior status, suggesting an additional factor of degree—'far above, considerably superior to.'" Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996).

41.   Owens, *As it Was in the Beginning*, 133–34.

inimical powers can all be said to be located "in the heavenlies." Brannon outlines how the spatial aspect of ὑπεράνω may be a key to understanding this. Brannon suggests that Paul's OT understanding of a three-fold division of heaven would allow him to envisage the evil powers in the lower heavens in a way that is consistent with Jewish thought, and that matches the description of "the ruler of the power *of the air*" in Ephesians 2:2. At the same time, God (and the seated Christ) would be located in the highest heaven ("far above all the heavens," 4:10).[42] This multivalent understanding of ὑπεράνω in Ephesians 1:21 makes sense of both the soterio-eschatogical and cosmological facets of the text regarding Christ's supremacy over the powers through the Christ event. This supremacy is then reiterated in Ephesians 1:22 (in allusion to Ps 8 LXX) with the description that God has "put all things under his feet" (cf. 1 Cor 15:25, 27) and "made him the head over all things for the church."[43]

Ephesians 2:1–22 builds upon 1:20–23 and provides the clearest overview of humanity's salvation experience in the letter.[44] Gombis helpfully frames the thrust of 2:1–10 in relation to 1:20–23 by raising the question, "If Christ has been so exalted, what are his triumphs, or in what way has he demonstrated his superiority over these supposedly vanquished powers?" He suggests that Paul answers this question in two parallel passages (Eph 2:1–10, 11–16) in order to substantiate his claim of Christ's supremacy.[45] The present focus will be on the former of these texts, which can be examined in three sections: verses 1–3 detail the former situation of the readers; verses 4–7 describe the dramatic salvation operation God enacted in the Christ event; and verses 8–10 expound the new reality of this salvation for the readers.

It is helpful to begin by highlighting the spatial significance of the language that is used in Ephesians 2:1–3, particularly as it relates to the powers. First, we note that Paul employs a number of spatial inferences when he describes the readers as having been metaphorically dead. For example, the phrase τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις is best taken as a dative of sphere to convey that they were "dead *in* the trespasses and sins."[46] This is then modified by a prepositional phrase that also conveys sphere: ἐν αἷς ποτε περιεπατήσατε ("*in which* you once walked").[47] The

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42. See Brannon, *The Heavenlies in Ephesians*, 207–9. Delling (*TDNT* 1: 483) remarks, "Perhaps they were originally assigned to a higher heavenly sphere. Their abode is now the ἐπουράνια, which is obviously the lowest of the heavenly spheres from which σκότος comes into this world."

43. This is a clear example of the ecclesiological implications of the new creation concept in Ephesians.

44. Owens (*As it Was in the Beginning*, 141) explains that "1:20–23 forms an introduction to the author's treatment of new creation in Eph 2:1–22 by portraying Christ as a divine warrior . . . and inaugurator of the new creation." On this theme, Gombis (e.g. *The Drama of Ephesians*, 27–31, 87–88) argues that Ephesians exhibits patterns of the divine warfare motif found in the ANE mythological traditions. However, Owens (*As it Was in the Beginning*, 135–37) contends that it is better to find the background for this pattern in Isaiah's New Exodus motif.

45. Timothy G. Gombis, "Ephesians 2 as a Narrative of Divine Warfare," *JSNT* 26 (2004): 410.

46. So e.g. Larkin, *Ephesians*, 27; Hoehner, *Ephesians,* 308; Merkle, *Ephesians,* 53.

47. So e.g. Larkin, *Ephesians*, 28; Merkle, *Ephesians,* 53.

force of this spatial language communicates that the readers' trespasses and sins functioned as more than a lifestyle of choices detached from any greater reality. Rather, it was a manner of living that was ingrained in and in step with a pervasive and inescapable realm of existence. The next two prepositional phrases in Ephesians 2:2 offer even greater clarity about this sphere and lifestyle.

The use of κατά in the first phrase conveys that the standard was, translated literally, "according to the age of this world" (κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου). While it has been suggested that τὸν αἰῶνα here should be taken to refer to a personified inimical power,[48] it is better (as noted earlier) to take this phrase as a further temporal and spatial description of the readers' former existence in the present evil age/world. As Lincoln expresses it, "Instead of being oriented to the life of the age to come and the heavenly realm, the past lives of the readers had been dominated by this present evil age and this world. Their sinful activities were simply in line with the norms and values of a spatio-temporal complex wholly hostile to God."[49] The second prepositional phrase now offers a fuller indication of why this is so: the readers' lifestyle in this sphere is also κατὰ τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος. Having determined already that the accusative and two genitives refer to an evil personal power (namely, Satan) whose realm of power is in the air, we add here only that κατά conveys that the readers' former lifestyle was directed by or functioned according to the standard of this evil power. It is probable that the preposition also purports the sense of "under the control of."[50] So thorough is their captivity in this sphere, this intrinsic lifestyle of disobedience in the grip of inimical forces, that Paul can describe the readers—along with all humanity—as "children of wrath *by nature*" (τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς) in Ephesians 2:3.[51]

It is against this dark backdrop that God's salvific action in the Christ event shines all the brighter in Ephesians 2:4–7. Because of God's merciful nature and great love for humanity, he performed an act of new creation by making humans, who were otherwise dead and hopelessly captive to the powers in the present evil age, "alive together with Christ" (συνεζωοποίησεν τῷ Χριστῷ, 2:5) through resurrection. More than this, however, God has also "raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (συνήγειρεν καὶ συνεκάθισεν ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, 2:6).[52] In these phrases, the depiction of union with Christ is emphatic. Each of the aorist verbs ("made alive," "raised," "seated") contains a σύν-compound that conveys

48. See e.g. Gnilka, *Epheserbrief*, 114; Markus Barth, *Ephesians 1–3* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 214.

49. Lincoln, *Ephesians,* 95. See also Thielman (*Ephesians,* 123) who describes it as a "powerful mode of existence characterized by rebellion against God."

50. Merkle, *Ephesians,* 53.

51. See also Ephesians 5:6.

52. Gombis ("Ephesians 2 as a Narrative of Divine Warfare," 411) rightly notes that these three verbs refer back to Jesus' own resurrection and seating in the heavenlies in 1:20–23.

humanity's participation in each action through union with Christ.[53] The result of this salvific action, Paul continues to explain in Ephesians 2:7, is that God has done this "so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." At this stage, four observations need to be made.

First, by nature of its association with resurrection, this is an act of new creation. It bears the major marks of the explicit new creation announcements found in Galatians 6:14–15 and 2 Corinthians 5:14–17, including union with Christ, participation in the Christ event, and a new eschatological beginning.[54] At the same time, secondly, it introduces a new vertical and spatial aspect to the Pauline concept of new creation since believers are raised and seated "in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."[55] Third, though we will need to turn to other texts to more thoroughly delineate the readers' relation to the powers, which also remain "in the heavenlies," what can be highlighted here is that believers are seated securely above the powers as a result of their union with Christ, who himself is seated above the powers (1:21). In this, it must be emphasized that the readers' participation and security in this new realm above come entirely from their spiritual connection to Christ. The fourth observation, finally, is that believers inhabit both the heavenlies and the earth simultaneously.[56] That is, in the spatial soteriology of Ephesians they enjoy "a heavenly existence 'in Christ Jesus' which does not cancel their life on earth with all its worldly implications and obligations."[57] As we turn now to see, Paul begins to spell out the earthly "implications and obligations" in 2:8–10 (and following).

It is significant for our purposes to notice that the outcome of this salvation event, insofar as it relates to the new life of the readers on earth, is framed concretely in new creational terms. After disclosing that salvation is by grace through faith (2:8–9), Paul summarizes the result in 2:10 with the language "for we are what he has made (ποίημα) us, created (κτίζω) in Christ Jesus for good works." Snodgrass strikes the correct balance on this when he writes, "That creation language is used should

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53.   See Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 233.

54.   In 2 Corinthians 5:14–17 new creation points to humanity's transfer from the old age/world to the new creation in Christ through participation in the Christ event. The same is true of Galatians 6:14–15, but here the reference point comes from Paul's own proclamation of dying to the old order of circumcision *and* uncircumcision, which has bearing on the former lifestyle of the Galatians in relation to the powers of the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ("elemental spirits of the world"). The best analysis of these text remains Jackson, *New Creation*, 83–149.

55.   The closest parallel to this idea is found in Colossians 2:20 wherein, through participation in the Christ event, the readers are described as having died "from" (ἀπὸ) the powers (τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου). The inference of this is that they have been brought into the world of new creation with Christ that is free from the threat of the powers. This temporal/spatial aspect of salvation is underscored in Colossians 3:1–4 as the readers are told to "seek the things that are above" (τὰ ἄνω) where their lives are hidden with Christ. Still, the focus in Colossians is not so emphatically oriented towards the vertical aspect of salvation as it is in Ephesians.

56.   See Hoehner, *Ephesians,* 335, 830–31.

57.   Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 52.

not be taken lightly. The New Testament assumes that God's act in Christ is parallel to creation itself."[58] Indeed, just as the first creation activity was purposed to launch a world of growth and flourishing, so "this new creation is to be active and productive like the Creator."[59] This juxtaposition of the readers' heavenly existence in Christ with their obligation to faithful productivity on earth illustrates both aspects of salvation in the vertical framework of Ephesians. Both are true in the temporal overlap of the ages since believers inhabit both heaven and earth. One particular tension related to this comes to the fore when we observe that even as believers are freed from the grip of the powers and positioned above them, they must still combat their evil advances. In order to understand how this is so, it is necessary to turn briefly to Ephesians 3:10 and 6:10–17.

In Ephesians 3:10 Paul conveys that the church plays a key role in making the wisdom of God known to "the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." Gombis explains, "As Paul the prisoner preaches the riches of Christ, God creates the church, and this coming into being is a striking lesson for the cosmic rulers about God's power."[60] The nature of this "striking lesson" builds from the description of God's unification of Jew and Gentile in the church in Ephesians 2:11–22 (cf. 3:6).[61] Specifically, the manifestation of the church as a unified body demonstrates to the powers the stunning power of God's creative purposes and wisdom: "He not only created the universe with its endless variety, but in a wholly surprising way he has also begun to restore the crowning achievement of his creation—humanity—to its original unity."[62] More than this, however, it indicates to the powers who controlled and subjugated a divided humanity in the present evil age that this power has been taken from them in the church, and that this is to be taken as a sign of their own defeat.[63]

Our final text concerns the nature of the on-going battle between believers in Jesus and the hostile powers (Eph 6:10–17). The readers are to put on (ἐνδύω) six pieces of armor, which correspond to truth, righteousness, gospel readiness, faith, salvation, and the word of God. There is a significant connection between these features and the power of God that has been in focus throughout the letter (e.g. Eph 1:17–23), for by putting on the armor believers are equipped with the power of

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58. Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 106–7. See also Owens (*As it Was in the Beginning*, 148), who rightly notes that his text (2:1–10) displays both anthropological and cosmological aspects of the new creation concept.

59. Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 107.

60. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians*, 116.

61. It is important to note that Ephesians 2:11–22 expands from 2:1–10; see Arnold, *Ephesians*, 149, 153. As such, the unification of Jew and Gentile depicted in Ephesians 2:11–22 and alluded to in 3:10 both build from and are an (ecclesiological) outcome of new creation in 2:1–10.

62. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 216.

63. See Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 140; Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians*, 116.

God.[64] Gombis suggests that in Eph 6:10–18 Paul portrays the church in the role of the divine warrior "as the presence of God on earth and as the chief character in God's ongoing cosmic conflict with the suprahuman powers that rule the present evil age."[65] However, the nature of the battle to which the church is called is one of inhabiting God's accomplished victory over the defeated foes through resistance.[66] Put differently, the purpose of the armor is not for attacking the powers but for holding and defending the ground God has won. To underscore this, we observe that Paul uses the term "stand" (ἵστημι) three times and "withstand" (ἀνθίστημι) once in Ephesians 6:11–14. Believers put on the armor in order to stand, for example, "against the wiles of the devil" (6:11) and to withstand "that evil day" (6:13).[67] Gombis rightly notes that Paul's instructions for performing this divine warfare are found in the preceding section (Eph 4:17–6:9), which lays out the ethical mandates for the church.[68] That is, the church stands firm in the result of God's salvific defeat of the powers by faithfully embodying the realities of the new creation of which it is a part. Believers complete the works prepared in advance (2:10) and demonstrate the defeat of the powers (3:10), for example, by faithfully serving one another in a united, multiracial body where two have become one; by putting off the "old self" (4:22) and putting on the "new self, created after the likeness of God" (4:24); and by living as light and not in the former ways of disobedience and darkness. The church is to continue faithfully in all of this until the final act of new creation when God will "gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (1:10).[69]

Conclusion

This essay has covered significant ground in its effort to examine the portrait of soteriology found in Ephesians. Two key results should be noted. First, I have argued that the new creation concept operates in Ephesians with an important vertical axis. In addition to depicting believers as raised to new life and participating in the age to come, Paul also portrays the readers to be seated securely in the heavenlies with Christ above the powers, even as their life continues on earth. This vertical axis enlarges the scope of the Pauline new creation concept to include both heaven and

64. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 417. See also Thomas Yoder Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God: The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 117.

65. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians*, 116.

66. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians*, 160.

67. The reference to the "evil days" in 5:16 (αἱ ἡμέραι πονηραί) and "evil day" (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ) in 6:13 may well be additional ways of expressing the ongoing experience of the evil age from 2:2, to the point of the climactic evil day. See Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4–6* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 579; Best, *Ephesians*, 504; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 694–95; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 449–50.

68. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians*, 159.

69. See Owens, *As it Was in the Beginning*, 130–31.

earth in the overlap of the ages until the consummation (1:10). Second, we have noted that the powers play a significant role in the soteriology of Ephesians and now observe that their demise is characterized in a unique and multifaceted manner. Whereas, for example, the defeat of the powers is stated plainly in 1 Corinthians 15:24 or connected directly to the Christ event in Colossians 2:14–15, their overthrow is illustrated with significant nuance *in relation to the church* in Ephesians. In Ephesians, we observe the powers' defeat in the rescue and removal of the readers from their sphere of control, by the display of God's creative wisdom in uniting Jew and Gentile in the church, and through the faithful conduct of the church in resisting the powers, which is a direct manifestation of their life in the new creation.

Power and the "Powers" in Thomas Aquinas' *Lectura ad Ephesios*

Eʀɪᴄ Cᴏᴠɪɴɢᴛᴏɴ

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Abstract: In his medieval commentary on Ephesians, Thomas Aquinas interprets the various terms that refer to the "powers" throughout the letter as references to specific tiers within hierarcies of both benevolent and malevolent spiritual beings. Intriguingly, Aquinas interprets the "powers" of Ephesians 1:21 and Ephesians 3:10 as references to the benevolent, angelic hierarchy, while he interprets the "powers" of Ephesians 2:2 and Ephesians 6:12 as references to the malevolent, demonic hierarchy. This chapter will examine Aquinas' interpretation of these terms in each of these verses and will conclude by examining the theological significance of this identification for Aquinas' reading of Ephesians. Ultimately, Aquinas sees Christ as the form and exemplar of true divine power, which is most fully expressed in Christ's resurrection and exaltation over all spiritual beings. Thus, while Aquinas does not contradict modern scholarship's focus on the subjugation of malevolent forces, he dramatically reorients the discussion around Ephesians' presentation of Christ as the exalted one through whom the appropriate divine power extends to every creature—physical and spiritual.

Key Words: Divine Power; Angelic Hierarchy; Demonic Hierarchy; Spiritual Beings; Thomas Aquinas

Introduction

Though *Summa Theologiae* stands as his most enduring contribution in the field of systematic theology, Thomas Aquinas' "ordinary labor," particularly during his service as *Magister in Sacra Pagina* ("Master of the Sacred Page") at the University of Paris, was to teach Holy Scripture.[1] Records of Thomas' exegetical teachings include commentaries on five Old Testament books, two Gospels, and the Pauline

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1. Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 1 The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 55.

corpus (which, for Aquinas, includes the book of Hebrews).[2] Most of Aquinas' Pauline commentaries, including his work on Ephesians, are technically in the form of a *reportatio* (a record) of Thomas' classroom lectures made by Reginald of Piperno.[3] Thus, his commentary on Ephesians is more formally known as the *lectura ad Ephesios* – the "lectures on Ephesians."

In his engagement with Ephesians, Aquinas uses a verse-by-verse style of commentary to highlight significant exegetical and theological elements of the biblical text to his class. Because Thomas, of whom it has been said "speculated with more precision and consistency about the nature of spiritual beings than anyone before him,"[4] produced such a detailed exegetical and theological treatment of Ephesians, analyzing his *lectura ad Ephesios* can offer a unique approach to the difficulty of understanding the role of "the powers" in this letter. Aquinas' teaching on passages

2.   The Aquinas Institute hosts a free website (https://aquinas.cc) that contains Aquinas' complete works, including the biblical commentaries in Latin and, where available, English translation. The Aquinas Institute has also published hardcover diglot versions of the commentary on Job: [Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Job*, ed. The Aquinas Institute, trans. Brian Mullady, Latin-English Opera Omnia 32 (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2016)], a four-volume set of the Gospel commentaries on Matthew and John [Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospels of Matthew and John*, ed. The Aquinas Institute, trans. Jeremy Holmes, Beth Mortensen, and Fabian R. Larcher, 4 vols., Latin-English Opera Omnia 33–36 (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2013)], and a five-volume set of the commentaries on the Pauline epistles[Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul*, ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcón, trans. Fabian R. Larcher; 5 vols., Latin-English Opera Omnia 37–41 (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012)]. At the time of writing, Thomas' other Old Testament commentaries (on Psalms 1–54, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Lamentations) are currently being translated through the institute for future publication.

3.   Reginald of Piperno served as Thomas' *socius continuus* ("constant companion"). According to Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 1 The Person and His Work*, 273, a *socius continuus*, having been appointed by the Dominican order to serve lecturers and masters in theology, "followed them everywhere, on trips as well as in the priory, and helped them personally in the preparation of their lessons. They served not as domestics…but as assistants and secretaries. In the present case, things went even further than that for, if we can believe Reginald, he exercised the role of Thomas's 'nurse' (*quasi nutricis officium*), even to the point of watching over his diet and making him eat so that his distraction (*abstractio mentis*) would not be harmful to his health." In his analysis of Aquinas' lectures concerning the Pastoral Epistles, Michael G. Sirilla, *The Ideal Bishop: Aquinas's Commentaries on the Pastoral Epistles*, Thomistic Ressourcement 8 (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 83 notes that "the statutes in place at the University of Paris at the time required that all *reportationes* be personally corrected and edited by the master before their publication . . .We can be confident, then, that Reginald's *reportationes* faithfully express the lectures as Thomas gave them."

There is some disagreement as to whether these reports come from Thomas' preliminary lectures on the Pauline epistles during his period of teaching in Rome 1265–1268 CE, as Matthew L. Lamb, "Introduction," in *Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, trans. Matthew L. Lamb, by Thomas Aquinas, Aquinas Scripture Series 2 (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1966), 28 and Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Vol. 1 The Person and His Work*, 255 suggest, or whether they come from Thomas' second Pauline lectures, which were given during in Naples in 1272–1273 CE shortly before his death, as Norman Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Theism: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa Contra Gentiles I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 256 suggests.

4.   Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion 1250-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 93.

relevant to the "powers" in Ephesians demonstrates that he has a highly refined understanding of a hierarchical organization of both benevolent and malevolent spiritual creatures that he sees referenced in the biblical text. However, Thomas' emphasis throughout his *lectura* remains on God's unrivaled power exemplified in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ.

Power and Spiritual Creatures in Thomas Aquinas' Philosophical Theology

One of the defining characteristics of Thomas' exegesis is that his scriptural interpretation is deeply informed, and indeed cannot be separated from, his broader philosophical theology.[5] This makes his commentaries dense and rewarding, yet also difficult, to engage. In examining Thomas' understanding of the "powers" in Ephesians, there are two particular components of Aquinas' broader thought that must be initially addressed: his understanding of divine power and his understanding of the reality of spiritual creation.

Aquinas defines *power* as the ability to accomplish an action,[6] and for Aquinas, an *action* is understood, in an Aristotelian sense, as the ability to bring something potential to actuality.[7] To exercise *power*, then as Ralph McInerney states, means "to be able unqualifiedly to bring action to its intended term."[8] Thomas' understanding of divine power is dependent on his understanding of God's ultimate perfection as pure actuality (*actus purus*).[9] God is the only reality whose existence is the same

5. So also, Franklin T. Harkins, "*Docuit Excellentissimae Divinitatis Mysteria*: St. Paul in Thomas Aquinas," in *A Companion to St. Paul in the Middle Ages*, ed. Steven R. Cartwright, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 39 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 236. Referring to Aquinas' broader systematic thought as "philosophical theology" corresponds to the terminology of Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 6.

6. Or, as Gilles Emery, "Central Aristotelian Themes in Aquinas's Trinitarian Theology," in *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 16 has it: "Power is the principle of an act, and the principle of what is produced by an action."

7. See John F. Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas II*, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy 47 (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 196: "Absolutely central to Thomas's argumentation for the presence of power in God is his conviction that God is pure actuality, totally devoid of matter and passive potentiality."

8. Ralph McInerny, "Aquinas on Divine Omnipotence," in *L'homme et son univers au moyen âge: actes du septième congrés international de philosophie médiévale (30 aout-4 septembre 1982)*, Volume 1, ed. Christian Wenin, *Philosophes Médiévaux* XXVI (Louvain-la-Neuve: Editions de l'Institut supérieur de philosophie, 1986), 441.

9. Note also Tyler R. Wittman, "'Not a God of Confusion but of Peace': Aquinas and the Meaning of Divine Simplicity," *Modern Theology* 32.2 (2016): 154, who suggests that Aquinas' doctrine of God begins "with the demonstration of God's existence in which God is characterized as the pure actuality [*actus purus*] related to all things causally as their ultimate efficient, exemplary, and final cause."

as his essence—who is fully and completely actual[10]—and, thus, "in God there is active power in the highest degree."[11] For Aquinas, then, *power* refers to the ability to accomplish that which one wills, and, by necessity of his understanding of divine perfection, God is the only reality that exercises infinite power and is omnipotent.[12]

Aquinas' understanding of the created order, including spiritual beings, builds on the foundation of his understanding of God's perfection and power. For Aquinas, everything else in existence—including immaterial elements like the human soul and spiritual beings—has been created by God and, thus, every being within the created order is dependent upon God.[13] Within this understanding of creation in which all things are causally ordered to God, Aquinas reflects a medieval Christian tradition that assumes the presence of immaterial, spiritual beings.[14] These

10.   See, for example, *ST* 1.1.4.resp.: "For a thing is perfect in proportion to its state of actuality, because we call that perfect which lacks nothing of the mode of its perfection." Citations from the *Summa* will follow the standard order of listing part (1), question (50), and article (1). Where a more specific reference is required, the following abbreviation pattern will be used: prologue (prol.), arguments (arg. 1/2/3), *sed contra* (s.c.), response (resp.), and replies to arguments (ad. 1/2/3).

11.   *ST* 1.25.1.resp. In *ST* 1.25.1.ad 3, Thomas clarifies that, technically, divine power is not a principle of action, because *action* refers to a movement from potential to actual, and there can be no such movement in God since he is fully and completely actual. So, then, "the notion of power is retained in God in so far as it is the principle of an effect." This informs the observation made by Oliva Blanchette, "The Logic of Perfection in Aquinas," in *Thomas Aquinas and His Legacy*, ed. David M. Gallagher (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 109, that Aquinas can refer to God as *perfect* only by extension "since he is not thought of as coming or having come to be in any way."

12.   Thomas details the infinite power of God in *ST* 1.25.3 and divine omnipotence in *ST* 1.25.4. McInerny, "Aquinas on Divine Omnipotence," 442 summarizes Aquinas' understanding of divine omnipotence: "If something can be, God can bring it about; His power extends to any thing or state of affairs which does not involve a contradiction." McInerney further indicates that "God's power is grounded in (is identical with) His infinite being which is the sum of all perfection. Thus, what is said to be possible with respect to His power is anything whatsoever that can be" (p. 440). This leads to an interesting reflection on a question of the limits of God's power in regard to sin: If sin is a potential, and God cannot sin, does that mean there is something God cannot do? McInerney summarizes Thomas' response to such an objection: "A capacity to act is defined in terms of successful, not of defective, action. Being able to fail is not a way of successfully achieving what one sets out to do. Thus, to be able to act without restriction, that is, to be able unqualifiedly to bring action to its intended term, excludes and is incompatible with acting defectively" (p. 441).

13.   This is based on Thomas' broader metaphysical understanding of the distinction between *essence* and *existence* in created beings. As Kevin Corrigan, "A Philosophical Precursor to the Theory of Essence and Existence in Saint Thomas Aquinas," *The Thomist* 48 (1984): 220 has it: "In all created things, however, existence is not contained in the notion of essence and must, therefore, come from outside the essence and enter into composition with it. Only in God are existence and essence identical . . . Every creature possesses existence, therefore by participation; and the substance that participates in existence is something other than the participated existence. Hence, the essence stands as potency to the act of existence which it receives from God."

14.   An assumption of bodiless, intelligent beings was not unique to the middle ages or to Christian theology, though. Serge-Thomas Bonino, "Aristotélisme et angélologie chez Saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 113.1 (2012): 3 provides a reminder that in addition to the scriptural presentation of spiritual beings, ancient philosophy, especially Aristotelian and Platonic traditions, were highly influential in the development of Christian understandings of spiritual beings. Even though, according to David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*

spiritual beings are a necessary component of the divine providential order that pervades the cosmos,[15] and, for Aquinas, they "rank between God and corporeal creatures."[16] As such, they function as intermediaries between God and creation.[17] Aquinas was particularly influenced by (Pseudo-)Dionysius' *De Coelesti Hierarchia* in understanding a hierarchical structure of angelic beings.[18] Spiritual beings, for Aquinas, are hierarchically ordered and differentiated both by species and by function.[19] Each of the angelic orders is named in a top-down demarcation that relates their function in communicating the knowledge of God from the higher to the lower

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 4, the subject of angelology has been said to be "the most neglected topic in medieval studies," there are a number of helpful studies concerning medieval and Thomistic angelology. See, for example, James Daniel Collins, *The Thomistic Philosophy of the Angels*, Philosophical Studies 89 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1947); Tiziana Suarez-Nani, *Les anges et la philosophie*, Études de philosophie médiévale (Paris: Vrin, 2002); Tiziana Suarez-Nani, *Connaissance et langage des anges selon Thomas d'Aquin et Gilles de Rome*, Études de philosophie médiévale (Paris: Vrin, 2003); and Tobias Hoffmann, ed., *A Companion to Angels in Medieval Philosophy*, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 35 (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

15. Thomas discusses spiritual beings in a number of places throughout his work, including, among others, *ST* 1.50–64; *SCG* 2.46–55; *Quaestio Disputata de Spiritualibus Creaturis*; and *De Substantiis Separatis* (*Treatise on Separate Substances*).

16. *ST* 1.50.1.*ad*.1.

17. Juanita Feros Ruys, "Nine Angry Angels: Order, Emotion, and the Angelic and Demonic Hierarchies in the High Middle Ages," in *Ordering Emotions in Europe, 1100-1800*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions 195 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 14–15. Or, as Potter, *Angelology*, 110 states: the angelic hierarchy functioned "as a means of permanently saturating earth with heaven."

18. *De Coelesti Hierarchia* (*The Celestial Hierarchy*) is a 5th-century CE text originally composed in Greek. Though the author writes under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite (a reference to the Athenian convert of the Apostle Paul mentioned in Acts 17:34), the true identity of the author remains unknown, leading recent scholarship to refer to the author as Pseudo-Dionysius. For more on the identity of the author, see Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*, Outstanding Christian Thinkers (London: Continuum, 1989), 1–2.

A Greek text and a Latin translation of the title are preserved in Jacques Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologia Graeca* 3:119–370a (Paris, Migne: 1857). A critical edition of the original Greek is available as "*De Coelesti Hierarchia*" in *Corpus Dionysiacum II: Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita: De Coelesti Hierarchia, De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia, De Mystica Theologia, Epistulae*, eds. Günter Heil and Adolf M. Ritter; Patristische Texte und Studien 36 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), 5–60. The work was originally translated into English by John Parker, trans., *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 2 vols. (London: James Parker and Co., 1897). A modern English translation of the work is available in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 143–192. For more on (Pseudo-)Dionysius' angelology, see Dylan David Potter, *Angelology: Recovering Higher-Order Beings as Emblems of Transcendence, Immanence, and Imagination* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), 64–109. For a study on an earlier theological engagement with (Pseudo-)Dionysius' work reflected in John Scotus Eriugena's commentary of *De Coelesti Hierarchia*, see Paul Rorem, *Eriugena's Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy*, Studies and Texts 150 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005).

19. Note Bonino, "Aristotélisme et angélologie chez Saint Thomas d'Aquin," 32: "L'ange Gabriel se distingue de l'ange Raphaël, comme les chevaux se distinguent des lions, et non pas comme Bucéphale se distingue de Rossinante" [Personal translation: "The angel Gabriel is distinguished from the angel Raphael as horses are distinguished from lions, rather than as Bucephalus is distinguished from Rocinante"].

orders.[20] For Aquinas, spiritual beings are not merely passive instruments; rather, they have particular functions within creation that they consciously undertake.[21]

The potentiality of the spiritual beings' task and their existence as creatures allows for the possibility of sinful, fallen spiritual beings,[22] and indeed, Aquinas assumes the reality of malevolent spiritual beings who followed Lucifer in rebellion against God.[23] Aquinas, echoing a received Augustinian tradition, understood the demonic realm to consist exclusively of fallen angels.[24] As fallen angels, the demonic realm reflects both the hierarchical ordering and the creaturely limitations of the benevolent, angelic realm.[25] However, they were understood in inverse relationship with the angelic hierarchies. Though they "were arranged in replication of the angelic hierarchies," the demonic beings, for Aquinas, are ordered antithetically away from God.[26] Aquinas assumes the reality of this spiritual creation, and it informs his interpretation of four passages within Ephesians that refer to "the powers": Ephesians 1:21, 2:2, 3:10, and 6:12.

Power and "the Powers" in Ephesians 1:21

In Aquinas' exposition of Ephesians, Paul's primary aim in writing the letter was to strengthen believers in their faith,[27] and the apostle's prayer in Ephesians 1:17–19a contributes to this overall theme by affirming the certainty of the believers'

20. Ruys, "Nine Angry Angels," 18.

21. Serge-Thomas Bonino, *Angels and Demons: A Catholic Introduction*, trans. Michael J. Miller (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 231.

22. Bonino, *Angels and Demons: A Catholic Introduction*, 198.

23. Tobias Hoffmann, "Theories of Angelic Sin from Aquinas to Ockham," in *A Companion to Angels in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Tobias Hoffmann, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 35 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 238. For an overview of Aquinas' position within the broader medieval understanding of demons, see Alain Boureau, *Satan the Heretic: The Birth of Demonology in the Medieval West*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 94–118.

24. David L. Bradnick, *Evil, Spirits, and Possession: An Emergentist Theology of the Demonic*, Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies 25 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 43.

25. Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 97. For an example of the limitations of demonic abilities, see Travis Dumsday, "Natural Evil, Evolution, and Scholastic Accounts of the Limits on Demonic Power," *Pro Ecclesia* 24 (2015): 76–81.

26. Ruys, "Nine Angry Angels," 27. Ruys continues: "Although they had become demons through their own attempted overthrow of divine order, so pervasive was the doctrine of order in the medieval world that they were nevertheless pictured as submitting to order in their new forms" (Ibid).

27. *Ad Ephesios*, prol.1. References to *ad Ephesios* will give chapter, lecture, and paragraph number according to the Marietti numbering (e.g., 1.7.56) corresponding with the numbering and translation used in The Aquinas Institute's Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcón, trans. Matthew L. Lamb and Fabian R. Larcher (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012). Though the Pauline authorship for Ephesians is now disputed, Aquinas assumes it is an authentic letter of the apostle Paul.

eschatological hope of glory.[28] Aquinas tells his students that Ephesians 1:19b–23 affirms the reality of this eschatological hope, which lies beyond the scope of temporal reality, by describing God's power—that is, the ability to accomplish what he wills. For Thomas, this passage presents Christ's resurrection and exaltation as the "form and exemplar" of the believers' eschatological hope of "glory and exaltation."[29] Believers can be assured of God's ability to accomplish their eschatological hope because God's power has been manifest in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ.

Based on Ephesians 1:20–23, Aquinas identifies three elements of God's power expressed in Christ: (1) the transition from death to life, (2) the exaltation to the utmost heights of glory, and (3) the elevation to the greatest power.[30] He provides little exposition of Christ's resurrection as stated in Ephesians 1:20a, except to note that it was accomplished according to the operation of the power that God the Father shares with Christ.[31] Aquinas spends significantly more time, though, in discussing Christ's exaltation to the "height of glory" and his elevation to the greatest power.[32]

Aquinas finds in Ephesians 1:20b–21 three different perspectives from which to understand Christ's exalted position: (1) its relation to God, (2) its relation to material creatures, and (3) its relation to spiritual creatures. Aquinas uses a thrifty 134 Latin words to interpret Ephesians 1:20, suggesting that the verse presents the exalted Christ being seated "at the right hand" in equality with God the Father and placed "in the heavenly places" in superiority to the material creation. Yet, Thomas devotes 877 Latin words, more than 6 times what he used to discuss the first two perspectives, to comment on Ephesians 1:21 and Christ's relationship with spiritual creatures.

Aquinas suggests that Ephesians 1:21a refers to specific spiritual creatures over which Christ is exalted with the terms "Principality" (*principatum*), "Power" (*potestatem*), "Virtue" (*virtutem*), and "Dominion" (*dominationem*), according to the Latin Vulgate.[33] Aquinas interprets these disputed terms in Ephesians 1:21a as references to specific ranks of benevolent angelic beings. Aquinas, whom Karl

28. Aquinas' exposition of Ephesians utilizes a medieval exegetical method known as *divisio textus* ("division of the text"). This method begins the interpretation of a text by identifying its central theme and then by creating divisions and subdivisions that help identify how every chapter and verse of the book contribute to the text's central theme. For more on the *divisio textus* in Thomas' Ephesians commentary, see Eric Covington, "*Divisio Textus* and the Interpretive Logic of Thomas Aquinas' *Lectura Ad Ephesios*," *Journal of the Bible and Its Reception* 4.1 (2017): 21–41.

29. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.56.

30. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.58.

31. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.59. This is not to suggest that the resurrection is unimportant for Aquinas, but, rather, that his focus in interpreting the passage is the demonstration of God's power.

32. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.60.

33. There is a terminological difference between the Latin Vulgate, which Aquinas used, and the Greek text of NA[28]: πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος ("every rule and authority and power and dominion"). For more on the Vulgate tradition of Aquinas, see Jean-Eric Stroobant de Saint-Eloy, "Avertissement," in *Commentaire de l'épître Aux Éphésiens*, by Thomas Aquinas, Thomas d'Aquin Aux Éditions Du Cerf: Commentaires Scripturaries (Paris: Cerf, 2012), 47.

Barth called "probably the greatest angelogue of all Church history,"[34] tells his class, "To understand this, note that there are nine ranks of angels, of which the Apostle here mentions only the four middle ranks."[35] Thomas identifies nine-tiers of angelic beings, which are organized around three hierarchies each composed of three different ranks of angelic beings, and he uses this verse as an opportunity to discuss in some detail his understanding of the benevolent spiritual beings he sees referenced in Ephesians 1:21a.

"Since everything that happens among creatures occurs with the assistance of angels," Thomas explains, the three ranks of angelic beings have functions associated with "the threefold way of conceiving the structure of reality."[36] The highest tier operates according to reality "as it is present in the first cause of everything, namely in God," and, thus, the function of the highest three ranks is to facilitate "the governance of reality in relation to God."[37] The highest tier of angelic beings is composed of three ranks of angelic beings: Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones.[38] The order of the ranks within the first hierarchy is agreed by "all the doctors;"[39] however, Aquinas reminds his class, none of the ranks of this highest tier are referenced in the text of Ephesians 1:21.

The middle tier of the angelic hierarchy operates according to the nature of reality "as it is in the universal causes," and so the three angelic ranks that compose this tier are named and given functions "associated with power since the universal causes are present in the lower and individual things by their power and strength."[40] Within the middle tier, the initial rank of angelic beings are the Dominions who are tasked with giving "direction by their commands" and, thus, give orders to the angelic ranks subordinate to them.[41] The second rank of the middle hierarchy, the Virtues are tasked with disposing "any impediments to the fulfillment of these commands" and, thus, they are said to "facilitate the execution of the commands."[42] The third

34. *CD* III/3: 391. [Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. III.3: The Doctrine of Creation §50–51 of *Study Edition* 18 (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 102.] It should be noted, though, that Barth does go on to indicate that Thomas' position "has nothing whatever to do with the knowledge of the *veritas catholicae fide* ["true catholic faith"], or with attention and fidelity to the biblical witness of revelation."

35. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.61.

36. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.62.

37. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.62.

38. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.62: "The seraphim are so called because they are burning with love and through it are united to God. The cherubim are, as it were, radiant inasmuch as they possess a supereminent knowledge of divine mysteries. The thrones are so termed inasmuch as in them God carries out his judgments."

39. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.61. "Doctors" refers to those who received the *licentia docendi*—the ultimate qualification and license to teach in the university system. According to Torrell, *The Person and His Work*, 50, Aquinas received his license to teach in Paris in 1256.

40. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.62.

41. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.62.

42. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.62.

rank of the middle hierarchy, the Powers "must arrange how others will carry out the commands."[43]

On the third tier of the hierarchy "devolves the guidance of things in relation to individual causes," and the three ranks of angelic beings are given names according to their particular functions.[44] The highest rank of the third tier, the Principalities "preside over each of the provinces" of the earth.[45] The middle rank, the Archangels, are tasked with "the salvation and utility of greater personages"—that is, humans of higher authority in the world. Finally, the lowest rank, the Angels "carry out what pertains to the salvation of individual persons."[46]

In concluding his comments on the formation of the angelic hierarchy, Aquinas notes the central organizing point of the entire angelic hierarchy: "Christ is above all of these ranks."[47] Not only is Christ's exaltation over the angelic ranks— the preeminent exemplar of God's power—the culminating feature of Aquinas' discussion of the angelic hierarchy, it is the reason, in Thomas' exposition, that Ephesians 1:21 mentions four of the angelic ranks in ascending order (*principality, power, virtue,* and *dominion*) rather than listing all nine ranks. Aquinas explains that Ephesians 1:21a describes Christ's exaltation position above specific ranks of benevolent spiritual beings who are directly responsible for the divine administration of that which occurs on the earth.[48]

For Thomas, this emphasis on the divine power expressed through Christ's resurrection and exaltation is affirmed by the phrase "and above every name that is named" in Ephesians 1:21b. He interprets this phrase as a general summation of Christ's exaltation "above every substance which can be known and comprehended

43. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.62.

44. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.62.

45. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.62.

46. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.62. In the immediately preceding section (*ad Ephesios* 1.7.61), Thomas notes that there is some disagreement between the correct ordering of angelic ranks in the middle and lower hierarchies. The cause of the division, Thomas tells his students, is because Dionysius favors the hierarchical ordering that follows the text of Ephesians 1:21, whereas a hierarchical arrangement proposed by Pope Gregory I in *Homilia 34 in Evangelia* Gregory more closely follows the text of Colossians 1:16, which indicates that in Christ all things were created, whether "thrones or dominions or rulers or powers." Aquinas further notes that he will reserve discussion of Gregory's classification until the (forthcoming, it would seem) lectures on Colossians, but to guide his interpretation of Ephesians 1:21, Thomas says, "we will follow Dionysius's approach since it accords with the text at hand." Aquinas' comments here point to the primary significance that the scriptural text as primary authority continued to exercise in Aquinas' commentaries. This stands in stark contrast to Barth's criticism of Aquinas's angelology, noted above in n. 34, as having nothing to do with the biblical witness. Aquinas' interpretive fidelity to the biblical texts may be questioned depending on how one interprets this passage, but he certainly cannot be critiqued for not paying attention to scripture.

47. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.63.

48. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.63: "The Apostle only makes a special mention of four of them. The reason is that the names of these four ranks are given them for their dignity, and since he is dealing with the dignity of Christ, he names them especially to show that Christ surpasses all created dignity."

by a name."[49] This includes everything in the cosmos—physical and spiritual—except for the "substance of divinity," which alone "can neither be contained nor designated by a name."[50] Finally, Ephesians 1:21 includes the phrase "not only in this world but also in that which is to come" to affirm, according to Aquinas, that even realities that may occur in the future, and so cannot be comprehended or named in the present, are subject to Christ.[51]

Aquinas ultimately ties Christ's exalted position over all creation with the full expression of divine power based on his interpretation of Ephesians 1:22a: "and he has subjected all things under his feet . . ." For Thomas, this phrase "discusses the power of Christ with respect to the whole of creation."[52] Specifically, Aquinas maintains, this verse indicates that in his resurrected and exalted position over creation, Christ exercises "universal power since God the Father *has subjected all things under his feet.*"[53] Christ exercises the complete power of God the Father as the one to whom all of creation is subject.

This affirmation causes Aquinas to reflect on the way in which all things are subjected to Christ, and in his exposition, a hint of Aquinas' understanding of the reality of malevolent spiritual beings appears. Aquinas maintains that things may be subject to Christ's power in two ways: voluntarily or involuntarily.[54] Some creatures are subject to Christ's divine power willingly "as to their Savior."[55] Aquinas describes those who willingly submit to Christ's power as "the just who fulfill God's will in the present life."[56] Other creatures, though, are subject to Christ's power "unwillingly, as to their judge."[57] Aquinas identifies these unwilling creatures as "the

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49. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.64.

50. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.64.

51. *Ad Ephesios* 1.7.64.

52. *Ad Ephesios* 1.8.65.

53. *Ad Ephesios* 1.8.66. Emphasis original indicating scriptural quotation. The importance of Christ's resurrection for Thomas' understanding of his exaltation and power is indicated in an interesting metaphorical interpretation of "under his feet": "By the feet the lowest part of the body is understood, and by the head the highest. Although the humanity and divinity should not be thought of as parts of Christ, nonetheless the divinity is preeminent in Christ and may be understood as his head—*the head of Christ is God* (1 Cor 11:3). The humanity is lower and may be taken as the feet—*let us worship at his footstool* (Ps 132:7). The meaning of this passage is then that the Father has not only subjected all of creation to Christ as he is God, to whom everything is subject from eternity, but also to his humanity."

54. *Ad Ephesios* 1.8.67. Aquinas maintains that Origen misunderstood these two different ways of subjection, and that this misunderstanding "occasioned an error on his part" when Origen contended that "the demons and damned will be saved at some time since they are subjected under Christ's feet." Aquinas appeals to Jesus' proclamation of judgment in Matthew 25:31–46 as scriptural precedent that illustrates the "error" of Origen's universal interpretation. Aquinas maintains that though all things—including "the demons and damned"—are subject to Christ's power, they are not subject to it in the same salvific way.

55. *Ad Ephesios* 1.8.67.

56. *Ad Ephesios* 1.8.67.

57. *Ad Ephesios* 1.8.67.

wicked"; however, Aquinas maintains that Christ's will is still accomplished (that is, Christ's power is affirmed) in the midst of their unwilling subjection. Though he briefly introduces the reality of creatures both physical (*damnati* – "the damned") and spiritual (*daemones* – "the demons") who may be opposed to Christ's power, the overall focus of Aquinas' exposition of Ephesians 1:20–22 is on Christ's unrivaled exaltation above every element of creation (both spiritual and physical) and the ultimate divine power that he exercises. Even those creatures that may oppose Christ's reign are subject to the divine power so that Christ's will is accomplished among both those who willingly and unwillingly are subject to his power.

Power and "the Powers" in Ephesians 2:2

Ephesians 2:1–3 continues the letter's emphasis on God's resurrection power exhibited through Christ, which "restored us to the life of grace from the death of sin"[58] by focusing on "the need for such a blessing…where he describes so well their sin."[59] In a characteristically meticulous division, Aquinas creates two further subdivisions within the passage: Ephesians 2:1–2 discuss "the state of sin with reference to the pagans" and Ephesians 2:3 discusses the state of sin "with reference to the Jews."[60]

Ephesians 2:1, in Aquinas' interpretation identifies the consequence of the Gentiles' sin "with the worst type of death, spiritual death,"[61] while Ephesians 2:2–3 describes a "twofold cause of their sin."[62] Aquinas identifies the first cause of the Gentiles' sin in Ephesians 2:2a—which describes them as walking "according to the course of this world"—as an alluring "by mundane matters into a worldly life."[63] In Aquinas' exposition, an individual's attraction to the mundane, rather than the celestial, is the first cause of sin. That is, the initial cause of sin is the individual's own culpability in misplacing their focus and thus ordering their actions away from God.

Aquinas identifies the second cause of sin in his reading of Ephesians 2:2b: "…following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient." Aquinas indicates that this phrase refers to the "demons whom they served," intriguingly inferring the presence of a plurality of malevolent spiritual beings (the *daemones*) even though Ephesians 2:2 refers to a singular "ruler" (according to Aquinas' Vulgate: *principem potestatis aeris* – "prince of the power of the air"). This demonic cause of sin is only applicable with reference to Gentiles. Thomas explains, "The Apostle had designated two causes when dealing with the sin of the gentiles, one on the side of the world and the other on that of the demons

58. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.73.
59. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.74.
60. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.72.
61. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.74
62. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.75.
63. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.75.

whom they worshiped. The Jews were like the gentiles in their sinful condition in regard to the first cause, but not the second."[64] Thus, for Aquinas, while malevolent spiritual beings have some role in the cause of sin, it is secondary and only applicable to Gentiles. Aquinas makes this distinction because he equates the "demons whom they served" specifically with the practice of idolatry by citing *Wisdom* 14:27: "The worship of abominable idols is the beginning and cause and end of all evil." Aquinas, thus, associates this demonic cause of sin with idolatry, which is misplaced worship of God.

Aquinas indicates that Ephesians 2:2b goes on to detail three features of the demonic cause of sin: (1) their strength, (2) their location, and (3) their activity. Of the three aspects of the demonic cause of sin, Aquinas is particularly interested in discussing their strength, expressed by the biblical description of the malevolent being as a prince "of power." Aquinas draws a strict distinction between God's power and the power of this malevolent prince. This "prince" does not have the same power as God, whose power is a natural component of his identity as Lord and Creator. Rather, Aquinas notes that the "power" of this "prince" is a "power" that has been given him through the sin of humanity. Aquinas states, "He exerts a power, not by the fact that he has it naturally, since he is neither the lord nor creator by nature, but to the degree that he dominates over men who subject themselves to him by sinning."[65] Aquinas suggests that the only "power" this prince is able to exert has been given him by the misplaced, sinful activities of humanity. In human sin, this prince is given some small demonstration of power; the only power the prince has to accomplish anything, according to Aquinas, is temporarily given, not naturally held.

Similarly, when discussing the "activity" of the malevolent spiritual beings— indicated by the biblical phrase "that now works on the children of despair"— Aquinas highlights the limited efficacy of the malevolent prince's power. Aquinas maintains that it is only among these children of despair that the "prince of the power of this air" is able to express any power to "freely operate" and "lead to whatever he wills."[66] Aquinas contrasts the prince's ability to freely operate among the children of despair with his limited power toward anyone else.[67] In contrast, those "who sin from ignorance or weakness" are not to be despaired because the prince does not have the ability—the power—to work among them according to his desire.[68] For Aquinas, a defining feature of this malevolent "prince of power" is his distinct lack of free, natural power to accomplish his own will. Rather, any power he is able to exercise

64. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.80.

65. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.76.

66. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.78.

67. At *ad Ephesios* 2.1.78, Aquinas suggests that the "children of despair" may refer either to "those who reject the fruit of Christ's passion," "those who have no faith in eternal realities nor hope in salvation through Christ" or, alternatively, to "those of whom we should despair because they sin out of malice."

68. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.78.

is given him from misplaced homage and action that should have appropriately be given to God.

While Aquinas' primary interest in describing the strength and activity of the demonic cause of sin is to identify its limitations and inferiority, his comments concerning the location of the demonic cause of sin—which he reads in the biblical phrase "of the air"—provides the most detailed glimpse into his understanding of the plurality of malevolent spiritual beings. Aquinas' focus is still on the limited "power" exercised by the prince; he indicates that the phrase "of this air" demonstrates that the prince only exercises power "in this darksome atmosphere" (*aere caliginoso*). This statement then leads Thomas into a discussion of which particular demons have residence in the "air," and his answer evidences a hierarchical conception of the ordering of malevolent spiritual beings that approximates the nine-tiered hierarchy of benevolent spiritual beings he identified in Ephesians 1:21.

Aquinas notes that "two opinions exist among the doctors" concerning the hierarchical identification of these malevolent spiritual beings—which he further identifies as "demons who had fallen"—exercising limited power in the "air."[69] The first opinion, which Thomas associates with John Damascene,[70] holds that these demons of the air refer to fallen angels of the lower ranks whose original charge had been over "the terrestrial order," suggesting that "*of this air* is interpreted that they were created to preside over this atmosphere."[71] Thus, the interpretation of this passage associated with John Damascene holds that a specific order of the demonic hierarchy—those originally created to preside over the terrestrial order of the "air"—are in view here. The second opinion, which Aquinas thinks more likely with reference to Jude 1:6, is that the "powers of this air" refers to the fallen angels "from the highest ranks" who are residing in the "air" as their place of punishment until "the day of judgment."[72] These demonic forces have some ability to "test men"

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69. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.77.

70. Matthew Lamb, ed., *Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1966), 279n.44 suggests that Aquinas is here referring to John Damascene's discussion of demons in *De Fide Orthodoxa* II.4, though it should be noted that this passage does not reference Ephesians 2 or a discernable hierarchical order associated with the demons. Damascene does explicitly mention in this chapter, though, the limited power of the demons: "And so, all evil and the impure passions have been conceived by them and they have been permitted to visit attacks upon man. But they are unable to force anyone, for it is in our power either to accept the visitation or not" [John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith* in *Saint John of Damascus: Writings*, trans. Frederic H. Chase, Jr., Fathers of the Church 37 (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 210].

71. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.77.

72. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.77. Aquinas' exposition of this section ends with a linguistic defense of his interpretation of Eph 2:2 as a plurality of malevolent spiritual beings, indicating a tension between his interpretation and the singular referent of the biblical text: "Observe also how one reading has *of the spirit* which, as a genitive singular, stands for the plural *of the spirits*. Another reading gives *spirit* in the accusative case; as if to say: *according to the prince spirit*, that is, the prince who is a spirit."

before the final day of judgment;[73] however, even their limited activities result in the furthering of God's ordained order: Aquinas maintains the demons are sent by God "to try men, by which the good would be prepared for glory and the wicked for eternal death."[74]

Thomas' interpretation assumes a plurality of malevolent spiritual beings that apparently have a corresponding, though inverse, hierarchical order to the benevolent spiritual beings with various tiers and strata. Even here, though, when Aquinas arguably extends the biblical text's discussion of a singular malevolent entity to include a plurality, the emphasis remains on the appropriate hierarchical subordination to the ultimate divine power expressed in Christ. The malevolent spiritual beings in Ephesians 2:2 are already in a place of punishment awaiting their final sentence on the day of judgment when they will be "thrust back into hell," and they play a divinely mandated role in preparing humans for their ultimate end.[75]

Power and "the Powers" in Ephesians 3:10

Aquinas interprets Ephesians 3 to contribute to the letter's ultimate purpose of strengthening the church by discussing the divine blessings given specifically to the apostolic author himself.[76] Ephesians 3:10–12, according to Aquinas, describes the great worth of the content of Paul's apostolic mission: the revelation of God's manifold wisdom.[77] Aquinas identifies the "principalities and powers in heavenly powers" of Ephesians 3:10 as the ones to whom the revelation is directed. Aquinas indicates that these "principalities and powers" are explicitly stated to be "in heavenly places" since "there are also princes and potentates on earth."[78] Returning to the assumed hierarchical order of supernatural beings already evident in his discussions of Ephesians 1:21 and Ephesians 2:2, Aquinas identifies these heavenly "principalities and powers" as two ranks of "the holy angels by whom the saints are directed and protected."[79] As he did in Ephesians 1:21, Aquinas interprets the "principalities and powers" of Ephesians 3:10 with specific benevolent angelic orders who play particular roles in God's administration of the created order.

The identification of the "principalities and powers" as benevolent spiritual beings, though, "presents no small problem" and raises a question that Aquinas spends the rest of his third lecture on Ephesians 3 addressing: how and why are

73. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.77.

74. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.77.

75. *Ad Ephesios* 2.1.77.

76. *Ad Ephesios* 3.1.133.

77. *Ad Ephesios* 3.3.152. This worth (*dignitas*) consists "in the revelation of great realities to eminent persons."

78. *Ad Ephesios* 3.3.158.

79. *Ad Ephesios* 3.3.159.

angelic beings taught God's wisdom by the church?[80] Aquinas bases his response in large part on the limited abilities of the angelic realms in comparison with divine knowledge. For Aquinas, angels are created beings and thus do not share in the complete divine knowledge of future events or of the "inner thoughts of the human heart, except by inference in the same way that people are capable of doing."[81] Their knowledge of God's grace is partial and is predicated on their order within the angelic hierarchy. Even those of the highest ranks only know something of God's "intelligible patterns of the mysteries of grace which transcend the whole of creation . . . as they unfold in their effects."[82] To further explain how this creaturely limitation of spiritual beings answers the difficulty of the passage, Aquinas uses the metaphor of an architect building a house: "This is like . . . the concept of a house to be built, in the mind of an architect. As long as it remains in his mind it can be known to no one—except God who alone penetrates into human souls. However, once the concepts are realized externally in the construction, in the house after it is built, anyone can learn from the building what previously was concealed in the architect's mind."[83] Ultimately, Aquinas can conclude from Ephesians 3:10 that the angelic hierarchy "know the mysteries previously hidden in the divine mind as they unfold in the apostles themselves."[84]

Aquinas' interpretation of the "powers" in Ephesians 3:10 echoes important elements of his interpretation of these terms in Ephesians 1:21 and Ephesians 2:2. His comments indicate the assumption of a hierarchical order of spiritual beings ordered to God with specific functions to fulfill within the created order. Yet, Thomas' interpretation also emphasizes the limitations of the power of these spiritual beings in relationship to God.

Power and "the Powers" in Ephesians 6:12

Aquinas summarizes Ephesians 4:1—6:9 as Paul's description of "general and particular instructions aimed at destroying the old man of sin and encouraging the

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80.   *Ad Ephesios* 3.3.160. Indeed, modern commentators, like Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 322–23, have similarly wrestled with the question of what purpose making known God's wisdom to "friendly spiritual beings" would serve in this passage.

81.   Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 94–95.

82.   *Ad Ephesios* 3.3.160.

83.   *Ad Ephesios* 3.3.160.

84.   *Ad Ephesios* 3.3.160. Interestingly, this conclusion concerning Ephesians 3:10 leads Aquinas to address a further hypothetical question in *ad Ephesios* 3.3.162 concerning the limits of angelic knowledge concerning the "mystery of the Incarnation." Aquinas details two different approaches to the question, one by Peter Lombard and the other by (Pseudo-)Dionysius, and expresses his preference for Dionysius' perspective that both the higher and the lower angelic hierarchies "were ignorant of some aspects of the mystery and knew others."

newness of grace."[85] But in the climactic section of Ephesians 6:10–17, Aquinas suggests, the letter's attention turns to speak "of the power by which we must carry out these precepts, for we must trust in divine assistance."[86] Aquinas identifies the key theme of this section as the necessity of trusting in divine power for assistance in accomplishing the new life lived in response to grace. In Aquinas' interpretation of this passage, Ephesians 6:10–11 contains this primary admonition, and Ephesians 6:12 explains it in further detail.[87] That is, for Aquinas, the reference to the "powers" in Ephesians 6:12 must be understood as a further explanation of divine power.

Aquinas begins by detailing two necessary conditions for someone to trust another: "One is that the person is charged with protecting him; and the other reason is that he is strong and prepared to defend him."[88] Aquinas maintains that these two necessary conditions are realized in God's relationship with humans. Thomas cites 1 Peter 5:7 as proof of God's care for humanity before affirming that God is powerful to provide assistance.

The affirmation of God's power leads Aquinas to address two hypothetical misunderstandings of a life lived in response to God's power. Aquinas articulates the first potential misunderstanding of God's power: "Someone might say: if God is powerful and wills to protect us, we ought to be unconcerned."[89] However, in response to this, Thomas maintains that Ephesians 6:11, and the admonition to "put on the armor of God" indicates that such a statement misconstrues the true nature of the life lived under God's power. Aquinas likens one who is "unconcerned" to an unarmed man who goes into a battle: "no matter how much the king protected him," Aquinas maintains, "he would still be in danger."[90] Rather, as Ephesians 6:11 indicates, God has given his people armor, which for Aquinas are "gifts and virtues" that "protect man from vices."[91] Aquinas understands the nature of the malevolent beings' attacks to consist of temptations to vices, and the armor which God provides to protect from these temptations consists of divine gifts and virtues.

The second hypothetical misunderstanding of a lived response to God's power is presented in a form more familiar from Aquinas' more well-known work, the *Summa Theologiae*. Aquinas articulates a potential objection (*sed contra*) before offering a personal response (*respondeo*): "An objection: the Lord is so powerful a king that no one can attack him. I reply. This is true concerning violence; yet the devil

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85. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.351.

86. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.351. Here, the Latin term translated as "power" is *virtus* rather than *potestas*. In the next section of his lecture, Aquinas further details the relationship between these two terms: *virtus* and *potestas* are identical in God since "virtue is the ultimate of power, and as it were the perfection of power."

87. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.351.

88. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.352.

89. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.353.

90. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.353.

91. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.353.

does attack him, not in himself, but in his members through deceit and illusions."[92] Aquinas illuminates a significant truth in this conjectural objection: the forces aligned with the malevolent spiritual hierarchy are unable to seriously mount a "violent" counter-attack against God's power. The power of the malevolent forces is incapable of directly challenging God's power. However, Thomas further maintains, there are still challenges that come from these forces that attempt to use deceit and trickery to ensnare people in vices and rebellion against God's created order. It is precisely this challenge that Ephesians 6:12 explains in further detail for Thomas. Aquinas sees three components expressed in Ephesians 6:12–20: (1) Ephesians 6:12 describes the "snares of the enemies," (2) Ephesians 6:13–17 describes "what arms should be taken up," and (3) Ephesians 6:18–20 concludes describing "the confidence which must be had in Christ."[93] Here, again, Aquinas roots his discussion in the need for confidence in God's power in light of the reality of the deceitful attacks of the enemy.

The reason that Ephesians 6:12 describes the "snares of the enemies" is to demonstrate the seriousness of the opponent. Aquinas begins his exposition of the passage suggesting that an ineffective enemy does not give much reason "to be on one's guard;" however, "when he is strong (*potens*), evil (*callidus*),[94] and shrewd (*timendus*), then he ought to be dreaded."[95] Ephesians 6:12 reminds its readers that "these latter three are found in the devil."[96] Interestingly, though, in his exposition of this verse, Aquinas does not explicitly identify *potens* ("power"/"strength") as a characteristic of the devil; rather, the biblical phrase "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood" from Ephesians 6:12 demonstrates, for Aquinas, that "he is not weak" (*non est debilis*).[97] Aquinas' makes a clear distinction in his use of this negated characteristic between the devil who is "not weak" and God, who is truly "powerful."

Aquinas further indicates that the biblical phrase "flesh and blood" refers to "sins of the flesh," which raises a tension for Thomas: such a statement "seems to be false no matter how it is understood" based on other verses like Galatians 5:17 ("for the flesh lusts against the spirit").[98] Against this potential objection, Aquinas has two responses. First, one can read the verse as though it rhetorically assumes the word "only," so that it presents the idea that our wrestling is "not only against flesh and blood without it also being against the devil."[99] The second response is that the focus of this biblical phrase ("our wrestling is not against flesh and blood") is on the

92. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.353.

93. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.354.

94. Though Thomas does not identify the connection explicitly in his comments on the passage, *callidus* is the term used in the Vulgate translation of Genesis 3:1 to describe the serpent as "more crafty" than anything else in creation.

95. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.355.

96. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.355.

97. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.355.

98. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.355.

99. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.355.

ultimate agent of the action rather than the instrument. So, then, for Aquinas, this suggests that "when flesh and blood attack us, it is not of themselves principally but from a higher moving force, namely, from the devil."[100] Aquinas, then, sees the devil as the principle agent of "sins of the flesh." Through deceit and illusion, the evil spiritual forces attempt to draw humans away from a life properly ordered to God through Christ into carnal vices.

This, then, leads to Aquinas' next discussion of "the devil's power" (*potentia*) in the biblical phrase, "against principalities and powers . . . of this darkness."[101] Echoing his exposition of the "ruler of the power of the air" from Ephesians 2:2, Aquinas focuses on a singular "prince of the world" (*princeps mundi*) before further describing the plurality of malevolent spiritual beings indicated by the "principalities and powers." Aquinas suggests that the devil is considered the "prince of the world" either because "the worldly minded imitate him" or because he is the primary leader of the malevolent spiritual beings.[102] Whereas Aquinas focused on a plurality of malevolent spiritual beings in his exposition of the singular "ruler" in Ephesians 2:2, here in Ephesians 6:12, he identifies the significance of a singular "prince" in the plural references to the principalities and powers. The two apparently cannot be separated in Thomas' understanding of the organization of the malevolent spiritual beings.

As he turns to further describe the "principalities and powers of this darkness," Thomas again assumes a tiered hierarchy of malevolent spiritual beings that inversely parallels that of the benevolent spiritual beings. The "principalities and powers of this darkness" in Ephesians 6:12 represent, for Aquinas, two tiers of demonic spiritual beings who have a function that directly inverses the role of the benevolent "principalities and powers." Whereas the benevolent "principalities" were to direct and enjoin humanity to the fulfillment of the ultimate good, the malevolent "principalities" in view here in Ephesians 6:12 "incite others to rebel against God."[103] And whereas the benevolent tier of "powers" were tasked with protecting humanity, the inverse malevolent tier of "powers" "have the power to punish those who are subjected to them."[104] Aquinas' interpretation of this passage indicates an understanding that all "sins of the flesh" are directly related to the ultimate agency of evil, which is primarily expressed as a turning away from a proper ordering to God. These forces of evil are evident throughout creation in an inverse parallel to the angelic hierarchy, whose function is to connect creation with the divine will.

Aquinas concludes his discussion of this passage with a lecture that describes the spiritual armor of Ephesians 6:13–17 as a response to the deceits and illusions

100. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.355.
101. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.356.
102. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.356.
103. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.356.
104. *Ad Ephesios* 6.3.356.

with which the malevolent spiritual forces attack. Aquinas identifies the elements of the spiritual armor as elements of moral and theological virtues paralleling the three-fold function of martial weaponry: some are "meant to cover one; others are to protect him; and still others are for fighting."[105] The virtues associated with covering and protecting are designed to help the individual "check carnal desires" and to quench "present and transitory temptations with the eternal and spiritual blessings promised in Holy Scripture."[106] So, Aquinas can suggest, "We conquer the earthly powers by the moral virtues."[107] Finally, in Ephesians 6:17, the weaponry for fighting is expressed by "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." For Aquinas, it is an assault on "the demons themselves" when the word of God, "penetrating into the hearts of sinners, thrusts out the chaos of sins and demons."[108] Ultimately, for Aquinas, this passage demonstrates how individuals are able to respond to the deceits and illusions of the malevolent spiritual forces that try to turn others away from God. It is by means of "a confirmation and strengthening in the power of God" that one is able to resist temptation by means of the moral and theological virtues.[109] It is through God's ultimate power that the deceits of the "powers" come to naught.

Conclusion: Power and "the Powers" in Thomas Aquinas' *Lectura ad Ephesios*

Throughout his lectures on Ephesians, Thomas Aquinas is deftly aware of the significance that the letter places on divine power. Aquinas' understanding of *power* is infused with an Aristotelian sense and based on a theological understanding of God's perfection. Aquinas' comments concerning power continually reflect his understanding that God is the only being that truly expresses a full, active power—that is, the ability to accomplish that which He wills. Aquinas is particularly concerned with explicating how Ephesians demonstrates that Christ's resurrection and exaltation are the ultimate representation of God's ultimate power and how that representation of God's power guarantees the eschatological hope of the believers and contributes to the edification of the Church. The four passages in which Ephesians discusses "the powers" (Eph 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12) give Aquinas opportunity to discuss the implications of God's power expressed through Christ in relation to an assumed reality of spiritual beings. Aquinas' concern, in his comments on each of these passages, is to explicate the unrivaled power of God within the order of all material and spiritual creation.

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105. *Ad Ephesios* 6.4.361.

106. *Ad Ephesios* 6.4.364–365.

107. *Ad Ephesios* 6.4.365. I have slightly modified the translation here, which translates *potestates terrenas* as "powers of darkness" to more closely reflect Aquinas' Latin.

108. *Ad Ephesios* 6.4.367.

109. *Ad Ephesios* 6.5.368.

Aquinas equates the spiritual beings referenced throughout Ephesians as references to hierarchies of both benevolent and malevolent spiritual beings. He sees Ephesians 1:21 and 3:10 referring to the angelic hierarchy while Ephesians 2:2 and 6:12 refer to the demonic hierarchy. A demonic realm is an assumed part of creation for Aquinas; they are always portrayed in direct contrast to the ultimate divine power expressed in Christ. The only power the malevolent "powers" can exercise is given through sin, not naturally held. For Thomas, sin, particularly understood as idolatry, misattributes that which is rightfully God's to something else. Any power these malevolent spiritual "powers" may exercise comes from this misappropriation.

By interpreting the "powers" in Ephesians as a reference to the hierarchy of benevolent and malevolent spiritual beings, Aquinas identifies in Ephesians an emphasis that Christ stands as the foundational ordering power of every element of creation. Christ is exalted as the form and exemplar of God's power, and all things (material and immaterial, benevolent and malevolent) are ordered through him to God. For Aquinas, this same divine power, manifest in Christ's resurrection and exaltation, will accomplish believers' eschatological glorification. For Aquinas, believers' eschatological hope is predicated on God's power—his ability to accomplish his will, and, throughout his *lectura ad Ephesios*, he describes how Ephesians demonstrates the reality of God's power to strengthen believers' faith. Believers can stand firm in their faith and their eschatological hope because God is powerful to accomplish that which God wills. Ultimately, then, for Aquinas, the primary significance of Ephesians' description of Christ's exaltation over the "powers" is to demonstrate God's unrivaled power as Creator and Lord—a power that is exemplarily evident in Christ's resurrection and exaltation.

Three Cycles of Growth: Warfare and Spiritual Metamorphosis in John and Paul

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Abstract: In this paper, we examine two key NT passages that address spiritual warfare and spiritual growth, showing how they are inextricably linked. In Ephesians 6:10–20, Paul shows believers that in order to stand in their faith, they must stand in God's full armor, their identity "in Christ." With each piece, he reveals essential aspects of Christ's armor, beginning with the belt of truth and ending with requests for prayer for evangelism. Paul seems to organize them in three sets of three pieces of armor. In 1 John 2:12–14, John teaches that the natural outworking of standing in Christ's armor is growth in three stages. As we compare the 1 John and Ephesians passages, we will see how each piece of armor, and the believer's understanding of them, is necessarily linked during the three stages of growth. Finally, we conclude with the far-reaching missiological implications.

Key Words: 1 John 2:12–14, Ephesians 6:10–20, three stages of spiritual growth, spiritual warfare, identity in Christ, armor of God, 1 John, Ephesians

Introduction

There are no civilians in God's army. Our King calls all of his followers to engage in his spiritual war and to grow into maturity in him. All true Christ-followers are thrust into conflict not against "flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12, ESV).[1] However, many believers in the West remain in the first stage of spiritual growth and have little awareness of their vital role in this battle.[2]

In this chapter, we will show the connection between two NT passages that address spiritual warfare, the mission of God, and the need for spiritual growth. In Ephesians 6:10–20, Paul shows that in order to stand in faith, believers must resist

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1. All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated.

2. In the original language, the word πάλη can be translated "wrestle," but also to "fight." Paul seems to be saying we are not "wrestling" but "waging war" in deadly combat.

in God's full armor, their identity "in Christ." Paul seems to organize the armor into three sets of three pieces. In a parallel passage (1 John 2:12–14), John shows three growth stages as believers learn to stand firm in Christ's armor: Children, Young Warriors, and Mentors. All the weapons of armor need to be worn and used together with growing skill in order to appropriate the victory in Christ. As we compare the 1 John and Ephesians passages, we will see how the pieces of armor in sets of three are correlated with the three stages of spiritual growth.

Growth in believers' lives depends on their ability to stand firm in the strength of the Lord, so they are not pushed down and crushed as they assail the "gates of hell" (Matt 16:18) and the demonic enemies counterattack them.[3] Since all believers are combatants (2 Tim 2:2, 7),[4] no one can remain passive. All must actively choose to use the whole armor and to fight by faith "in the strength of his might" (Eph 6:10). To grow up and "overcome the evil one" in the *missio Dei*, believers need to engage their enemy with Christ's armor consciously put on.[5]

Relying on the Lord's Armored Strength and Growth

Paul speaks of the panoply (τὴν πανοπλίαν) as the Lord's very armor,[6] defining our new identity "in union with Christ," our King. The armor belongs to Jesus himself as Yahweh of the Old Testament, as Paul implies by saying "be strong in the Lord."[7]

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3. John Gill writes, "For though they are weak . . . and can do nothing of themselves . . . without Christ; yet since there is strength in him, which is communicable to them, they may expect it from him, and depend upon it; and they may come at, or strengthen themselves in it, and by it, by meditation on it, by prayer for it, by waiting on Christ in his own ways, by exercising faith upon him, and through the Spirit, who strengthens them from him with might in the inward man" ([John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament in Three Volumes* (London: Aaron Ward, 1746). Available online at: https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills–exposition–of–the–bible/ephesians–6–10.html]).

4. Robert Saucy and Neil Anderson write: "Scripture presents the process of Christian growth as far more than a restful passivity." Six paragraphs later after summarizing Scripture passages that reveal the "rigorous process" of the "ongoing battle against evil forces" in spiritual warfare and growth (Phil 3:12–14; 1 Cor 9:24–27; 1 Tim 4:7; Eph 6:10–16; 1 Tim 6:11–12; 2 Tim 2:3; 4:7), they write: "At the cross, Christ won the decisive battle over the powers of sin, but in God's providence and plan, the defeated enemies have not yet been judged. They still wage war against God, and in a real sense the battle ground for the ongoing war between Christ and sin is now in our lives. Our coming to Christ means enlistment in His army to do battle against sin. We are able to enter the fray armed with Christ's victory because we wage war 'in Christ.'" ([Robert L. Saucy and Neil T. Anderson, *The Common Made Holy: Being Conformed to the Image of God* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1997, 310–311]). See also, David Martyn Lloyd–Jones, *The Christian Soldier: An Exposition of Ephesians 6:10–20* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986, 40–53.

5. Sinclair B. Ferguson, "The Reformed View" in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 67–68.

6. See the article by Donna R. Reinhard, "Ephesians 6:10–18: A Call to Personal Piety or Another Way of Describing Union with Christ?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 3 (2005): 521–532.

7. Iain Duguid, "Sacred Weapons for Spiritual War: Wearing the Whole Armor of God," *Desiring God* (blog), June 21, 2019, accessed July 10, 2019, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/

"Lord" (κύριος) is the translation of the Hebrew word YHWH (Yahweh) in the Septuagint, an ancient Greek translation of the OT.[8] The image of the "belt of truth" comes from Isaiah 11:6–9; the "breastplate" and "helmet" are found together in Isaiah 59:17, showing that they correlate with one another. The "feet" readied with the Gospel are found in Isaiah 52:7. The "shield", though not directly referenced in Isaiah (see Isa 37:35), is God's very presence in Genesis 15:1.[9] Since the panoply belongs to the Lord, we cannot exercise it without first "put[ting] on the Lord Jesus Christ" at salvation (Rom 13:14) and then appropriating all that he is for us in our daily war with Satan and his demons.[10]

Second, appropriating the Lord's armor requires the gift of repentant faith given in Christ through hearing the Gospel in the Spirit's power (Rom 10:6–17; 1 Tim 1:14; 2 Tim 2:14; 2:25). Faith and its resulting fruit springs out of the gift of the fullness of the Holy Spirit, as the grammatical and logical connections of the whole armor teaching in Ephesians show (Eph 5:18–6:10). Without the fullness of the Spirit (Eph 5:18) of the resurrected Christ (Rom 8:2), it is impossible to fight, grow and stand in the spiritual war. We can see this in the life of Jesus himself. After the Spirit of God anointed him for ministry, he went out into the wilderness, led by the Spirit to battle Satan, thus establishing a paradigm for believers for spiritual warfare (Matt 4:1). In that battle, he depended on the sword of the spoken word from Deuteronomy and relied on the shield of his Father's absolute faithfulness (Matt 4:4, 7, 10). The same is true for the believers in the book of Acts. After receiving the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, they went into the battle in his fullness, and spoke the words boldly (Acts 4:31). Therefore, a conceptual parallelism exists between being filled with the Spirit with whom believers should be empowered (Eph 5:18–20) and putting on God's protective armor. Even Paul himself asks for prayer to be filled with boldness to speak as he ought to speak. Such boldness only comes from relying on the indwelling Spirit for resurrection power (Eph 6:19; Rom 8:2).

Third, in Ephesians 6:10–20 the armor summarizes who believers are "in Christ," who has clothed them with his own identity. Many expositors, on the other hand, believe the armor pieces are essentially aspects of personal purity and righteousness.[11] While there is some measure of truth to this, as parallel passages demonstrate (1 Thess 5:8; Rom 13:12), it is important to note that the ability both "to desire and to work his good purpose" (Phil 2:13, author's translation) flows out of our new status based on our armored identity in Christ. We are able to stand in purity

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sacred–weapons–for–spiritual–war. Adapted from Iain Duguid, *The Whole Armor of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019).

8.   Passages referencing "the Lord" from the OT, often apply to Jesus in the NT (e.g., Phil 2:10–11; Isa 45:23).

9.   Cf. Prov 30:5 "he is a shield"; and Ps 7:10 "My shield is with God."

10.   Christ is the truth (John 14:6; Eph 4:21); He is our righteousness (1 Cor 1:30); Christ is our peace (Eph 2:14) and he is our message (1 Cor 1:23; 2:2); "His faithfulness is a shield" (Ps 91:4).

11.   Reinhard, "A Call to Personal Piety," 522–523.

and righteousness only as we are clothed with the armor of his strength in the midst of the spiritual war. We see this throughout Paul's letters. For example, in Ephesians, he first describes the believers' identity (Eph 1:1–3:21) and then their responsibility to live out who they are in Christ (Eph 4:1–6:24). This phenomenon is often referred to as the "indicative before the imperative." The indicative describes who we are and what Christ has done; the imperative describes how we are to live. Sinclair Ferguson, for example, writes: "Know your new identity and it will determine how you live."[12]

Last, all believers must grow up from being newborn babies who have recently "put on Christ" (cf. Rom 13:14) to full-grown mentors, who have learned to live in Christ's resurrection strength against the demonic powers (Eph 1:19b–21).[13]

John's Growth Stages and Paul's Armor Correlated

Interestingly, both John (1 John 2:13b,14b) and Paul (Eph 6:10–20) use parallel ancient warfare symbolism in the context of growth.[14] In both, new believers grow to be warriors who "are strong . . . and have overcome the evil one" (1 John 2:14b; Eph 6:10). Personal growth in purity and righteousness in both is the essential outworking of practicing warfare as believers know and trust Christ.[15] Furthermore, out of knowing all the riches "in Christ" and full of bold confidence in his Gospel, growing believers will overcome the forces of darkness in active evangelism to disciple all people-groups. In addition, the language of 1 John 2 concerning three stages of spiritual growth echoes that of Paul in Ephesians. For example, John summarizes his discussion of self-deceived members of the community who think they were genuine partners of the light of God (1 John 1:5–7). He indicates that a person enters the first stage of growth when he or she repents of self-deception and moral darkness, which

12. Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Devoted to God: Blueprints for Sanctification* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2016), 88: "Know your new identity and it will determine how you live—just as hearing the name your parents gave you causes you to respond in a deep seated and instinctive—and perhaps distinctive—way." Notice also, e.g., 93–94, 213. See also, Sinclair B. Ferguson, "The Reformed View" in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views,* ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 48. Ferguson cites, e.g., Matt 6:32–34; Rom 12:1–2; and Eph 4:20–25.

13. See classically, Matthew Henry: "All Christians are not of the same standing and stature; there are babes in Christ, there are grown men, and old disciples. As these have their peculiar states, so they have their peculiar duties; but there are precepts and a correspondent obedience common to them all, as particularly mutual love and contempt of the world" (Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Unabridged*, Vol 6. Acts to Revelation. Online at: www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc6.iJo.iii.html, accessed July 30, 2019). John MacArthur takes a similar view of three stages of growth. See John McArthur, *1–3 John.* The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 2007), 69–78.

14. John likely read Paul's writings, as Peter certainly read Paul (2 Pet 3:15–16) and vice versa. It is possible that some of the apostles got together and discussed spiritual warfare and other doctrines during the times when their lives overlapped (e.g., Acts 11:30, 12:25; Gal 1:18, 2:1, 9).

15. "Moreover, daily putting on and utilizing the armor is an essential element of the believer's process of becoming like Jesus—the goal of biblical discipleship" (Charles E. Lawless, "Spiritual Warfare and Evangelism," *Clergy Journal* 82, no. 8 (2005): 29–30.

have blinded their eyes (1 John 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 9, 11), and fully trusts Christ's sacrifice that satisfies his Father's justice (1 John 2:1–2; 2:12a, 13c).[16] Likewise, Paul discusses blindness, Christ's sacrifice, and the heart regeneration that comes from repentance (Eph 5:1–9). John next exhorts the young men to be strong, to fight, and to overcome the evil one. Paul also encourages the Ephesian house churches to "no longer be children" but to grow up to become mature (Eph 4:13–14).[17]

John and Paul, thus, both describe stages of spiritual growth[18] as development from infancy to maturity. John explicitly states that there are three (1 John 2:9–14). As a new Christian grows, he or she eventually becomes a young warrior (1 John 2:13b, 14b). After learning spiritual warfare in this stage, a person progresses to become a seasoned warrior and later a father–mentor in the faith (1 John 2:13a, 14a).[19] The only means to do so is to live (abide) in Christ (1 John 2:6, 14, 24, 27; Gal 2:20; 2 Tim 3:12) with the *full* armor in Christ "put on" and "taken up" (that is, put into practice) as Paul commands (Eph 6:11, 13).[20] We strongly emphasize that all pieces of

16. "Propitiation" (ESV, NASB) is better than "sacrifice of atonement" (NIV) in 1 John 2:1–2 and Rom 3:25.

17. Saucy and Anderson write, "John uses the metaphors of little children, young men, and fathers to describe the process of growing up. Little children are those who have entered into a knowledge of God and have had their sins forgiven. They have overcome the penalty of sin. Fathers, who are more mature, have had a long understanding and knowledge of God. Young men know the word of God, are strong, and are characterized as those who have overcome the evil one . . . How are we going to help fellow believers mature in the faith if they don't know who they are in Christ and are basically ignorant of Satan's schemes? In all the years that we have been helping people find their freedom in Christ, the one common denominator of every person living in defeat was they didn't know who they were as children of God" (Saucy and Anderson, *Common Made Holy*, 50).

18. See, Mark R. Kreitzer, "Spiritual Growth Challenge: Spiritual Warfare and the Christian Walk," Living Faith Blog, June, 2019, accessed June 9, 2019, https://blogs.gcu.edu/college–of–theology/spiritual–growth–challenge–spiritual–warfare/

19. Robert Yarbrough cites three main views on the three terms used. First, he cites I. H. Marshall and Augustine, who teach that the passage "addresses one group," but rejects it because it does not do "sufficient justice" to the uniqueness of each group. Second, Yarbrough's own view in effect is similar to ours. "Little children . . . are probably the entire readership, conceived of by John as children of God through their reception of the gospel" and the "subsequent [two] terms [are] subordinate." In other words, all the addressed believers are the "little children" (1 John 2:1; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21) and "little ones" and within that larger group there are two sub-groups, "fathers" and "young men." Against this, Yarbrough discusses the third view, which we espouse. "This understanding is viable (and allows an analogous reading of 2:14). But it assumes a choppy flow, from the very young to the old and then back to the not so young (or not so old)." Instead of a "choppy flow," John seems to clearly be using a biological metaphor that, first, challenges all of John's beloved children to grow to become "fathers" (what we term "mentors"), a valuable goal in ancient cultures (e.g., Prov 16:31, 20:29). These wise fathers and mothers are able to robustly disciple younger believers. After impressing upon all believers the goal, John builds upon the biological growth metaphor, which came into his mind with the use of "little children," and returns to the intermediate growth stage, reminding the younger men (and women) of inevitable warfare in the King's army with its concomitant suffering in the spiritual battle (Robert W Yarbrough, *1–3 John: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008], 113–114).

20. Lloyd-Jones, *The Christian Soldier*, 179–181. Lloyd-Jones emphasizes putting on the whole armor and dislikes emphasizing separate pieces.

armor need to be knowledgably put on and exercised at all times *together* as much as one is capable.

However, from a practical and missiological perspective, and with at least one internal hint of the connections, each of these sets of three pieces connect with the three growth stages in 1 John 2—three pieces of armor for each growth stage. Paul's first set of three coincides with John's baby/child stage and ought to be emphasized especially at that time. Paul's second set of three is analogous to the description of the young warrior. John uses a similar phrase as Paul: "You are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one" versus "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might" (1 John 2:14b; Eph 6:10). The father-mentors of 1 John (2:13a, 14b) need a deep emphasis upon praying in the Spirit together with all of God's people and asking for a powerful filling of the Spirit to boldly make known the Gospel (Eph 6:19). As believers grow, the Lord takes them through three "cycles," emphasizing the *same* three truths in each cycle but with ever deepening insight and emphasis.

As we correlate John's three stages of growth and Paul's armor passage, first it is important again to see that the whole pericope from Ephesians 6:14–20 is grammatically and conceptually connected to the verb "stand" (Eph 6:14) and that, in turn, with the fullness of the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18. Someone may say that all of this results in six pieces of armor. However, this neglects the grammatical and logical connection between "stand" and the three exhortations on prayer in Ephesians 6:18–20. This link indicates there are three more necessary aspects of our "armor." Perhaps these could be analogous to a long-distance weapon, something like the spear and javelin that God wields: "Draw the spear and javelin against my pursuers; say to my soul: 'I am your salvation'" (Ps 35:3). Taking all this into account gives us *nine* weapons as we see in the chart below. These three sets are linked with the three stages of growth in 1 John 2:12–14.

Comparison of Paul and John Summarized

	Truth	**Protection**	**Evangelism**
Children	Belt of truth	Breastplate of Righteousness	Feet shod with the Gospel of peace
Warriors	Shield of faithfulness	Helmet of salvation	Sword of the spoken Gospel–word
Mentors	Praying in the Spirit	Pray together for all the saints	Prayer for bold evangelism

In summary, baby Christians need to learn to know and rely on the Father (1 John 2:12, 13c). This includes a childlike trust in his flawless and inerrant truth ("belt of truth"; see Pss 12:6; 18:30). Second, they need to know they have been declared righteous in Christ, have peace with the Father (Rom 5:1–2), and can never come under any accusation or condemnation (Rom 8:1, 33–34; "breastplate of righteousness"). Out of this experiential knowledge, baby Christians evangelize ("feet prepared with the Gospel of peace," author's translation). As they mature into young warriors, the three pieces of armor repeat themselves at a deeper level. By girding themselves with God's truth, they grow in greater trust in the absolute faithfulness of our Father's promises and character ("shield of his faithfulness," author's translation). Next, believers develop an ever-deepening understanding of God's saving righteousness which rebuilds their thought life ("helmet of salvation"). And finally, they increasingly move forward in evangelism, "boldly to proclaim the mystery of the Gospel" (Eph 6:19) ("sword of the Spirit"). Mentors repeat the same cycle a third time with an emphasis on prevailing prayer and action in evangelism.

Armor and Growth Linkages Explained

In order for Christ-followers to mature, "building [themselves] up in [their] most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20), they first need to know how to appropriate the weapons God provides. Paul carefully addresses each piece of the armor, both defensive and offensive, so they would be able to practice using them before entering combat. This preparation should happen in the infant and late childhood stage of growth.

Christ-Followers as "Children"

The initial "putting on" of Christ's whole armor means that a new-born believer has become a "new person," because he or she is regenerated. Believers are initially united with Christ through the outpoured Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13). They have died with him, been raised with him, are now seated in the heavenly places hidden with Christ in God and will come with him in glory (Col 3:1–4). In their new elevated status of grace, they are seated with him, sharing his authority over all the demonic rulers and principalities (Eph 1:19b–23; 2:4–6; Rom 5:1–2). They realize that the spiritual battle is not a battle between two people within them—the old and the new man—but with the internal flesh and external Satanic forces.[21] Their armor "in

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21. See John Murray, "The Dynamic of the Biblical Ethic," in *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics*, with a Foreword by J. I. Packer (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957/2001), 202–228; Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 25–28; Ferguson, *Devoted to God*, 82: "When I was united to Jesus Christ I was transferred from Adam-Land to Christ-Land, from the Adam Family to the Christ Family. By God's grace my past forgiven. But there is more to it than that: I died out of an entire world order—the Adamic order—and was

Christ," therefore, is a completely renewed identity. The "old person" they once were has forever died and been "put off" (Col 3:3, 9; Eph 4:22–24).[22] The new creation, the new person, has come "in Christ" and "in the strength" of his armor; old things have passed away forever (2 Cor 5:17).

"Now you have been washed," Paul summarizes, "you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11). Certainly, young believers are not yet glorified and sinless; that awaits the resurrection at the last day. However, in their new identity in Christ, they are no longer idolaters, occult practitioners, hate-filled people, who practice fighting and fits of rage (Gal 5:20; 1 Cor 6:9–10; Titus 3:3).[23] Paul even warned "that those who [habitually] do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5; 1 Cor 6:10). John agrees: A new life is always evidenced by active growth. Anyone who says he is in the light, but lives in darkness, is a liar (1 John 1:6–7, 10).

This first stage, then, addresses everyone's existential need for a good and wise Father and provides the first piece of armor. John says, "You have come to know the Father" (1 John 2:14, author's translation). As new Christians come to know the Father's kind yet firm voice of truth in the flawless Word (Heb 3:7; Pss 12:6; 18:30), they grow to trust his grace and justice, along with what he says about their new identity. This absolute confidence enables them to stand against Satan's proven and deceptive strategy to malign the Father's character and to cast doubt on his Word's necessity and inerrant authority. He was a liar from the beginning (John 8:44).[24] Without the "belt of truth," which holds the "sword of the Spirit," all the other pieces are useless and growth in grace is stunted (2 Pet 3:18).

Furthermore, new-born believers need to know the "breastplate of righteousness," that their "sins are forgiven," once for all, based upon Christ's merit alone (1 John 2:12). They have been declared righteous in Christ and can never again be declared guilty (Rom 8:1, 33–34). The Father's just wrath is forever satisfied (1 John 2:2). They are fully graced — "accepted in the beloved" (Eph 1:6 KJV). Instead, Satan and his demons accuse and condemn believers for their sins (Rev 12:10), tempting them to seek their own righteousness (Phil 3:9; Rom 10:3), to do fleshly works for human praise, and to boast in themselves rather than in the Lord (Isa 59:6; 64:6; Matt 6:1; Eph 2:9; Rom 3:27; 1 Cor 1:30–31). On the other hand, God never again motivates by guilt but only by grief and sorrow leading to repentance

thus delivered from a fallen and condemned race under sin's reign, through union with the Christ who died to sin and was raised to new life." Cf. Ferguson, "The Reformed View," 59–60.

22. This is paralleled in Ephesians 4 where Paul says new believers were taught the content of the faith, which states a rebel must once and for all put off the old Adam and once and for all put on the second Adam, Christ.

23. In their new lifestyle in Christ, they are also no longer blasphemers, persecutors, or violent people (1 Tim 1:13) nor adulterers, fornicators, homosexual offenders, drunkards, slanderers or swindlers (1 Cor 6:10).

24. Cf. the serpent in Genesis 3:1, "Did God actually say?"

(2 Cor 7:10; Heb 10:1–3). This "breastplate" is the very "righteousness of God" in Christ through faith (2 Cor 5:21; Rom 5:1), which is always "working through love" (Gal 5:6; 2 Pet 1:3–7; Jas 2; Eph 2:10). Believers' identity, as justified ones in Christ's obedience (Rom 5:19–20), results in loving and just interpersonal relationships (Eph 5:21–6:9; Rom 13:1–8; 1 Pet 5:8; Heb 12:4).

Finally, Paul speaks of "feet prepared with the Gospel of peace" (author's translation), echoing Isaiah 52:7. Christ is the "Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6), who ran with beautiful feet to proclaim good news to Zion: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace . . . who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" In that context, the Lord commands all peoples to "Turn to me and be saved . . . for I am God, and there is no other" (Isa 45:22). Paul likewise emphasizes that the idolatrous peoples (τὰ ἔθνη) have now been brought near through the blood of the cross (Eph 2:11, 13). Therefore, the Lord begins to build into new believers a passion to disciple all tribes, peoples, and nations of earth (Matt 28:18–20). Out of their new experiential knowledge of the Father, baby Christians joyfully evangelize with Christ's "prepared feet" (Eph 6:15). Satan's counterattack is to hi-jack Christ's light and peace through fear and anxiety so that believers lose all motivation to trust God and share his Gospel.

Christ-Followers as Young Warriors

As children mature into young warriors, the first pieces of armor repeat themselves at a deeper level. Children needed to experience the Father's unconditional welcoming love "poured into in [their] . . . hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5) in order to overcome the demonic forces they face (Eph 2:1–2). However, in this second cycle, God's once and for all forgiveness and the constant practice of believers' girding themselves with God's truth ("belt") moves warriors into deeper trust in the absolute faithfulness of God's promises and character ("taking up the shield of his faithfulness," author's translation). Because this whole pericope deals with Christ's armor, not the believers', the shield must be his faithfulness instead of their faith, as the OT allusion demonstrates. Their confidence, then, is in Christ's proven faithfulness. Warriors take refuge from the enemy's blazing arrows by standing and holding out their protective leather shields soaked in water. These flaming shafts attack God's faithful character and infallible promises of protection. Without the Lord's quenching shield, the arrows assail the minds and emotions of Christ's people, tempting them instead to take cover in their own shields of fleshly truth, schemes, and resources (Ps 118:8–9; Prov 3:5–6). Such self-made shields offer no protection and burn up when hit.

Warriors, however, have adequately trained for and practiced warfare "against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph

6:12). Their enemies constantly bombard them with tempting thoughts to turn away from implicitly trusting the Father's Word and instead to yield to various lusts of the flesh and the mind (Jas 1:13–15; 4:1–3; Eph 2:3). Only when they surrender to these temptations, such as letting the sun go down on their anger without repentance and seeking reconciliation, do they give "the devil [accuser] an opportunity" (Eph 4:26–27).[25] As a norm, however, warriors have learned to daily repent as they listen to the voice of the Father's Spirit speaking daily through the Word of Christ (Prov 8:34). They have practiced memorizing and meditating on the Father's instruction day and night (1 John 2:14b; Ps 1:2b). John thus indicates that warriors are now "strong," "the [memorized] word abides in them" and they have fought and "overcome the evil one" (1 John 2:14b) in both their spiritual growth and spreading the Good News.

Next, the "helmet of salvation" (warrior stage) and "breastplate of righteousness" (baby stage) are used in direct poetic parallelism in Isaiah 59:17, showing that they are conceptually synonymous. The helmet symbolizes warriors' deepening expectation (the "hope of salvation" in 1 Thess 5:8) of the glory of God (Rom 5:2, 11; 1 Pet 1:3–4) and a growing sense of security in his unconditional love in Christ' righteousness (Rom 5:1, 5–11; 8:28–39). This helmet of hope, as the anchor of their soul, will never make believers ashamed (Heb 6:19; Rom 5:5) but instead rebuilds their emotions and thought life (2 Cor 10:5; Phil 4:8). Hope provides exalting joy and strength to persevere through the inevitable sufferings of the warrior stage (Rom 5:3–5) because it gives a certain expectation of complete salvation, experienced in final form at the resurrection (e.g., Acts 23:6; 24:15; Gal 5:5; Phil 3:11; 1 Cor 15:32; Heb 11:35).

The third weapon in this second cycle, the sword of the spoken word (ῥῆμα) of God, parallels the "feet" that are prepared and ready to evangelize with the Good News of peace in the first cycle. The term "word of God" is often used to mean the Gospel-word (see Acts 6:7; 11:1; 2 Cor 2:17; 4:2; Col 1:25; 1 Pet 1:23; 1 Thess 2:13) and should be taken in the same way here. All believers, and especially young warriors, learn to wield this sword that is hidden in their hearts and ready on their lips (Prov 22:18; Pss 1:2; 119:99). Only then can they speak boldly on all occasions for Christ. This weapon is "powerful, living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12). It is also useful defense against the sword thrusts of the enemy. Satan's strategies attempt to persuade children and emerging warriors to be ashamed of God, his Good News (Rom 1:16), and not to trust the power of the Gospel. Those who believe Satan replace the Lord's sword with their own weapon, holding to a form of

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25. Clinton Arnold writes, "Paul uses spatial language to refer to the devil securing inhabitable space in the life of a believer when he warns, 'Do not give the devil a foothold' (Eph 4:27). This directly contradicts the view that the two cannot coexist in the same body." ([Clinton T. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 82]). See Edward F. Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2003), 522, "Demonic powers gain entrance only through sin areas in a person's life. Sin areas give demons something to hold on to . . . The Apostle Paul refers to them as . . . 'footholds' . . . in the believer's life (Eph 4:27)."

spirituality devoid of power (2 Tim 3:5), while proclaiming "cleverly devised myths" (2 Pet 1:16), no longer for God's glory (John 5:44).[26] Such a counterfeit sword cannot win souls for Christ (Matt 4:7, 10).

Christ-Followers as Mentors

Once these lessons are learned, a seasoned warrior progresses to the final mentor stage of growth. This stage involves building upon the first two layers of armor and recapitulating these truths with an even deeper emphasis. The mentor has learned to take up the javelin, praying God's faithful truth and promises "in the Spirit" (Eph 6:18a), to prepare the ground ahead for the Gospel-word to spiritually conquer. Being filled with the word of truth and praying the promises "in the [fullness of the] Spirit" gives the same result, as Paul reveals in parallel passages (Eph 5:18–20; Col 3:16–17). Mentors have learned to pray together "at all times," interceding according to the truth for protection for all the saints, who are engaged in the spiritual war.[27] Corporate prayer for all believers is similar to the "turtle formation" used by the Roman army when a whole platoon surrounded themselves with shields that looked like a tortoise from a distance.[28] Such intercessory prayer correlates with the protective breastplate and helmet of the first two cycles, guarding Christ's army in mission against the enemy's flaming arrows. Last, Paul also asks for prayer for himself, as all believers and especially mentors should, in order to use his "readied feet" and the "sword of the [spoken] word" to proclaim the Gospel boldly (Eph 6:19).

Mentors, then, are characterized by a strong understanding of their identity in Christ and have learned to fight victoriously "to overcome the evil one." John says that they have come to intimately know Jesus, "who is from the beginning" (1 John 2:14a; see, 1 John 1:1; John 1:1). The Lord has comforted and encouraged them through suffering caused by sin and by years of warfare, enabling them to teach and disciple others (2 Cor 1:3–7; 12:6–10; Matt 28:18–20). They also have developed perseverance through being "utterly burdened beyond [their] strength." This happens so that they might "rely not on [themselves] but on God who raises the dead" (2 Cor 1:8–9). Through constant practice they have trained themselves to distinguish good

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26. Ferguson, "The Reformed View," 68.

27. Paul implies this when he writes, "[you all (plural)] keep alert [ἀγρυπνοῦντες] with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints" (Eph 6:18).

28. In their comments on Ephesians 6:16, Neil T. Anderson and Robert L. Saucy write the following in *God's Power at Work in You: Unleashing the Fullness of God's Power* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2001), 252: "The Roman soldiers in the New Testament era used a huge, door-shaped body shield that could provide much individual protection. But even more protection was offered when the soldiers came together as a compact unit and held these shields side by side or above them. If they stood apart and held their shields individually, their sides were exposed, but when they brought their shields together they were fully protected." This is termed the "testudo formation."

from evil and "solid food [meat]" from "milk," because they are no longer infants (Heb 5:13–14). Consequently, mentors intimately know and experience the reality of their new identity in union with Christ in his death, resurrection, and ascension along with his present reign over all demonic authorities (Eph 1:19–21; 2:6; Col 3:1–4).

Paul and John's Challenge for Christ-Followers Today

In the context of these two warfare passages, Paul and John express concern that Satan and his demons would seduce believers away[29] from walking and resting in our Father's truth in the strength of the Lord's armor, their identity in Christ (2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 4:1–7; 1 John 4:1–7). Paul especially desires that they rest in the sufficiency of God's grace in Christ in the midst of the war (2 Cor 12:7–10). Both apostles realized that the true battle is not with "flesh and blood" (Eph 6:11) but against the inner spirit of believers, which God wants to heal and renew daily (Eph 4:23).[30] The older, outer man is decaying but the new, inner man is being refreshed day by day (2 Cor 4:16) only through the ministry of the Word and Spirit by faith.

The Apostles, thus, challenge all contemporary Christ-followers to learn spiritual warfare as they grow from the baby to mentor stage. Unfortunately, the second stage is greatly neglected in modern evangelicalism, keeping many believers bound in the baby stage and preventing them from maturing into mentors. This keeps most Christians from teaching and counseling those who are in the first and second stages with the Father's comfort, as they share their combat experience of overcoming the evil one by the power of his Word and Spirit (1 John 2:14b).

Finally, in order for Christ-followers to accomplish God's Great Commission goal to fill the earth with his glory (Isa 11:9; Hab 2:14), they must stand firm by faith in their new armored identity in Christ, grow up into maturity through the three stages described by John, and move out together to spread the Good News of peace.

29.   Neil Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker: Overcoming Negative Thoughts, Irrational Feelings, Habitual Sins* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2019) 64–66 mentions Satan inciting David to take a census (1 Chr 1:21), Judas Iscariot (John 13:2), and Ananias (Acts 5:3) as other examples of direct demonic input into human minds. He also cites Martin Luther and David Powlison as a classic and a modern example of those who teach the same.

30.   See the classic book, John Bunyan, *The Holy War* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1985).

The Armor of God, the Gospel of Christ, and Standing Firm against the 'Powers' (Ephesians 6:10–20)

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Abstract: As the climactic conclusion to the letter, Ephesians 6:10–20 recapitulates and summarizes much of the earlier themes in Ephesians. It clarifies that the "powers" are evil, supernaturally power, spiritual beings. Christians must therefore stand firm against the "powers" by resting in Christ's redemptive work for them. Christ is seen as the Divine Warrior whose victory over the "powers" is the armor that Christians are called to put on and appropriate by virtue of their union with Christ by faith.

Key Words: powers, Divine Warrior, union with Christ, stand firm, armor of God

Introduction

Among the letters of Paul,[1] Ephesians focuses most clearly on the topic of the "powers," particularly their existence, dominion over the world, hostility towards the church, and subjugation under the authority of Christ. Moreover, Ephesians 6:10–20 plays a large role in unfolding this topic, not only because of its climactic place at the end of the letter but also because of the manner in which the pericope recapitulates and summarizes much of the preceding material on the "powers." For this reason, it is appropriate to analyze closely the pericope, with a view to grasping the identity of the "powers" and Paul's prescription for standing against them successfully.

On the basis of this analysis, I will argue that in Ephesians 6:10–20 Paul teaches that the "powers" are evil, supernaturally powerful, spiritual beings, and that because of their existence and hostility towards the church, Christians must stand firm against them in the strength the Lord provides in the gospel. Specifically, Christians should remember and rest in Christ's redemptive work for them, which by virtue of their union with Christ will in its application to them result in successful resistance against all kinds of temptations and trials. Putting on the armor of God

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1. The Pauline authorship of Ephesians is debated. Although I am convinced of Pauline authorship, the question need not detain us, for the focus of this chapter is on the meaning of Ephesians 6:10–20 within the letter, regardless of authorship. In keeping with the letter's own claim, I will use the name "Paul" to refer to the author of the letter.

means, then, appropriating the gospel of Christ afresh throughout the Christian life, which will undergird and propel Christians to stand firm against the "powers."

In order to demonstrate this thesis, I will analyze the relationship between Ephesians 6:10–20 and the rest of the letter, as well as the structure of the pericope. This will set the stage for a closer analysis of the identity of the "powers" (Eph 6:12) as well as Paul's prescription for standing firm against them.

The Relationship of Ephesians 6:10–20 to the Rest of the Letter

The literary significance of Ephesians 6:10–20 is widely recognized. While some argue it summarizes the ethical section of the letter (4:1–6:9),[2] others contend it summarizes the entire letter.[3] In either case, the pericope is rightly seen as having a summative function for much of the preceding material. The significance of the pericope is seen in the use of adverbial λοιπός ("finally") in 6:10, the place of the pericope at the end of the letter, and the pericope's verbal links with the rest of the letter.

Paul regularly, although by no means always, concludes his letters with adverbial λοιπός, as he does in 6:10 (cf. 2 Cor 13:11; Gal 6:17; Phil 4:8; 1 Thess 4:1; 2 Thess 3:1).[4] The word functions rhetorically to catch the attention of the audience so as to highlight what is about to follow, and in the case of 6:10–20 points to its summative character.

Additionally, 6:10–20 concludes the body of the letter. Jeffrey Weima has shown that the way Paul concludes his letters often communicates or summarizes the main themes of the letter.[5] One does not have to subscribe to a Greco-Roman rhetorical-critical approach in order for this to be recognized. In light of this

2. Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 435.

3. Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 335–36; Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 411. Andrew T. Lincoln (*Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary 42 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990], 432) thinks Ephesians 6:10–20 functions rhetorically as the *peroratio* and concludes both 4:1–6:9 and the body of the letter as a whole. Cf. Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 1998), 585–86.

4. Some early Greek manuscripts of the Alexandrian text-type have the genitive τοῦ λοιποῦ, whereas others in the Western and Byzantine tradition have the accusative τὸ λοιπόν. The meaning is not affected in either case, although the former is more likely due to the early date of the manuscripts (rightly Thielman, *Ephesians*, 430; contra Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002], 819n1). Thielman (*Ephesians*, 416–17) suggests the phrase is an ellipsis for τοῦ λοιποῦ χρόνου and thus means "from now on," indicating that Christians should forget what is past and look to stand strong for Christ in the future; cf. BDF §186.2 [Friedrich Blass, Albert Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961)].

5. Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "The Pauline Letter Closings: Analysis and Hermeneutical Significance," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 5 (1995): 177–198. Cf. idem, *Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 101 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

observation, it is likely that Paul intended 6:10–20 to be the climactic imperative of the letter. Weima's point is worth quoting in full:

> A Pauline letter closing is not an insignificant epistolary convention, simply designed to maintain contact with the addressees (although that goal is surely part of its intended purpose). Rather, it is a carefully constructed unit, shaped and adapted in such a way as to relate it directly to the major concerns of the letter as a whole, and so it provides important clues to understanding the key issues addressed in the body of the letter. Thus the Pauline letter closing functions much like the thanksgiving section, but in reverse. For as the thanksgiving foreshadows and points ahead to the major concerns to be addressed in the body of the letter, so the closing serves to highlight and encapsulate the main points previously taken up in the body. And this recapitulating function of Paul's letter closings, in turn, provides interpretive clues for a richer understanding of their respective letters.[6]

Even though Weima's focus is on the conventional aspects of a letter closing, his points are still broadly applicable to a pericope that concludes the body of a letter and transitions to the letter closing, such as we find in Ephesians 6:10–20 (cf. Gal 6:11–18).[7] In this regard, Frank Thielman rightly says of this passage, "Paul subtly sums up what the readers of the letter must do in order to fulfill their role in God's plan to unite all things in Christ."[8]

Finally, Ephesians 6:10–20 has numerous verbal links with the rest of the letter, suggesting it is summarizing or recapitulating much of the letter's content.[9]

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6.   Weima, "The Pauline Letter Closings," 183.

7.   For a helpful distinction between a "letter closing" and a "closing to the letter body" with reference to Galatians 6:11–17, see Jeff Hubing, *Crucifixion and New Creation: The Strategic Purpose of Galatians 6:11–17*, Library of New Testament Studies 508 (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 11–13. Ephesians 6:10–20 serves more accurately as a "closing to the letter body" than a "letter closing" *per se.*

8.   Thielman, *Ephesians*, 414.

9.   Contra Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 817. In order to sustain his chiastic structure of Ephesians, John Paul Heil (*Ephesians: Empowerment to Walk in Love for the Unity of All in Christ*, Studies in Biblical Literature 13 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007], 39–40) recognizes only the verbal links with Ephesians 1.

What follows is a tabulation of the verbal links:

Ephesians 6:10–20	The Rest of the Letter
6:10 the strength of his might[10]	1:19 the strength of his might
6:11 put on the whole armor of God	4:24 put on the new self
6:11 the schemes of the devil	4:14 deceitful schemes 4:27 give no opportunity to the devil
6:12 the rulers . . . the authorities	1:21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion 2:2 following the authoritative ruler of the air 3:10 the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places
6:12 cosmic powers over this present darkness . . . the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places	2:2 following the course of this world . . . the spirit that is now at work 5:8, 11 for at one time you were darkness . . . Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10 in the heavenly places
6:13 the evil day	5:16 the days are evil
6:14 the belt of truth . . . the breastplate of righteousness	1:13 the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation 4:15 speak the truth in love 4:21 as the truth is in Jesus 4:24 in righteousness and holiness that comes from the truth 4:25 let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor 5:9 for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true
6:15 the gospel of peace	2:14–17 For he himself is our peace . . . so making peace . . . And he came and proclaimed the gospel of peace

10.   The biblical quotations in this chart are the author's own translation.

6:16 the shield of faith	1:15 faith in the Lord Jesus
	2:8 by grace you have been saved through faith
	3:12 we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him
	3:17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith
	4:5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism
	4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God
6:17 the helmet of salvation	1:13 the gospel of your salvation
	2:5, 8 by grace you have been saved
6:18 praying at all times	1:16 remembering you in my prayers (cf. 1:17–23; 3:14–21)
6:19 to make known the mystery of the gospel	1:9 making known to us the mystery of his will
	3:4–6 the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations . . . This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs . . . in Christ Jesus through the gospel
	5:32 this mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church

This table shows the close relationship between 6:10–20 and the rest of the letter. Certain phrases or words therefore recall or summarize the focus of earlier texts. For instance, the phrase "the strength of his might" only occurs in 1:19 and 6:10, suggesting a close link between those texts. The only occurrences of the verb ἐνδύω ("to put on") in Ephesians are in 4:24 and 6:11, 14, suggesting a close relationship between putting on the new person and putting on the armor of God. In some cases, the entire verse or verses collectively serve to summarize multiple texts earlier in the letter. In the case of 6:12, for instance, the four prepositional phrases describing the enemy summarize what has been said about them earlier in the letter, such as their authority (1:21), non-physicality (2:2, "spirit"), locale (3:10, "in the heavenly places"), and domain (2:2, "world," "air"). Similarly, the phrase "mystery of the gospel" (6:19) probably is Paul's shorthand for his explication of the "mystery of Christ" elsewhere in the letter (1:9–10; 3:3–6; 5:32).

Especially significant are the verbal links in 6:14–17 with the terms: truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation. While not synonymous, these terms are closely related because they are christologically defined and linked inextricably with the gospel. For instance, the term "truth" (ἀλήθεια) is christological (4:21, "the truth is in Jesus") and gospel-oriented (1:13, "the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation"), which gives rise to right living before God and others (4:15, 24–25; 5:9). Similarly, while the phrase "gospel of peace" alludes to Isaiah 52:7, it is defined by the earlier context of Ephesians 2:11–22, which emphasizes that Jesus himself is our peace in that he brings us peace with God and one another through his sacrificial death on the cross. Again, the object of the Christian's faith is explicitly said to be "in the Lord Jesus" (1:15) and is therefore the means by which we are saved and have access into God's presence (2:8; 3:12). The notion of salvation also is clearly linked with the gospel (1:13) and God's grace that brings us new life in Christ (2:4–10). Hence, these terms that comprise the armor of God in 6:14–17 recall the teaching earlier in the letter regarding the gospel of Christ and its effects in the lives of believers. In fact, one might even go so far as to say that all the major terms descriptive of the gospel and its effects in Ephesians appear in 6:14–17 as the armor of God. The absence of the phrase "in Christ" from 6:10–20 does not, therefore, detract from the christological focus of the text, for Paul already clarified earlier in the letter that the gospel and its benefits come to the Christian only through union with Christ.[11]

Therefore, because of the use of the term "finally" in 6:10, the summative function of Paul's letter closings and the closings of the letter body, and the verbal links with the rest of the letter, it is likely that 6:10–20 is a summary or recapitulation

11. Rightly Donna R. Reinhard, "Ephesians 6:10–18: A Call to Personal Piety Or Another Way of Describing Union with Christ?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48 (2005): 521–32. Contra Best, *Ephesians*, 587.

of the entire letter, or at the very least, a climactic response based on the letter's content as a whole.[12]

The Structure of Ephesians 6:10–20

A discourse analysis of the text reveals that the structure of 6:10–20 is fairly straightforward. The outline of the text is as follows.

6:10	Be strong in the Lord (*imperative; main command*)
6:11	Put on the armor of God (*imperative; restatement of main command*)
	In order to **stand** (*purpose*)
6:12	Because we fight against cosmic powers (*ground of 6:11, 13*)
6:13	Therefore take up the armor of God (*imperative; restatement of 6:11*)
	In order to resist and **stand** (*purpose*)
6:14	Therefore **stand** (*imperative; inference from 6:11, 13*)
	Belt of truth
	Breastplate of righteousness
6:15	Feet prepared by/for the gospel of peace
6:16	Shield of faith
	In order to quench the devil's fiery darts (*purpose*)
6:17	Helmet of salvation
	Sword of the Spirit = God's word
6:18–20	Prayer
	In order for the mystery of the gospel to be made known (*purpose*)

The main command is that Christians should be strong in the Lord (6:10). The asyndetic command to put on God's armor in 6:11 probably restates the initial command and adds the element of God's armor.[13] The reason for armor is given in 6:12, which then gives rise to Paul's restatement of the command in 6:13. Both 6:11 and 6:13 include purpose clauses that utilize the complementary infinitive στῆναι ("to stand") with the verb δύναμαι ("be able"). That is to say, the main point, goal,

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12. Contra John Muddiman (*The Epistle to the Ephesians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries [London: Continuum, 2001], 282–84), who suggests that the passage adds new instruction for the Christian young men of Ephesus (cf. 1 John 2:12–14).

13. BDF §462.2: "Although asyndeton lends solemnity and weight to the words, it is not a conscious rhetorical device." Additionally, it can have an explanatory force, as in 6:11.

or purpose of 6:10–13 is that Christians would have the *ability to stand* in the midst of battle. The significance of standing is clear not only from its repetition in 6:11–13[14] but also from its reappearance in 6:14 as the dominant imperative in the rest of the passage.[15] What follows in 6:14–20 is a string of post-verbal adverbial participles, which Steven Runge suggests "elaborate the action of the main verb, often providing more specific explanation of what is meant by the main action."[16] Hence, putting on the specific components of the armor of God is an *elaboration* of what it means to "stand." More specifically, the specific components of the armor are the *necessary means* by which Christians will have the ability to stand in battle.[17]

If this analysis of the structure of 6:10–20 is correct, then the main point of the passage is that Christians should be strong in the Lord and put on the armor of God so that they will be able to stand firm against the "powers."

Identifying the "Powers"

Now that we have identified the relationship of Ephesians 6:10–20 to the rest of the letter, as well as outlined its structure and basic message, we can focus more precisely on the identity of the "powers." For our purposes regarding the portrayal of the "powers" in Ephesians, Ephesians 6:10–20 is a crucial text, for it is the most sustained discussion of the "powers" in Ephesians, and it is the only place in Ephesians where Paul suggests how to wage war against the "powers." Its function is to draw together and summarize the mention of the "powers" earlier in the letter. Prior to 6:10–20, the "powers" explicitly appear in three texts: 1:21; 2:2; and 3:10.[18] In 1:21, there are four terms that unpack the "powers": "rule" (ἀρχή), "authority" (ἐξουσία), "power" (δύναμις), and "dominion" (κυριότης). The following phrase ("and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come") shows that these four terms are not meant to be exhaustive but rather representative of the kinds of "powers" that be. In 2:2 the devil is likely alluded to as the "prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος, τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ νῦν ἐνεργοῦντος ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς τῆς ἀπειθείας). The verbal link between 1:21 and 2:2 is the word ἐξουσία, suggesting that the "powers" in 1:21 are hostile to God, over whom the devil is the "prince."

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14. Notice its appearance even in the compound verb ἀντιστῆναι ("to withstand," Eph 6:13).

15. The verb δέξασθε ("receive," Eph 6:17) appears as an imperative instead of a participle to clarify that in Ephesians 6:17 Paul resumes the list of the armor. Hence, it is not another dominant imperative in the pericope (similarly Arnold, *Ephesians*, 440).

16. Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 262.

17. Rightly Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 337. Hoehner (*Ephesians*, 838) suggests the aorist here depicts causality.

18. The devil (διάβολος) is also explicitly mentioned in 4:27.

In 3:10 God's wisdom is said to be made known to the "rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις). The terms ἀρχή and ἐξουσία recall their appearance in 1:21, suggesting the same hostile "powers" are in view. The new element that 3:10 adds is that their dwelling is also "in the heavenly places," even though 1:21 clarified that Christ's exaltation is "far above" them in those same heavenly places. Hence, the key words describing the "powers" are ἀρχή and ἐξουσία (1:21; 2:2; 3:10), with the devil also described as the ἄρχων and πνεῦμα (2:2). Their domain is "the air" (2:2) and "the heavenly places" (3:10).

In addition to the explicit texts referring to the "powers," Ephesians describes the reality of evil with the words "world" (κόσμος, 2:2, 12), dark/darkness (σκότος/σκοτία, 5:8, 11; cf. 4:18), and "evil" (πονηρός, 5:16). The "world" is a spatial term referring to the fallen place in which the present evil age reigns, and "darkness" is descriptive of the current fallen state experienced by those who belong to the "world." The ongoing nature of the present age is stated in 5:16: "the days are evil."

In keeping with its function in the letter, Ephesians 6:10–20 draws together and summarizes this prior material, which not only brings the letter's theme of the "powers" to a rhetorical climax but also clarifies their identity. All the major terms descriptive of the "powers" in Ephesians appear in this text: ἀρχή, ἐξουσία, κόσμος (compounded with the noun κράτωρ, "power"), σκότος, πονηρία/πονηρός, and διάβολος (6:11–13, 16). The fourfold description of the "powers" in 6:12 recalls the fourfold description in 1:21, except 6:12 clarifies and heightens the element of hostility associated with them. No longer can the interpreter consider the "rulers and authorities" of 1:21 and 3:10 to be benign, for they reappear in 6:12 as those against whom Christians struggle. Moreover, the latter two phrases—"against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places"—clarify the deep hostility of these forces, for they are associated with and in some sense rule over the present evil age and its darkness. Since the term "cosmic power" is a *hapax legomenon* in Paul's letters (cf. *T. Sol.* 8:2; 18:2), and since Paul never elsewhere uses the neuter plural τὰ πνευματικά ("spiritual forces"), their inclusion in the list gives the appearance that Paul is piling up terms for rhetorical effect to show the mighty force of the enemy.[19] Indeed, each of the four prepositional phrases is longer than the previous one, such that by the end of the list

19.   Similarly, Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 444–45; Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 340. The attempt by some interpreters (e.g., Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 289) to discern a hierarchy of demonic beings appears to be mere speculation.

one has a heightened and full-orbed description of the beings as evil, dark, powerful, authoritative, and, in some sense, heavenly or otherworldly.[20]

Ephesians 6:12 clarifies not only the hostility of the "powers" but also their identity as supernatural spiritual beings.[21] The reason Christians should be strong in the Lord and put on God's armor (6:10–11) is because their struggle is not ultimately with their fellow human beings but with supernatural, spiritual beings hostile to God and God's people (6:12). The phrase "flesh and blood" is an idiom descriptive of human beings, particularly those who either belong to this fallen age or experience its deleterious effects.[22] Paul's denial that the Christian struggle is with "flesh and blood" signifies that the "powers," however one defines them, cannot be limited to human beings. The term "spiritual forces" (τὰ πνευματικά) is thus set in contrast with "flesh and blood," and, like the devil's descriptor as a "spirit" in 2:2 (πνεῦμα), describes the non-physicality of the Christian's enemy.[23] Moreover, these "powers" are located "in the heavenly places," so whatever existence they have on earth does not lessen their reality as in some sense heavenly (yet evil) beings.[24]

Yet another indication of the identity of the "powers" comes from the historical background of Ephesus. As Clinton Arnold has shown, Ephesus was a center for Hellenistic magic practices, and Artemis in particular was linked with these practices as the supreme ruler and goddess. This background elucidates why Paul described the "powers" more often in Ephesians than in any other of his

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20. This point assumes the originality of the text as it appears in modern critical editions of Ephesians (e.g., NA28, TGNT). The length of the phrases in the Greek is as follows:

πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς = 12 letters

πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας = 15 letters

πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου = 37 letters

πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις = 44 letters

21. Rightly Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 341.

22. See BDAG: 26 [Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*; 3rd ed.; rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)]; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:50; Galatians 1:16. Even though in Ephesians 6:12 the terms are reversed (literally "blood and flesh"), the collocation seems to depict the same reality.

23. So, Arnold, *Ephesians*, 447–49; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 828–29; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 420. Paul's choice of the grammatically neuter adjective πνευματικά is not an argument for the impersonal nature of these beings. For as BDF §138.1 states, "The neuter is sometimes used with reference to persons if it is not the individuals but a general quality that is to be emphasized." That is, Paul's choice of a neuter adjective owes to his desire to depict the "general quality" of the beings, not to denude them of personhood. For a discussion of the nature of angelic or demonic beings as "spirits," see Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 463; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 397. Cf. Hebrews 1:14.

24. For an assessment of the textual variations of the phrase "in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12) and some of the patristic interpretations of the phrase, see Christopher J. A. Lash, "Where Do Devils Live? A Problem in the Textual Criticism of Ephesians 6:12," *Vigiliae Christianae* 30 (1976): 161–174. Cf. Best, *Ephesians*, 594–95; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 829–31.

epistles.[25] In other words, the Ephesians would have been well familiar with Paul's notion of the "powers" as supernatural and malevolent spiritual beings. That Paul did not deny their existence in Ephesians but showed Christ's victory over them is a powerful silence.[26]

None of this is to deny that there are earthly counterparts or manifestations, so to speak, of these beings. Nor is it to deny that the effect of their rule inevitably manifests itself in sinful desires and actions within human beings and human institutions (Eph 2:2–3). Yet when we consider the manner in which Paul refers to the "powers" in Ephesians, any detectable demythologizing of the "powers" is of the sort that puts the "powers" in their proper perspective, namely, as beings whose power is limited both in degree and duration in comparison to God's infinite power and reign. Indeed, the "powers" were defeated by Christ (Eph 4:8), and over them Christ is now far and above exalted (Eph 1:20–23). At the same time, in comparison to human power, the "powers" are untamable and hold the unbelieving world in their sway. These beings, whose existence was attested already in the OT (e.g. 1 Sam 16:14; Dan 10:13), wield their power for dark purposes while the present evil age remains.[27] In this sense, Ephesians is certainly not dualistic, for God is sovereign over the "powers," yet it also does not fall into anti-supernaturalism as though the "powers" do not exist in the heavenly places. Indeed, because the "powers" are supernatural beings, Christians must take up not their own armor but the armor of God.

Standing against the "Powers"

As indicated earlier, the main command in Ephesians 6:10–20 is that Christians should be strong in the Lord, which is expressed in terms of putting on God's armor (6:10–11). But the purpose or goal of the pericope is that Christians would be able to "stand," as evident from the purpose clauses in 6:11, 13, the use of στῆτε ("stand") as the dominant imperative in 6:14–20, and the inferential conjunction οὖν ("therefore") in 6:14. That is to say, the reason Paul wrote Ephesians 6:10–20 is so that Christians would be able to stand against the "powers."

The question is: If the "powers" are as supernatural and untamable as they appear to be (6:12), and if the devil attempts to bring fiery trials upon Christians through his manifold schemes (6:16), then how will Christians be able to stand firm successfully? The answer is that Christians can and certainly will stand firm

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25. Clinton E. Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 1–40.

26. Similarly, Best, *Ephesians*, 588.

27. In this sense, the worldview of Ephesians is the same as that of Job, whose Behemoth and Leviathan likely refer to Death and Satan, respectively; both are untamable to Job but are controlled by God alone (see Robert S. Fyall, *Now My Eyes Have Seen You: Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 12 [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002]).

by resting in and appropriating by faith the redemptive work of Christ for them, which by virtue of their union with Christ will in its application to them result in successful resistance against all kinds of temptations and trials. This is evident from Paul's emphasis in the text on union with Christ and from his allusions to OT Divine Warrior texts.

Union with Christ

In Ephesians 6:10 Paul indicates that Christians are to find their strength "in the Lord and in the strength of his might." When the verb ἐνδυναμόω ("to strengthen") is used in the middle or passive voice, it is rendered intransitively: "to be strong." Further, when it is followed by the dative case or by ἐν ("in") + prepositional object, the dative noun or prepositional object describes the content or the means by which a person is strong. Often the content or means is a thing such as faith (Rom 4:20) or grace (2 Tim 2:1). In 6:10, however, the content or means is a person (the Lord), and only after naming the person does Paul mention what that person can provide (divine strength). By mentioning the person first, Paul emphasized that the only means by which Christians can find supernatural strength to stand against the "powers" is by their association or union with the Lord.

The phrase ἐν κυρίῳ ("in the Lord"), which Paul uses fifty-four times throughout his letters, connotes a mode of existence experienced by Christians, who by their faith have been joined to the Lord Jesus. The anarthrous κυρίῳ ("Lord") is a qualitative noun that thus emphasizes the quality of Jesus' lordship and authority in the lives of Christians. The use of ἐν ("in") is likely associative or locative, indicating the Christian's proximity and association with Jesus.[28] Hence, the phrase is applicable to Christians, for Jesus is not only Lord of all, but his lordship is especially manifest in the lives of Christians. Christians do all that they do for the sake of his name; they labor (Rom 16:12), marry (1 Cor 7:39), greet (1 Cor 16:19), bear witness (Eph 4:17), rejoice (Phil 3:1; 4:4), stand (Phil 4:1), and oversee (1 Thess 5:12) "in the Lord." That is to say, Christians live the entirety of their Christian lives under the lordship of Jesus, and the strength to live for him and stand against the "powers" derives from himself.

Moreover, since Ephesians 6:11 conceptually restates 6:10, putting on the armor of God likely is equivalent with being strong in the Lord. This is confirmed by a brief analysis of Paul's use of the verb ἐνδύω ("put on"). In Paul's literature, ἐνδύω occurs thirteen times, all having to do with what one wears or puts on.[29] In Paul's theology, the Christian's clothing is Christ and the effects of union with Christ. Paul teaches that all Christians have already put on Christ (Gal 3:27; Col 3:10) in that they have already been united to Christ and have experienced a decisive break with

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28. So Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 821.

29. See Romans 13:12, 14; 1 Corinthians 15:53 (2x), 54 (2x); Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:24; 6:11, 14; Colossians 3:10, 12; 1 Thessalonians 5:8.

their old lifestyle (cf. Rom 6:3–4). On the basis of union with Christ, Christians are to continue living in new ways, which is referred to as putting on "the new man" (Eph 4:24) or various virtues (Col 3:12; 1 Thess 5:8). The indicative precedes and motivates the imperative.

A text parallel to Ephesians 6:11 is Romans 13:12–14, in which Paul urges Christians to "put on the armor of light" (13:12), which from the following vice list must be seen as certain virtues (13:13). But then Paul commands in 13:14 that Christians "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," suggesting that putting on the armor of light is nothing other than putting on the Lord Jesus. The similarities between Romans 13:12–14 and Ephesians 6:11 suggest that in the latter, the command to put on the armor of God probably is synonymous with putting on Christ.[30] The Christian imperative to put on Christ means, as Douglas Moo puts it, "that we are consciously to embrace Christ in such a way that his character is manifested in all that we do and say."[31]

OT Divine Warrior Texts

In addition to Paul's emphasis on union with Christ, his catalog of the armor of God recalls the OT theme of God as a Warrior who fights for his people. The OT is replete with references to God as a Warrior who fights for his people. In these accounts, the following motif frequently appears: Israel is oppressed and helpless, and God comes to rescue his people by judging their enemies. Because Israel is weak and God is strong, Israel need only trust in the Lord, and he will fight their battles for them (cf. Josh 6:1–27; 23:10; Judg 7:2–15; 1 Sam 17:46–47; 2 Kgs 7:6; Zech 10:5–12; 14:3).

The armor of God in Ephesians 6:10–20 recalls specifically Israel's exodus from Egypt and Isaiah's messianic and divine armor texts. The programmatic OT Divine Warrior text is the story of Israel's exodus from Egypt. At the shore of the Red Sea when Pharaoh and his armies were bearing down on the Israelites, Moses encouraged the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today . . . The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent" (Exod 14:13–14). This programmatic event leads into the Song of Moses, in which God is called "a man of war" (Exod 15:3). While it is difficult to establish a clear allusion to the exodus, it may be significant that, as in Ephesians 6:10–20, the crucial command for Israel was to "stand" (LXX: στῆτε).[32] Like Israel, who, though weak, watched God defeat their enemies, so Christians, while intrinsically unable to

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30.   So, Arnold, *Ephesians*, 444.

31.   Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 825–26.

32.   Similarly, there may be an allusion in Ephesians 6:14–15a to the Passover, for Israel was to eat the lamb "with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet" (LXX-Exod 12:11: αἱ ὀσφύες ὑμῶν περιεζωσμέναι, καὶ τὰ ὑποδήματα ἐν τοῖς ποσὶν ὑμῶν). If so, like Israel Christians stand firm, having prepared themselves at the time of their redemption (cf. Eph 1:7).

defeat the "powers," are called to stand firm, having already experienced redemption through Christ.

Additionally, Ephesians 6:10–20 likely alludes to Isaiah's divine armor texts.[33] Isaiah 11:1–5 describes the Messiah who would be from David's lineage and would be filled with the Spirit (11:1–2). He would rule the nations with equity and justice (11:3–4). The foundation for his rule is described in terms reminiscent of Paul's armor imagery: "Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins" (11:5).[34] The key for our purposes is to note that the armor is descriptive only of the Messiah.[35] Indeed, in the context of Isaiah 1–12, his reign is set in contrast with Israel and King Ahaz, who refused to trust in the Lord and lacked righteousness and faithfulness (Isa 1:21; 5:7; 7:9).

Another divine armor text relevant to Ephesians 6:10–20 is the oracle of salvation in Isaiah 59:15b–21, for in it we find a description of God's armor (cf. Wis 5:16–20). The extent of Israel's sin was so great that they lacked even one person to intercede for them, as in former days (59:15b–16a; cf. Gen 18:22–33; Exod 33:12–16; Amos 7:1–6). Hence, Israel's only hope for salvation was if God fought for them, and this is what he did: "[T]hen his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak" (59:16b–17). God's battle would mean judgment for his enemies and salvation for his people (59:18–21). This passage is of obvious relevance to Ephesians 6:10–20, because it lists the armor of God in ways similar to Paul (breastplate of righteousness, helmet of salvation). As in Isaiah 11, the key for our purposes here is to note that the armor belongs to God and to God alone. The armor does not belong to Israel or any particular subset of individuals within Israel, for 59:15b–16 is clear that "there was no man" and "there was no one to intercede." Only God was able to save Israel from their sins. His armor is described in terms of God's attributes (righteousness, zeal) and actions (salvation, vengeance).[36]

These OT Divine Warrior texts consistently indicate that God is the one who fights for his people, and that the armor belongs to and derives from him. It is

33. Rightly Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 290–91; Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 338–39.

34. There are slight differences in order and description with Paul's description of the armor. In Isaiah 11:5 righteousness (LXX: δικαιοσύνη) is the belt, and truth (LXX: ἀλήθεια) is the sash or loincloth. In Ephesians 6:14 truth is the belt, and righteousness is the breastplate. Peter Gentry rightly argues that the image of clothing around the Messiah's waist shows that the clothing of righteousness and faithfulness form the foundation of the Messiah's rule (Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012], 581).

35. Hence, Best (*Ephesians*, 591) is wrong to assert, "Christ is nowhere depicted as wearing the armor of our passage."

36. It is possible Paul alludes to Isaiah 49:2 in Ephesians 6:17, in which God's word is seen as a sharp sword coming out of the Servant's mouth. If so, this is yet another indication that the armor belongs to Christ.

necessary for him to fight for his people, for his people are intrinsically weak (Exodus) and sinful (Isaiah). Hence, he is the source for redemption, and all his people need do is to look away from themselves and trust fully in his strength on their behalf.

Resting in and Appropriating the Armor

When applied to Ephesians 6:10–20, these OT texts inform Paul's choice and description of the armor, for he wanted to remind the Ephesians that God in Christ is their Warrior.[37] Paul calls the armor "the armor of God" because it belongs to God in Christ.[38] The first three pieces of armor—truth, righteousness, and the readiness to herald the gospel of peace—are christologically defined and oriented.[39] Truth is linked with Jesus (4:21), truth and righteousness are found in the one new man (4:24; cf. 2:15), and the original preacher of the gospel of peace is Jesus (2:17; cf. Acts 10:36). By virtue of their union with Christ, Christians benefit from his armor, but the armor does not derive from or belong to them in any sense apart from Christ. The gospel of Christ's armor for them probably includes the Christian's status before God and transformation by God.[40] That is, because of Christ those who belong to him have the status of having already been reconciled to God (Eph 2:13–18) and accounted by God as saints (Eph 1:1). At the same time, at their conversion Christians were definitively transformed by God so as to live in new-creational ways characterized by righteousness, truth, goodness, holiness, and peace with one another (Eph 2:10; 4:1–3, 23–25; 5:9). The gospel of Christ, then, protects a Christian in various ways from the dominion and onslaught of the "powers."

The text's emphasis on the gospel of God in Christ is why the latter three pieces of armor—faith, salvation, and God's word—highlight that our strength is not in ourselves but in the Lord. In Ephesians 6:16, Paul syntactically highlights the necessity of exercising faith in Christ at every possible moment or circumstances (ἐν

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37.   The OT Divine Warrior texts do not nullify the salience of recognizing the background of a Roman soldier's armor (see James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1999], 175–76). However, since Paul does not provide a full description of a Roman soldier's armor but alludes to OT Divine Warrior texts, probably the most salient background for the armor is the OT (so Arnold, *Ephesians*, 451; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 424).

38.   Thus, τοῦ θεοῦ ("of God") is a possessive genitive (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 442) or possibly a genitive of source (Arnold, *Ephesians*, 444; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 823).

39.   Some interpreters suggest the order of the armor corresponds to stages of growth in the Christian life (e.g., Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 285–86). But these attempts appear forced onto the text and do not derive from it. It is difficult to be certain, but perhaps Paul moves from armor worn (belt, breastplate, shoes) to armor lifted (shield, helmet, sword). Theologically, while it is true that Christian growth is necessary, a Christian already possesses the entire armor at conversion by virtue of union with Christ.

40.   Snodgrass (*Ephesians*, 341–42) avers the accent of the text is on the need for Christian action, not divine gift; cf. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 839–41. On the other hand, Best (*Ephesians*, 599) contends that the immediate context and Pauline use elsewhere demand that truth and righteousness be seen as the objective gospel and justifying righteousness from God.

πᾶσιν, "in all circumstances"),[41] for faith links us with Christ, who by virtue of his ascended and mediatorial role as our king protects us from the devil's temptations and trials. In Ephesians 6:17, Paul highlights eschatological salvation, which like faith is also seen as a piece of armor that protects the person (cf. 1 Thess 5:8). In the context, this protection is from the "powers," although it likely includes protection from death, the world, and ultimately God's wrath (Eph 2:1–22; 4:17–24; 5:6, 14).[42] The gracious character of salvation is clear, both because Paul says Christians are to "take/receive" (δέχομαι) it[43] and because the collocation of faith with salvation in Ephesians 6:16–17 echoes Paul's prior teaching that salvation is by grace through faith and does not owe to human effort so that they cannot boast before God (Eph 2:8–9). The last item of armor is God's word, which the Spirit wields as a sword (Eph 6:17). Again, Christians are enjoined to "receive" the sword, but Paul clarifies that the sword truly belongs to the Spirit, and the sword is God's word, the gospel (cf. Heb 4:12).[44] The focus is therefore not on what belongs to or derives from the Christian but on God. It is the Triune God who protects the Christian from the "powers," and it is the Triune God who enables the Christian to stand against the "powers."

Finally, Paul's emphasis on prayer in Ephesians 6:18–20 must be interpreted as integral to the pericope, not because prayer is an additional piece of armor, but because prayer is the necessary means by which Christians experience the armor.[45] Paul's prayer request in Ephesians 6:19–20 is directly related to the sword of the Spirit, for he wants God to strengthen him to speak the word with boldness. The Spirit (πνεῦμα) is the link between Ephesians 6:17–18, for the Spirit enables us to rely on God through

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41. Syntactically, the participle ἀναλαβόντες ("take up") is subordinate to the main verb στῆτε ("stand," Eph 6:14) and thus continues to elaborate on the meaning of στῆτε. Nevertheless, it syntactically is distinct from the prior post-verbal participles in Ephesians 6:14–15 in that (1) the participial phrase is asyndetic and (2) ἐν πᾶσιν is placed in "marked focus" or "prominence" due to its pre-verbal position (Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 189–91). The emphasis is thus not on the action of "taking up" but on the necessity of taking up faith *at all times* (cf. BDAG [329] notes that ἐν can be a "marker of circumstances or condition under which something takes place").

42. Probably the salvation Paul has in mind is future: (1) the immediate context is prospective and eschatological (e.g., "the evil day," 6:13); (2) elsewhere in Ephesians Paul's inaugurated eschatology does not nullify future fulfillment (cf. 1:13–14; 4:30); and (3) the close parallel in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 views the helmet as the *hope* of salvation (contra Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 450).

43. So Thielman, *Ephesians*, 416.

44. The phrase τοῦ πνεύματος ("of the Spirit") is likely a genitive of possession.

45. Syntactically, the participle προσευχόμενοι ("praying") is subordinate to δέξασθε ("take," Eph 6:17)—not στῆτε ("stand," Eph 6:14; contra Best, *Ephesians*, 604)—and probably expresses the means by which we receive the sword the Spirit wields (rightly Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 854; contra Thielman, *Ephesians*, 432–33). Also, Constantine R. Campbell (*Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008], 72) avers that present participles are typically contemporaneous with the action of the main verb, suggesting προσευχόμενοι is contemporaneous with reception of the armor. Snodgrass (*Ephesians*, 344) suggests it typifies the "demeanor" of Christians.

prayer to speak the gospel boldly (6:18), and then uses as his sword our bold sharing of the gospel to free those controlled by the "powers" (6:17).[46]

Hence, Paul's strategy to stand against the "powers" is that Christians should rest in and appropriate by faith the redemptive work of Christ on their behalf. Like Israel in the OT, they were weak and sinful, and yet by God's grace in Christ they had already experienced a new exodus, a new redemption (Eph 1:7). By his grace they already were saved through faith and had been brought near to God by the blood of Christ (Eph 2:4–22). Their Divine Warrior had already fought for them, and the "powers" were already decisively defeated (Eph 1:20–23; 4:8–10). They were already therefore free from the darkness of the "powers" and had been brought into the light (Eph 5:8). Even though the "powers" still held sway over non-Christians, and believers needed to remain vigilant (Eph 4:27), Christ's decisive triumph over the "powers" undergirded the Christian's new status in God's presence and new way of life (Eph 2:19–22; 5:9–14). Therefore, Paul's battle strategy for Christians to stand against the schemes of the devil is that they should remember the gospel of Christ (Eph 2:11), trusting in the sufficiency of his death, resurrection, and ascension for them. Instead of trusting in themselves, they should remember that it is only by virtue of their union with Christ, their Divine Warrior, that they have been freed from the "powers" and will continue to stand firm against them.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that in Ephesians 6:10–20 Paul teaches that the "powers" are evil, supernaturally powerful, spiritual beings, and that because of their existence and hostility towards the church, Christians must stand firm against them in the strength the Lord provides in the gospel. Far from dismissing them, Paul reminds Christians of their dark reality and dominion over those who belong to the present evil age. Christians must take seriously the existence and hostility of these beings, lest they succumb to the onslaught of temptations and trials associated with the "powers."

Moreover, in Ephesians 6:10–20 Paul's prescription for standing firm against the "powers" centers around the gospel of Christ. Specifically, Paul emphasizes the Christian's union with Christ in order to stand firm. Utilizing allusions to the exodus and OT Divine Warrior texts, Paul teaches that, just as Israel, though weak and sinful, benefited from God's redemptive work by trusting in him to fight their battles, so Christians benefit from God's redemptive work in Christ by trusting in his all-sufficient victory and ascendancy over the "powers." On the basis of Christ's defeat and subjugation of the "powers," Christians should live by faith, resting in

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46.   Regarding prayer ἐν πνεύματι ("in the Spirit," 6:18), BDAG (327) notes that the preposition ἐν in this construction can "designate a close personal relation in which the referent of the ἐν-term is viewed as the controlling influence." Thus, the Spirit controls or propels us to pray.

and appropriating afresh the gospel of Christ so that they will be able to stand firm against the "powers."

Paul's command to be strong in the Lord does not entail Christian passivity or laziness. It is certainly not an invitation to antinomianism or loose morals. Rather, the call to put on, take up, and receive the armor commends vigilance throughout the Christian life. The call to put on "readiness" (Eph 6:15) accompanied by unceasing prayer (Eph 6:18) is a far cry from passivity, as is the command to receive the sword of Spirit, which does not nullify but propels speaking the gospel with boldness (Eph 6:17–20). Still, that the command to stand firm centers around the gospel of Christ means that Christians cannot boast in themselves, as though the armor or the victory they enjoy come from themselves. Like their salvation, which being rooted in God's grace disallows all human boasting before God (Eph 2:8–9), the entirety of their Christian life is a testament to God's grace. Everything good the Christian enjoys, including the strength to stand firm against the "powers," owes to God's redemptive work in Christ on their behalf, from which they benefit through union with Christ by faith.

Ephesians and Evangelical Activism: The Covenantal, Corporate, and Missional Components of the Ecclesial Armor of God

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Abstract: In Ephesians 6:10–20, the apostle Paul penned one of the most memorable accounts of spiritual warfare for Christians. Throughout the history of interpretation, the majority of exegetes have viewed Paul's account of the "armor of God" in relation to the spiritual struggle of individual Christians in their quests for growth in personal holiness. This article counteracts individualistic, moralistic, gnostic readings of Ephesians 6:10–20 by re-situating the "armor of God" metaphor within its original corporate/ecclesial, covenantal, and missional context in Ephesians. The article begins by redirecting evangelical thinking on social activism away from recent fundamentalist denunciations back to the original activist ethos of neo-evangelicalism. Next, Walter Wink's phenomenological reading of the Powers is explored as a framework for evangelical activism against human structures, systems, and ideologies that facilitate the activity of demonic and oppressive spiritual Powers. The article concludes by offering an exegetical recovery of the corporate, covenantal, and missional components of the armor of God metaphor thus providing a biblical and theological rationale and impetus for evangelical social action as the primary referent of spiritual warfare in Ephesians.

Key Words: spiritual warfare, demonology, the Powers, Ephesians, evangelical activism, social justice, Carl Henry, Walter Wink, Bultmann, neo-evangelical, covenant, missional, thoughts and prayers, faith and politics

Introduction

In Ephesians 6:10–20, the apostle Paul[1] penned one of the most memorable accounts of spiritual warfare for Christians. Throughout the history of interpretation, the

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1. In this article I refer to the author as "Paul." The argument of the chapter does not rely on a particular theory of authorship, though I see no convincing reason to argue against Ephesians as a genuine Pauline epistle.

majority of exegetes have viewed Paul's account of the "armor of God" in relation to the spiritual struggle of individual Christians in their quests for growth in personal holiness. Many have insisted that the armor in this passage is meant to function in a solely (or primarily) defensive manner. The armor exists, in this reading, to assist Christians as they "stand firm" while fending off the attacks of the evil one on their personal salvation and progressive sanctification.

This individualistic exegesis has been coupled with a contemporary form of gnosticism in regard to the reality and activity of the Powers. Paul's insistence in Ephesians 6:12 that the battle of the church is not against "flesh and blood" but against the rulers, authorities, the cosmic powers, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places, has been wrongly interpreted by many to suggest that the "spiritual" Powers operate in an entirely invisible manner, completely detached from any mediation through human structures, systems, or ideologies.

Consequently, a majority of Christians have inadvertently neglected, or outright removed the role of human structures, systems, and ideologies from the operation of the oppressive Powers, assuming that because the Powers exercise their influence from the "heavenly places," our response to them must take place apart from any material mediation. This individualistic, gnostic interpretation of Ephesians 6 and other parallel New Testament texts on the Powers, has led to an incomplete application of the biblical concept of spiritual warfare to an individual spiritual struggle that avoids the text's primary concern to articulate a corporate, covenantal, missional response to the Powers through and as the church, the body of Christ. This reading has, furthermore, jeopardized the ubiquitous and binding biblical mandate to pursue justice in the world as the covenant people of God. In contemporary times, this has caused some segments of American evangelicalism to become allergic to the church's historic commitment to the task of social justice, claiming as recently as 2018 that social activism is neither a sign of saving faith nor a central component to the mission of the church.[2]

In this chapter, I will counteract individualistic, moralistic, gnostic readings of Ephesians 6:10–20 by re-situating the "armor of God" metaphor within its original corporate/ecclesial, covenantal, and missional context in Ephesians. The chapter will proceed in three major movements. First, I will attempt to redirect evangelical thinking on social activism away from recent fundamentalist denunciations to the original neo-evangelical activist ethos characterized by Carl F. H. Henry and Harold John Ockenga. Second, I will offer Walter Wink's phenomenological reading of the Powers as a framework for evangelical activism against human structures, systems, and ideologies that facilitate the activity of demonic and oppressive spiritual Powers. Third, I will offer an exegetical recovery of the corporate, covenantal, and missional components of the armor of God metaphor thus providing a biblical and theological

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2. Tom Ascol, "The Statement on Social Justice & the Gospel," accessed January 7, 2020, https://statementonsocialjustice.com/.

rationale and impetus for evangelical social action as the primary referent of spiritual warfare in Ephesians.

Recovering the Roots of Evangelical Activism

When the term "evangelical activism" is used in the context of the current political, theological, and ecclesial climate in the United States, it evokes strong feelings of suspicion from a certain segment of American evangelicals. This can be observed in the recent document associated with John MacArthur and Tom Ascol entitled The Statement on Social Justice & the Gospel.[3] The document reveals a surprising distaste for evangelical involvement in the cause of social justice. The statement is, in this regard, more reminiscent of the separatist response of the fundamentalists of the 1920s and 1930s than of the neo-evangelicals who viewed both sound doctrine and social engagement as essential for faithful gospel ministry and witness in contemporary society. As George Marsden has shown, "The new evangelicalism [embraced] the full orthodoxy of fundamentalism in doctrine but [manifested] a social consciousness and responsibility which was strangely absent from fundamentalism."[4]

In contrast to the original neo-evangelical ethos, the Statement on Social Justice & the Gospel denies that "political or social activism should be viewed as integral components of the gospel" or that social activism should be "primary to the mission of the church."[5] The document explains that the "'obligation to live justly in the world" is one of the "implications and applications" of the gospel rather than a "definitional component" of the gospel.[6] The gospel is defined as:

> the divinely-revealed message concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ—especially his virgin birth, righteous life, substitutionary sacrifice, atoning death, and bodily resurrection—revealing who he is and what he has done with the promise that he will save anyone and everyone who turns from sin by trusting him as Lord.

Given the document's definition of the gospel, it is therefore internally consistent to refer to the activities of social justice as "implications and applications" rather than "definitional components" of the gospel. Yet, it is puzzling to then find that the drafters further deny that socially just acts are either "evidence of saving faith" or

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3. Ascol, "The Statement on Social Justice." Some of the initial signers include: John MacArthur, Voddie Baucham, Phil Johnson, and James White.

4. See e.g., George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 146. Cf. Ronald H. Nash, *The New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 177: "It is our contention that evangelicalism is not new . . . It is simply and plainly Christian orthodoxy speaking to the theological, social, and philosophical needs of the twentieth century."

5. Ascol, "The Statement on Social Justice," VIII The Church. Emphasis mine.

6. Ascol, "The Statement on Social Justice," VI Gospel.

that such actions "constitute a central part of the church's mission given to her by Jesus Christ."[7] It might be sensible to differentiate between the christological and soteriological components of the gospel and the effects, results, and implications that the gospel will have on a given society. It does not follow, however, that the enactment of the transformative social "implications" of the gospel through the church should be excluded from functioning evidentially in regard to saving faith. It is, likewise, hard to square the document's removal of social activism from the church's mission given the central role of social justice in the inspired texts of both the Old and New Testaments.[8]

Perhaps, in response the drafters would reply: "Yes, social justice matters but the biblical commands to live justly, though important, are not the gospel." My response would be to argue that the inspired, infallible deposit of Holy Scripture requires more of us than the mere Christianity amalgamated in the Statement's definition of the gospel. In addition to the Bible's perfect apostolic revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Scriptures also require us to submit to an authoritative, abiding, apostolic ethic. The drafters of the Statement already make this sort of distinction between "the gospel" and other crucial social and ethical issues derived from the teachings of Holy Scripture. This can be observed in their commitment to the traditional orthodox positions on marriage and human sexuality, and their argument for the acceptance of complementarianism, even though neither of those three issues—by their own definition—constitutes "the gospel."

Why, might I ask, is it therefore the case that social justice, a secondary and subsidiary but biblically-commanded "implication and application" of the gospel (by their definition) is deemed to be neither central to the mission of Jesus and the church, nor even allowed to serve as mere evidence of saving faith, while other "implications and applications" of the gospel, namely marriage, sexual ethics, and complementarianism are considered to be so vitally important? I would assume it has to do with the current cultural focus on redefining marriage, sexuality, and gender. While I affirm that the church ought to be clear about these issues on the basis of the clarity and authority of Scripture, it is also the case that Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the inspired authors of the Old and New Testaments issued authoritative, abiding commands about the practice of social justice in the lives of the covenant people and in the societies they inhabited.[9]

7. Ascol, "The Statement on Social Justice," VIII The Church.

8. Of the multitude of scriptural examples that could be provided to demonstrate the indisputable relationship of social justice to God's character, covenant faithfulness, and to his abiding commands to his people in both the Old and New covenants to extend justice to the poor, oppressed, widows, orphans, and sojourners see e.g., Ex 22:21; 23:9; Lev 19:9–10, 13–14, 15; Deut 10:17–18; 14:28–29; 15; Pss 103:6; 106:3; 146:5–10; Isa 1:16; Amos 2:6–7; 5:12, 24; Ezek 22:29; Zech 7:9; Mal 3:1–5; Mt 5:6, 9, 16, 42, 43–45; 6:2–4; 12:15–21; Lk 4:18–19; 11:42–45.

9. See footnote 8 for scriptural examples of the centrality of social justice to the character and abiding commands of God throughout salvation history.

Furthermore, I would contend that, historically speaking, the position taken by the Statement constitutes a deviation from evangelicalism, rather than a return to its roots. Compare, for example, the spirit of Ascol and MacArthur's Statement with the ethos of the following alternative statement:

> We acknowledge that God requires justice. But we have not proclaimed or demonstrated his justice to an unjust American society. Although the Lord calls us to defend the social and economic rights of the poor and oppressed, we have mostly remained silent. We deplore the historic involvement of the church in America with racism and the conspicuous responsibility of the evangelical community for perpetuating the personal attitudes and institutional structures that have divided the body of Christ along color lines . . . We affirm that God abounds in mercy and that he forgives all who repent and turn from their sins. So we call our fellow evangelical Christians to demonstrate repentance in a Christian discipleship that confronts the social and political injustice of our nation . . . We proclaim no new gospel, but the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ who, through the power of the Holy Spirit, frees people from sin so that they might praise God through works of righteousness. By this declaration, we endorse no political ideology or party, but call our nation's leaders and people to that righteousness which exalts a nation."[10]

I can just picture the response to such a statement, "Perhaps," one may say, "this is a quote from one of those troublemaking 'Red Letter Christians.'" Or, "maybe" one might conjecture, "it is from one of those bleeding heart evangelical 'millennials' we hear so much about. You know, the ones who want to turn the United States into Venezuela whilst simultaneously ruining their chances at buying a house because of their addiction to having smashed Avocado toast for breakfast."[11]

To the shock of many evangelicals who cringe at the seemingly egregious "crime" of caring about other human beings, this is not the Facebook post of a 27-year old hipster evangelical barista wearing a Rob Bell t-shirt. This is the Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern, a document from 1973 signed by conservative evangelical luminaries such as Carl F. H. Henry, Richard Mouw, Robert Webber, and Bernard Ramm.

Carl F. H. Henry was the inaugural editor of Christianity Today magazine, the leading theologian of the neo-evangelical movement in the United States, and a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary and many other evangelical institutions. He was also the past president of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) from

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10. "Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern (1973)," *Evangelicals For Social Action*, accessed January 6, 2020, https://www.evangelicalsforsocialaction.org/about-esa-2/history/chicago-declaration-evangelical-social-concern/.

11. Sam Levin, "Millionaire tells millennials: if you want a house, stop buying avocado toast," *The Guardian*, accessed January 6, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/may/15/australian-millionaire-millennials-avocado-toast-house.

1967–1970.[12] In his 1971 book, *A Plea For Evangelical Demonstration*, Henry argued that "[t]o do nothing about social wrongs is to do the wrong thing" and that "an evangelical commitment to earnest and energetic social involvement" is needed in which Christians engage "actively wherever possible in the struggle for social righteousness to the full limit of personal ability and competence.[13]

This is a long way from the Ascol's recent assessment that social activism is neither "evidence of saving faith" nor "a central part of the church's mission."[14] Henry has elsewhere famously shown how the doctrinal purity of the gospel is meant to exist side by side with a thoroughgoing commitment to social justice. He asserts:

> The God of the Bible is the God of justice and of justification. The Christian evangelist has a message doubly relevant to the modern scene: he knows that justice is due to all because a just God created mankind in His holy image, and he knows that all men need justification because the Holy Creator sees us as rebellious sinners.[15] [/EXT]

Henry entertained none of the delusions of the "social utopia"[16] chased after by the social gospel, nor did he think that the gospel was equivalent to a "socio-political program or political ideology."[17] Yet, he passionately advocated and practiced a form of evangelical Christianity that looked beyond ministering to "the victims of social injustice" and sought "hopeful ways" of "remedying and eliminating the causes of that social injustice."[18] Indeed, Henry recognized a "Biblical mandate for social involvement" and he was attempting to construct "a coherent evangelical social ethic that sought to fuse Biblical theology with political theory."[19] Henry's evangelical social ethic operated in accordance with a biblical framework for social engagement that included:

> "the solidarity of the human race," "the equality of all men in view of divine creation," "the offer of pardon for sin," "the responsibility for personal

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12. For a complete biography see Robert H. Krapohl, "The Life of Carl Henry," *Carl F. H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding*, accessed January 7, 2020, https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/carl-f-h-henry/the-life-of-carl-henry/.

13. Carl F. H. Henry, *A Plea for Evangelical Demonstration* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971), 106, 122. Emphasis mine.

14. Ascol, "The Statement on Social Justice," VIII The Church.

15. Carl F. H. Henry, "Facing a New Day in Evangelism," *Berlin World Congress on Evangelism*, 1966 (Wheaton College Billy Graham Center Archives), 4–5.

16. Carl F. H. Henry, *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society: Promoting Evangelical Renewal and National Righteousness* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Press, 1984), 102. My emphasis.

17. Henry, *A Plea For Evangelical Demonstration*, 67.

18. Henry, *A Plea For Evangelical Demonstration*, 122. Emphasis mine. Cf. Augustus Cerillo, Jr., and Murray W. Dempster, "Carl F.H. Henry's Early Apologetic for An Evangelical Social Ethic, 1942–1956," *JETS* 34, no. 3 (1991): 366, 368.

19. Cerillo Jr., and Dempster, "Carl F.H. Henry's Early Apologetic," 366, 379.

purity," "the use of wealth as a stewardship," and "the duty of work as part of an earthly existence which is a discipline and preparation for eternity."[20]

Many evangelicals today would continue to affirm these foundational concepts and some would significantly expand the list to include: healthcare as a human right, quality education for all, social safety nets for the elderly and the poor, religious freedom for all, the elimination of racism and bigotry from society, ending sex trafficking and exploitation, domestic and foreign policies that promote preemptive peace-making rather than pre-emptive war, a commitment to climate justice and the wise stewardship of the planet, criminal justice reform, just and compassionate immigration policies, and a firm commitment to pro-life causes and legislation.

As evangelicals engage in spiritual warfare we must do so by identifying a new biblical framework for evangelical social engagement in the 21st century, building on, and at some points course-correcting certain aspects of Henry's original vision.[21] Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical, Pentecostal—and all other orthodox Christians—must work together to construct an ecumenical biblical framework for transformative spiritual warfare through social action in accordance with the apostolic witness to the social and soteriological aspects of the gospel and the faith once delivered to the saints.

One may notice that my suggested updated framework for evangelical social action includes elements from a variety of political parties and platforms. It argues for both pro-life legislation and social safety nets for the elderly and the poor.[22] Thus, an ecumenical evangelical social ethic must exist prior to and above a Christian's commitment to any political party. Christians must exist in a state of perpetual discomfort and cognitive dissonance, never allowing themselves to collapse their commitment to Christ into any political ideology or party, and never confusing or equating adherence to any particular political approach with authentic faithfulness to the Gospel. Furthermore, in order to engage effectively in this manner, Christians must expand the way that they conceive of the activity of demonic spiritual forces in the world. A de-gnosticization process must take place in which the spiritual reality of demonic forces is affirmed and retained but is integrated within a paradigm that envisions the Powers as exercising their oppressive agency in the world through the mediation of the external forms of human social structures, systems, and ideologies.

20. Cerillo Jr., and Dempster, "Carl F.H. Henry's Early Apologetic," 375.

21. See e.g., Cerillo Jr., and Dempster, "Carl F.H. Henry's Early Apologetic," 374 where Henry is cited as referring to "Roman Catholic imperialism" that opposed "the free proclamation of a saving gospel." Cerillo Jr., and Dempster argue that Henry "thought that growing Roman Catholic political power threatened American freedom and democracy, the public school system and the time-honored principle of Church-state separation" (374). Henry's suspicion and hostility toward Roman Catholicism must be unequivocally rejected by contemporary evangelicals.

22. Henry himself "condemned profiteering and the exploitation of the poor" (Cerillo Jr., and Dempster, "Carl F.H. Henry's Early Apologetic," 377) and believed that "God requires justices . . . [and] calls us to defend the social and economic rights of the poor and oppressed" (*Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern*, 1973).

Walter Wink's Phenomenology of the Powers as a Framework for Evangelical Activism

The suggestion of a structural, systemic, and ideological framework for thinking of the activity of demonic Powers among evangelicals often elicits a response of suspicion and premature rejection. It is assumed by many that this sort of thinking advocates for a demythologization of the Powers along the lines of that which was attempted by Rudolf Bultmann. In his program of demythologization, Bultmann rejected all forms of supernaturalism and the miraculous, seeking instead to discover the kernel of truth located underneath the "primitive," "mythical," and "rationally incredible" claims of the Bible.[23] For Bultmann, the demythologization of demonology and dogmatics had an anthropological and existential aim, namely to discard the "mythical" elements of the biblical text in order to "to talk about human existence."[24] Bultmann's program of demythologization must be totally rejected. Likewise, the attempt by some liberation theologians to reduce the reality of demonic Powers to mythical metaphors for social structures or systems, is likewise, theologically deficient and biblically unjustifiable.[25]

The common evangelical assumption, however, that Wink's theology is a form of demythologization is demonstrably false. Wink himself argues in the following manner about his volumes on the Powers:

> [they] are themselves the record of my own pilgrimage away from a rather naive assurance that the "principalities and powers" mentioned in the New Testament could be "demythologized," that is, rendered without remainder into the categories of modern sociology, depth psychology, and general systems theory.[26] [/EXT]

In the same manner, Wink clearly asserts that the Powers are not "mere projections" or "creations of our own unconscious psychic processes."[27] Likewise, according to Wink, "gods, spirits, and demons are not mere personifications or hypostatizations."[28] Wink himself argues that Bultmann's understanding of "myth" was based on a "wrong foundation" because it defined myth as "a falsifying objectification of reality" and translated its meaning to existential categories.[29] It would seem, then, that any

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23. Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology: The Problem of Demythologizing the New Testament Proclamation (1941)" in *New Testament & Mythology and other Basic Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 8.

24. Rudolf Bultmann, "On the Problem of Demythologizing (1952)" in *New Testament & Mythology and other Basic Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 99.

25. Cf. Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 15.

26. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 5. My emphasis. Wink further denies that the Powers should be understood as mere metaphors for "institutions, social systems, and political structures."

27. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 140.

28. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 136.

29. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 142–145.

simplistic labelling of Wink as "Bultmannian" is either disingenuous, ignorant, incompetent, or willfully deceptive.[30]

Equally problematic to demythologizing approaches to the Powers is the inadvertent gnostic separation of the Powers from the mediation of material reality that is common in most conservative streams of Christian theology. Interpretations that gnosticize the Powers relegate their activity to an entirely invisible realm and envision them as being dealt with solely through individual, esoteric spiritual warfare that is completely divorced from any sort of external human mediation—whether structural or personal. The problem is rooted in the frequent assumption that because the Powers are "spiritual" and located "in the heavenly places," they therefore do not operate "on the human plane" and thus "Christian warfare is fought . . . in the spiritual realm."[31]

Best argues, for example, that in Ephesians 6:12 "our struggle is not against anything human." Nor is it a struggle, says Best, that "may come from human foes" through for example, "persecution, harassment, temptation, poverty, or injustice."[32] Likewise, according to Abbott, Barry has argued that the fight against "the power of evil" is "directly spiritual" and does not involve the Powers "acting through physical and human agency."[33] Thus, for Barry, the spiritual response of believers consists of the mere contemplation of the heavenly things and communion with God but not offensive action.[34]

Calvin, while correctly asserting that wrestling against mere flesh and blood would be "useless," then proceeds to argue that believers must therefore go "straight to the enemy" who is "concealed," "spiritual," and thus "invisible."[35] But how is one meant to contend with an invisible, spiritual entity that has been divorced

30.   I'm convinced that one of the reasons evangelicals tend to not identify with Wink's theology is that, while it sounds scholarly to call yourself Barthian, Reformed, or Wrightian, self-identifying as "Winkian" makes you sound more like a person who belongs to a sorcerer's guild or to a forgotten extraterrestrial people group from a distant planet in Star Trek. Well, you can call me an intergalactic wizard if you like, but by God, I am an evangelical Winkian. Here I stand with wand in hand. Beam me up, Walter!

31.   F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: A Verse-by-Verse Exposition* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1968), 127. Generally an excellent commentator, Bruce is elsewhere more careful and balanced in his commentary. Unfortunately, in this instance his explanation leads to an inadvertent deficiency in spiritual praxis. Cf. the same issue in Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: A Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 284: "they are also not called to more intensive human activity."

32.   Ernest Best, *Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 584, 593.

33.   T. K. Abbott, *Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1964 [1st ed. 1897]), 183 citing A. Barry, *The Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians* (C. J. Ellicott's New Testament Commentary for English Readers, New York, 1896).

34.   Abbott, *Ephesians*, 183.

35.   John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle, accessed January 8, 2020, https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom41/calcom41.iv.vii.html.

from any tangible personal or structural mediation? The practical application of this theological concept is not addressed by Calvin. More careful and nuanced, however, is the exegesis of Thomas Aquinas. He shows that while our battle is not against flesh and blood, nevertheless, the spiritual Powers work through flesh and blood—that is to say, human beings and structures—to carry out their oppressive attack against humanity. Aquinas argues that "when flesh and blood attack us, it is not of themselves principally but from a higher moving force, namely, from the devil."[36]

In contemporary theology, the primary advocate for the position that the Powers work through external means is Walter Wink.[37] The essence of Wink's theology of the Powers is that every external, earthly, and human Power operates by means of a real, internal, governing spiritual Power.[38] He derives his theology from a comprehensive lexical study of the various New Testament words for power. Focusing in particular on the terms used in Colossians 1:16, namely θρόνος ("thrones"), κυριότης ("dominions"), ἀρχή ("rulers"), and ἐξουσία ("powers" or "authorities"), Wink demonstrates that the New Testament words and concepts for the Powers refer to both human/earthly and heavenly/spiritual realities. Strikingly, for example, Wink's lexical research reveals that the words ἀρχή and ἄρχων in pre-Christian literature, the Septuagint, and the New Testament primarily refer to earthly rulers and human structures of power, like governments and kingdoms. These terms were later "extended" in the Jewish, Greco-Roman, and Christian literature to also include spiritual realities.[39] Likewise, in the New Testament ἐξουσία refers "in the vast majority of cases" to "ideological justifications" and "political or religious legitimations" and not—in the first place—to demonic powers.[40] Wink helpfully sums up the biblical language of the Powers by focusing on Colossians 1:16 in which the Powers are referred to by Paul as both earthly and heavenly.[41] In describing how both the inner and outer aspects of Powers function, Wink writes:

> As the outer aspect they are political systems, appointed officials, the "chair"
> of an organization, laws—in short, all the tangible manifestations which power
> takes. Every Power tends to have a visible pole, an outer form—be it a church,
> a nation, or an economy—and an invisible pole, an inner spirit or driving
> force that animates, legitimates, and regulates its physical manifestations in
> the world . . . When a particular Power becomes idolatrous, placing itself

36. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Ephesians*, accessed January 8, 2020, https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Eph.C6.L2.n350.3, Section 355. Emphasis mine.

37. Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); Walter Wink, *When the Powers Fall: Reconciliation in the Healing of Nations* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

38. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 5.

39. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 10, 14, 15.

40. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 16.

41. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 10, 11; cf. 12–16.

above God's purposes for the good of the whole, then that Power becomes demonic. The church's task is to unmask this idolatry and recall the Powers to their created purposes in the world . . .[42]

Wink's theology assumes that the Powers were created good and have fallen, which is commensurate with the historic orthodox position.[43] The goal of Christian spiritual warfare under Wink's reading, then, is to discern the Powers behind the external structures, and to unmask and engage the Powers through confronting their external mediating forms in order to bring them into reconciliation with God through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, Wink's phenomenology of the Powers offers a tangible framework for the praxis of evangelical social activism as spiritual warfare.

Wink's tendency to depersonalize the Powers, however, has typically been an area of concern for evangelicals. The issue of the "personality" of demons for Wink—and for all of us—is not, however, of primary concern for the praxis of spiritual warfare as social activism. Aquinas and the medieval exegetes went through great lengths to outline a complex speculative hierarchy of angelic and demonic beings, and this has had virtually no effect on the day to day spiritual experience of most contemporary Christians. When we feel that we are under spiritual attack we do not typically consult Aquinas or Dante to figure out which rung of the heavens our particular angel or demon hails from. And, when we feel that we are being personally spiritually attacked we do not ask: "Is this the nefarious doing of a demon by the name of Leonardo?" If our breakfast has been suspiciously ruined, we do not typically inquire as to whether or not this resulted from an incursion of Tricia the toast devil, dark overlord of scorched bread. It is not the metaphysical status or personality of the demonic Powers that is of primary concern to orthodoxy and orthopraxy; it is, rather, the affirmation of the real and actual spiritual existence of the Powers that matters for Christian theology and evangelical social praxis. Wink unequivocally affirms the reality and danger of the spiritual Powers, and there is, therefore, no reason for evangelicals to be suspicious of his theology of the Powers.

The scope and array of demonic forces that exist may well include beings that are personal, impersonal, or some mysterious mix or hierarchy of both. We cannot, however, precisely discern the exact metaphysical status of the demonic beings that exist from Holy Scripture. The fine details of their nature and operation remain, in large part, a mystery and a topic of speculative theology. This is why, in his theology of the Powers, Wink explains that he has intentionally "bracketed the question of the metaphysical status of the Powers" in order that he might treat them phenomenologically, focusing on humanity's experience of the Powers rather

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42. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 5.

43. Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 1.14.16 and *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Homebush, NSW: Society of St Paul, 1994), CCC 391 and 392.

than attempting to engage in speculative theology characterized by fascination and conjecture about their ontological features or personalities.[44]

With speculative questions of demonic metaphysics aside—and with no apologies to Leonardo or Tricia (stay away from my toast you she-devil!)—we can now return to a focus on the contribution that Wink's theology of the Powers can make toward the development of an evangelical social ethic and praxis. Wink, basing his exegesis on the teaching of Jesus about demonic spirits in Luke 11:24–26, argues that demonic spirits need to be embodied or else they roam restless. He correctly concludes that "demons can become manifest only through concretion in material reality."[45] What Wink offers to a praxis for evangelical social activism is a model that focuses on the governance and agency of evil spiritual Powers over corporate and societal structures, systems, and ideologies that demonically oppress mass volumes of people through what essentially amounts to a multitude of undetected cases of cultural collective possession.[46] Wink notes that "[i]n a highly individualistic society like ours it is rare to encounter single individuals who are possessed. Instead, the demonic has in our time taken the form of mass psychosis"[47] in which "the demonic has been installed at the heart of national policy" along with an assortment of other political, social, and cultural institutions, offices, and platforms that exert influence over our contemporary cultures.[48] It is into this reality that the church is called to corporately put on Christ through faith and baptism, and to engage in the mission of God by the power and protection that God provides in his corporate, covenantal, and ecclesial armor.

Ephesians, the Armor of God, and Evangelical Activism

The Corporate Component of the Ecclesial Armor of God

In Ephesians 2 we read that Jews and Gentiles have been "brought near by the blood of Christ" (2:13) and made into "one new man" (2:15). They have been reconciled in the one body of Christ through the cross (2:16) and drawn together to be "a holy temple in the Lord" (2:21) and a "dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (2:22). Later, in Ephesians 3:10, Paul asserts that it is "through the church" that "the manifold wisdom

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44. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 8.

45. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 106.

46. Wink, *Unmasking the Powers*, 43. Wink also affirms the reality of "inner personal demonic" possession of individual persons.

47. Wink, *Unmasking the Powers*, 50.

48. Wink, *Unmasking the Powers*, 52. Cf. 4, 28: "The media have made a sensation out of a few rare cases of possession of pubescent youth, with no comprehension whatever of Satan's grip on an entire civilization. Why should Satan reveal himself more often in individual cases when he can, from invisibility, preside over an entire global culture that spreads out over the whole surface of the planet . . ."

of God" is made known "to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places."[49] We have all been called, says Paul, "to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3) just as there is one body, one spirit, one hope, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and "one God and Father of all" (4:4–6). We are, furthermore, called to build up the body of Christ until we attain the unity of the faith and "mature manhood" unto "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (4:12–13). All of these images highlight the centrality of the unity of the church in Ephesians.

In addition to this focus on corporate inclusion in the church, Ephesians contains a significant focus on ethical paraenesis which spans from Ephesians 4:17–6:9. Some exegetes argue that Paul's ethical teaching extends even further—continuing on to 6:20. In Ephesians 6:10–20, they argue, Paul engages his readers in an ethical clothing metaphor that focuses on the moral struggle of individual believers against the powers of darkness.[50] Yet, I am convinced by Neufeld's analysis that Ephesians 6:10–20 is not primarily about the "faithful and moral life" of individual Christians that is "marked by resistance to temptations."[51] With a growing number of interpreters, I contend that the divine armor metaphor is intended to refer to the corporate and ecclesial clothing of the church. The church, therefore, rather than individual believers, are clothed in the singular ecclesial armor of God himself.[52] The armor is not merely from God, mass produced, as it were, and then extended to individuals as solo spiritual warriors apart from the church. Rather, the armor is God's own singular divine armor and believers are communally clothed in it as the one mystical body of Christ, the church into which they are incorporated through faith and baptism. Apart from the church there is no protection. Apart from the

49.   Emphasis mine.

50.   See e.g., John A. Allan, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: SCM Press, 1959), 135, 138, who interprets the armor of God metaphor as a reference to "the battle of the moral life" in which believers are engaged in "a struggle for inner integrity of moral character." Cf. Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the NT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 436, who sees this as a a metaphor focused on cultivating "virtue" by "practicing truthfulness" and "by becoming more righteous in . . . behavior, and essentially by becoming increasingly pure in thought and action." Arnold sees the metaphor as having a missional (450) and doctrinal (445) purpose as well. Cf. Aquinas, *Commentary on Ephesians,* Section 363 which focuses on the armor as sexual purity*,* and Section 365 in which Aquinas argues that believers conquer the powers of darkness through the "moral virtues."

51.   Tom Yoder Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God: The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 140 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 152.

52.   Scholars who hold to the corporate view of the divine armor include: Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God,* 16, 93, 98–99; J. Armitage Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: James Clark, 1904), 133, 135; Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, Anchor Bible, 2 vols. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 767, 773 fn91, 773. Robert A. Wild, S.J. "The Warrior and the Prisoner: Some Reflections on Ephesians 6:10–20," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46 (1984): 287; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 436, 437, 442; Timothy G. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians: Participating in the Triumph of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 70, 81, 90, 155–156, 157; Martin Kitchen, *Ephesians* (London: Routledge, 1994), 114, 116, 118, and 122.

church there is no sanctification. And, apart from the church there is no salvation, for only through the church, in the church, by the church, and as the church is the fullness of God actively able to transform the life of believers for the sake and life of the world.[53]

A corporate and christological reading of the armor makes the best sense of the frequent emphasis on corporate ecclesial categories in Ephesians. Furthermore, the use of the plural form of the verb ἐνδύω ("you [pl.] put on") in Ephesians 6:11 followed by an assortment of singular metaphorical pieces of armor lends weight to this interpretation.[54] Given that the same verb, ἐνδύω, is used of the corporate concept of "putting on Christ" in Romans 13:14, which in Galatians 3:27 is directly linked to baptism, it becomes clear that what we have in Ephesians 6:10–20 is a parallel metaphorical explanation of how the many become one in Christ. Believers take off the corporate "old man" (namely, Adam) and put on the corporate "new man" (namely, Christ) in Ephesians 4:22–24 (cf. Col 3:9–11), and are then clothed in the singular spiritual armor of the Messiah himself (Eph 6:10–20) in order to carry out his covenantal mission of bringing salvation, justice, truth, and peace to the world through the ministry of the gospel. The corporate old man and new man (gk. ἄνθρωπον) refer to the corresponding manner of life under each corporate head, and not to a vague existentialist "old self" and "new self" as many interpretations imply.[55] Ironically, that sort of individualistic reading has more in common with Bultmann than with Paul.

The most convincing exegetical detail that gives weight to the corporate view of the armor is that the Old Testament intertexts in Ephesians draw from passages that clearly refer to God's own divine armor. Virtually all commentators acknowledge that Paul is alluding to the Old Testament divine warrior motif which occurs in texts such as Isaiah 11:4, 5; 59:17; and Wisdom 5:17–20.[56] Reading with these intertexts in mind fundamentally transforms the way the metaphor functions in regard to believers and the mission of the church in Ephesians. Instead of communicating another set of ethical virtues for believers to cultivate in their personal quests for

53. Cf. Cyprian of Catharge, *Epistle* 73.21 as cited in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* 224, CCC 846: *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*, "outside the church there is no salvation."

54. The shoes (τοὺς πόδας) in Ephesians 6:15 are, strictly speaking, spoken of in the plural. Yet, since every other piece of the armor is singular it is obvious that the shoes are plural because, by necessity, they must be spoken of as a pair.

55. The ESV, NRSV, NIV render the phrases "the old self" and "the new self" whereas the RSV comes much closer by translating the phrases "your old nature" and "the new nature" respectively. The KJV translates the greek literally here as "old man" and "new man" which I find to be the most theologically clear, and closest to the original corporate sense intended by Paul in Ephesians 4:22–24, Colossians 3:9–11, and Romans 5:12–21. Cf. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 442, who sees the putting on of the armor of God as the "functional equivalent of putting on the new humanity (cf. 4:24)."

56. See e.g., Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 436. Cf. John Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: Continuum, 2001), 287; M. Barth, *Ephesians*, 760, 767, 768, 773; Stephen E. Fowl, *Ephesians: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 205, 206.

holiness, the Ephesians are called to be corporately clothed in God's messianic divine armor in order to fulfill the covenant faithfulness of God through the embodiment of the person, mission, power, and protection of Jesus Christ. The armor, therefore, while no doubt resulting in personal transformation, is primarily meant to highlight the missional vocation of the church rather than the progressive sanctification of individuals. It is through living out the mission of God that believers are spiritually renewed in the image of the living God. That this is then connected to prayer for "all the saints" and boldness in ministry in verses 18–20, further situates the metaphor of spiritual warfare within the context of the corporate continuation of God's righteousness through the covenant faithfulness of Jesus Christ carried out in the missional vocation of the church.

[B] The Covenantal and Missional Component of the Ecclesial Armor of God

If, as I have argued, the armor of God is God's singular divine armor that clothes the corporate body of Christ into which believers are incorporated through faith and baptism, then it stands to follow that all of the elements of the armor should be conceived of as items that belong to God and function to further his mission in the world. This is God's own armor, God's truth, God's righteousness, God's gospel of peace, God's readiness, God's faithfulness, God's Spirit, and God's Word. As Marcus Barth argues

> Terms such as "truth," "righteousness," "steadfastness," "faith," "peace," "salvation," "the Spirit," and "the word of God," occur when the ground and effect of God's attitude and action is described in relation to the people with whom he has made a covenant. All these terms denote a social relationship, i.e. the covenant which is at the same time personal and political, saving and ethical.[57]

There is a rich, though small, strand that exists within the history of interpretation of Ephesians 6:10–20 that recognizes this covenantal aspect to the metaphor. Neufeld refers to the components of the armor as "covenantal virtues," which he then sees in Ephesians as "exercised by the people."[58] For Neufeld, "Yahweh appears enveloped in those virtues which assure the survival of the covenant community."[59] The intertext from Isaiah 59:21 feeds Paul's reference to the sword of the Spirit and the word of God in Ephesians 6:17. These Old Testament passages draw us to Paul's use of metalepsis which is a process in which an author cites a small portion of a text with the entire original text and context in mind in order to apply its meaning to a new situation and

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57. Barth, *Ephesians*, 796. My emphasis.

58. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God,* 32–33.

59. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 36. Neufeld is specifically referring here to the virtues of "righteousness and salvation."

reality.[60] The immediate original context of the Isaianic passages reveal that "πνεῦμα and ῥῆμα appear in Isa. 59:21 as the content of the διαθήκη" that is, the covenant which "the Lord will establish with the recipient and his seed."[61] Neufeld concludes by suggesting that it is possible that "the Ephesian author is shaped by the conviction that the covenant hoped for in Isa. 59:21 is being realized."[62]

Similarly, Perkins points out a parallel usage of Isaiah 11 and 59 in a divine armor metaphor that takes place in the eschatological text of 1Q28b 5:21–26. In that setting, the prince of the congregation establishes a "new covenant" and "the kingdom of his people forever [to judge the poor with justice]."[63] She notes that

> [i]n the Essene text, God's blessing on the leader of the renewed covenant people equips him to be the agent of divine justice and judgment among the peoples. In Ephesians the enemies to be resisted are no longer human but spiritual, quasi-demonic powers that govern the lower world.[64]

On the relationship between covenant faithfulness and the vocational mission of the church, N. T. Wright's exegesis of God's righteousness in 2 Corinthians 5:21 offers an illuminating interpretive key, one that will also prove to be instructive for determining the function of righteousness in Ephesians 6.[65] Wright demonstrates that in 2 Corinthians, δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ("the righteousness of God") is not

> a human status in virtue of which the one who has "become" it stands "righteous" before God, as in Lutheran soteriology. It is the covenant faithfulness of the one true God, now active through the paradoxical

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60. On the process of metalepsis, see Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), see esp. 20. Cf. 24, 63.

61. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 144–145.

62. Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God*, 144–145.

63. Pheme Perkins, *Ephesians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 143–144.

64. Perkins, *Ephesians*, 144.

65. Though space does not allow here for an extended treatment of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as "covenant faithfulness," Wright's reading is based upon a strong scriptural case that demonstrates the use of the term and related righteousness language in biblical texts as a reference to the concept of God's faithfulness to his covenant promises to bless the world through Abraham's offspring. Wright (N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013], 800 quoting Onesti and Brauch, 1993, p. 828f) sums up this view: "An essential component of Israel's religious experience was that Yahweh was not only Lord of Law but also the one who was faithful to it. God was faithful to the covenant. God's righteousness was shown by saving actions in accordance with this covenant relationship . . . Righteousness is not primarily an ethical quality; rather, it characterizes the character or action of God who deals rightly within a covenant relationship . . . The covenant faithfulness of God, the righteousness of God, is shown by Yahweh's saving acts." This covenantal aspect to δικαιοσύνη is now recognized by a majority of New Testament scholars as a key component to usage of the δικ- word group in many Old Testament and New Testament passages.

Christ-shaped ministry of Paul, reaching out with the offer of reconciliation to all who hear his bold preaching.[66]

By applying this covenantal understanding of "God's righteousness" to the themes of the body of Christ and the armor of God in Ephesians, the church is now corporately presented (just as Paul was individually presented in 2 Cor 5:21) as "an incarnation of the covenant faithfulness of God."[67] Clothed in the covenant faithfulness of God, the church is thereby required not merely to "stand firm" but to "stand against" the Powers as a part of the fulfillment of the covenant promises of God through the ministry of reconciliation.

This is a crucial point to make because in the individualistic readings of Ephesians 6:10–20, it is common to encounter interpretations in which "stand firm" is taken to mean "stand still."[68] Believers are led to envision that their spiritual warfare takes place in an entirely stationary and defensive fashion, as they shout Bible verses at random invisible demons while the world is crushed under the weight of systemic and structural evils that are governed by demonic Powers. These Powers are permitted to persist, undetected and unencumbered by the church as it remains perpetually distracted by its focus on gnostic and narcissistic individual spiritual battles. While evangelicals in the West have been wondering "why is there frequent spiritual activity in the Global South but not in the United States?" the Powers have been hard at work, bewitching and possessing the masses through the structures, systems, and ideologies that hold our "enlightened" society captive in the collective cultural darkness.

Conclusion: A Call to Action

It is the Powers who orchestrate every human atrocity in history through the mediation of personal and structural human agents thereby oppressing humanity in

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66. N.T Wright, "On Becoming the Righteousness of God: 2 Corinthians 5.21 (1993)," in *Pauline Perspectives: Essays on Paul, 1978–2013* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 68–76.

67. Wright, "On Becoming the Righteousness of God," 74.

68. Cf. e.g., Best, *Ephesians*, 588, who argues that the "struggle is essentially defensive" and that "believers are not ordered to advance but to stand firm" and "hold the position which had been won for them." Cf. 611, where he asserts that "the only attitude then can be one of defence; no attack is possible." Cf. Marcus L. Loane, *Three Letters From Prison* (Waco, TX: Word, 1972), 71 who thinks "stand" means to ""hold your ground." He argues that even the sword is "entirely for defense," 74. Cf. Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 285, who argues for standing "defensively" takes a rather defeatist interpretation of the outcome of the battle, writing that "[t]o be left standing at the end and not carried off the field as a casualty of war is all that one can reasonably hope for." Cf. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians,* 168, where he argues that "Paul says nothing in Ephesians about taking an aggressive posture toward the world." While I find Gombis' exegesis of the corporate divine warrior motif to be among the finest scholarship published on the topic, I disagree substantially with how he sees this warfare being carried out in practice. Gombis views spiritual warfare as a form of non-aggressive "resistance" that relinquishes "the pursuit of control in the political sphere" and resists "the opportunity to exercise power in culture" (125).

an attempt to impede the coming of the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. Only, they never come up on our spiritual radar because we are looking for the devils of medieval artwork rather than the faces, ideas, and institutions of ordinary people who have become mediating pawns in a cosmic war. Thus, in contemporary Christianity, the Powers have benefited from our passive abdication of action in favor of our pious and harmless "thoughts and prayers." They have never faced the force of our full ecclesial assault. In fact, as we have remained aloof in our gnostic religiosity, the Powers have actually been strengthened. By excusing ourselves from action, we have removed ourselves from the front lines of the spiritual war. We have restricted our sphere of influence to the circumference of our sanctuaries relegating our spiritual response to the Powers to subsidiary spaces of minimal importance like the sidebar of our weekly prayer bulletins.

Paul does not command us to "stand still"; he commands us to "stand against" the Powers,[69] to rise against them, to reject them, to run headfirst at them, and to disarm them by the power of the gospel. The "readiness given by the gospel of peace," is not a stationary, standby "readiness" that stands still and stands down while awaiting further orders in a state of missional flux and evangelical ambiguity or apathy. We have received our holy orders, and we have been equipped with God's own righteousness and God's own readiness to successfully fulfill those orders. Therefore, let us race into the spiritual battle knowing that we do so, not as a network of salvation solo soldiers relying on our own acquisition of virtue to empower our performance, but as one body in Christ, wearing the very armor of God, partaking in the divine life, fullness, and power of God. The time for standing still has long passed. Let us together stand up, stand firm, and stand against the Powers as the body of Christ, the Church, the corporate ambassador of the covenant faithfulness of God through which he is making all things new.

69. The greek verbs used in Ephesians 6, ἵστημι and ἀνθίστημι refer not only to "standing firm" but just as frequently to "standing against."

Considering the Impact of Missiology on Contemporary Understandings of "Principalities and Powers"

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Abstract: While the early 20th century saw well-defined movement toward the depersonalizing and demythologizing of principalities and powers as they are described in the biblical text, the latter part of the century witnessed a reappraisal of this process as multi-cultural perspectives began to filter from the mission field into the academy. This paper traces key milestones in the former demythologizing process and then explores some of the reasons why these modernist assumptions have been revised, including: the experiences of missionaries, greater insight into the assumptions that lie behind worldviews, and the research of anthropologists. The paper finishes with the brief suggestion that each part of this journey brings value to the practice of Christian ministry.

Key Words: powers, missions, missiology, demythologizing, worldview, syncretism, secularization, Christian worldview, global south, multi-cultural mission

Introduction

It has been said that mission is the mother of all theology.[1] Historically, theological advancement has almost always been in response to contextual challenges, forcing the church to better understand particular concerns and then articulate corresponding theological positions. Creeds, therefore, have been shaped out of controversy. If this is true, should it not follow that missiology demands an ongoing role in the development of theological perspectives? Missiologist Michael Goheen insists that reflecting missiologically on theology is as important as reflecting theologically on mission.[2] Similarly, David Bosch comments, "We are in need of a missiological agenda for theology rather than just a theological agenda for mission; for theology

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1. Commonly believed to originate with Martin Kahler, *Schriften zu Christologie und Mission: Gesamtausgabe der Schriften zur Mission* (Munchen: Kaiser Verlag, 1971), 190.

2. Michael Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today: Scripture, History and Issues* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 87.

rightly understood, has no reason to exist other than to critically accompany the *Missio Dei*."[3]

Considering the powers in Ephesians,[4] it is important to not only unpack recent developments in theological studies regarding the powers' identity, nature, and function, but also to ask: what insights are offered through both the study and praxis of mission? This paper explores ways in which a contemporary understanding of the powers has been shaped, not only by theological reflection but also by missionary practice.

The Powers in Contemporary Biblical Studies and Theology

One of a missiologist's key tools is contextualization. Context plays an essential role in the way that the powers have been understood historically. Throughout the 20th century, in the philosophical environment of Western academia, the concept of the powers was clearly secularized and demythologized, having been previously conceived of in personal and supernatural terms. Bultmann's well-known quote captures the modernist assumption: "It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of daemons and spirits."[5]

Yet, in reality the journey toward a more secularized understanding of the powers is far more complex and interesting than Bultmann's quip suggests. Clinton Arnold asserts that "any discussion of the powers would be incomplete without reference to the foundational work of Otto Everling published in 1888."[6] Everling's work, entitled *Die Paulinische Angelologie und Dämonologie,*[7] sought to establish a connection between pre-Christian Jewish and heathen cultic activity, and the use of the terminology and concepts of the powers in Ephesians.[8] He asserted that the author of Ephesians worked in continuity with the Jewish demonology of such pseudepigraphal works as 1 Enoch and Jubilees, rather than being primarily

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3. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 494.

4. As this paper is primarily an historical and pragmatic excursion regarding understandings of the powers, virtually no space is given to exegetical treatment of the relevant passages from Ephesians (or Romans or Colossians). Suggested resources toward this end include: Clinton E. Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of its Historical Setting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); G. B. Caird, *Principalities and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003); Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*. Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).

5. Quoted in Derek Brown, "The Devil in the Details: A Survey of Research on Satan in Biblical Studies," *Currents in Biblical Research* 9, no. 2 (2011): 201.

6. Arnold, *Power and Magic,* 42.

7. Otto Everling, *Die Paulinische Angelologie und Dämonologie* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1888).

8. Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 43.

influenced by gnostic ideas. Everling concluded that in Ephesians, one finds, "the existence of a multitude of devilish beings which live in the air under the supreme command of Satan."[9]

Better known than Everling is the work of Martin Dibelius whose *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus*[10] is identified by Carr as one of the most influential books for theological study in the 20th century.[11] Like Everling, Dibelius attributes Ephesians to Pauline authorship but takes a broader view with regard to sources for Paul's thinking, seeing elements of Hellenism influencing a primary grounding in Jewish apocalyptic. In Ephesians, Dibelius sees Paul affirming "a world dominated by supernatural forces"[12] and believes Paul has a primary interest in responding to the question "Where does Christ stand in relation to the spirit world?"[13]

Scholarly understanding of the powers was broadened by Oscar Cullman's assertion that the word applies equally to angelic beings *and* human authorities.[14] Clinton Morrison significantly developed this hypothesis with particular attention to Romans 13:1–7.[15] He argued the "angel of the nations" concept from Jewish apocalyptic had correspondence with Greco-Roman thought, and suggested a significant relationship between civil rulers and spiritual powers.[16] Hendrik Berkhof took one further demythologizing step by questioning whether Paul even conceived of powers as personal beings, preferring to frame them as "structures of earthly influence."[17] Seen in this light, the teaching on powers in Ephesians better supports an agenda of Christian social action than overt spiritual warfare. George Caird reinforced a structural interpretation of the powers in his *Principalities and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology*, noting: "I have tried in these pages to expound Paul's view of man's dilemma, that he lives under divinely appointed authorities—the powers of state, the powers of legal religion, the powers of nature—which through sin have become demonic agencies."[18]

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9. Everling, *Die Paulinische,* 119; quoted in Arnold, *Power and Magic,* 42.

10. Martin Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909).

11. Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning and Development of the Pauline Phrase* hai archai kai hai exousiai, SNTSMS 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

12. Carr, *Angels and Principalities*, 1.

13. Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt,* 182.

14. Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Conception of Time and History*, revised ed. trans. Floyd V. Filson (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1964), 95–114.

15. Clinton Morrison, *The Powers that Be: Earthly Rulers and Demonic Powers in Romans 13:1–7* (London: SCM Press, 1960).

16. Morrison, *The Powers that Be*, 130.

17. Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, trans. J.H Yoder (Scottdale, PE: Herald Press, 1977), 23.

18. Caird, *Principalities and Powers.* In Caird's commentary on Ephesians, published 20 years later, the powers are conceived as spiritual beings who operate in and through human structures. See G.B. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 91, 101.

Caird suggests that only the sacrificial love demonstrated in the cross can rob the corrupted powers of their tyrannical influence. It is well known that Walter Wink has published numerous volumes on the topic.[19] Despite establishing more rigorous exegetical and historical grounds for a demythologizing agenda, Wink's approach broadens the base on which an understanding of the powers rest. He writes: "Unless the context further specifies (and some do) we are to take the terms for power in their most comprehensive sense, understanding them to mean both heavenly and earthly, divine and human, good and evil powers.[20]

In his volume, *The Powers That Be*, Wink asserts: "What people in the world of the Bible experienced as and called 'principalities and powers' was in fact the actual spirituality at the center of the political, economic and cultural institutions of their day."[21] According to Wink, the powers are best understood when seen in light of the "spirit" that develops in human institutions, often initially as the collective attitude and ethos of those participating in the institution, but often becoming more than a sum of the parts, with the potential to develop a life of its own that, in turn, profoundly influences the culture and behaviour of the organization out of which it grew.[22] Powers is an apt description for such a reality. Addressing the question of whether demons are personal metaphysical beings, Wink writes, "I prefer therefore to regard them as the impersonal spiritual realities at the centre of institutional life."[23]

The Powers in Contemporary Literature, Philosophy, and Social Activism

While these understandings were developing in the theological world, a corresponding intellectual renovation was occurring in the worlds of literature, philosophy, and social activism. For example, C. Norman Kraus provides an account of two influential awakenings to the phenomenon of the powers in a broader institutional sense. The first figure is lawyer, author, activist, and lay theologian, William Stringfellow, who, in the late 1960's, analyzed the social crisis in America in terms of unseen powers. Stringfellow "spoke of the demonic power ruinating human beings and ruling society by the threat of death."[24] In 1967 French philosopher Paul Ricoeur

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19. The four best known include his Powers' Trilogy: Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992); and *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1999).

20. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 39.

21. Wink, *The Powers That Be*, 24.

22. Wink, *The Powers That Be*, 24–30.

23. Wink, *The Powers That Be*, 28.

24. C. Norman Kraus, *An Intrusive Gospel: Christian Mission in the Postmodern World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998), 95.

produced a similar construction in *The Symbolism of Evil,* which was the fruit of a re-examination of the New Testament teaching about the principalities and powers through a philosophical lens.[25]

Both authors recognized the congruence between the spiritual authorities referred to in the New Testament and the powers which so often tend to control or at least influence human affairs in the form of social and ideological systems and institutional empires. Their studies engaged critical questions: Are the principalities and powers inherently evil, or are they created orders gone wrong? Are they projections of the human subconscious? Are they to be identified with the institutional empires that dominate the lives of individuals? Or are they the personification of ideologies, myths, and rationalizations that sanction the self-centered systems that control society?[26]

In responding to these questions, Kraus asserts that the powers are not inherently demonic or evil. God did not create these powers as demonic forces. Rather, they were "created by God as part of the human reality. They are creaturely— that is, they are limited in their ability to achieve their goals. They are subject to what sociologists call 'the law of unintended consequences.'"[27] Kraus sees these ideas corresponding with Colossians 1:16 where Paul indicates that all the "thrones," "dominions," "rulers," and powers were created by Christ and for him. Kraus contends that the powers "have become perverted and alienated (fallen) through their idolatrous self-centeredness."[28]

In an account used by numerous Christian writers to illustrate the satanic character of the powers influencing world systems, Psychologist David Bakan has vividly described the dehumanizing impact of institutionally conceived powers (in contrast to the redemptive power of genuine community):

> Agency manifests itself in self-protection, self-assertion, and self-expansion; communion manifests itself in a sense of being at one with other organisms. Agency manifests itself in the formation of separations; communion in lack of separations. Agency manifests itself in isolation, alienation and aloneness; communion in contact, openness and union. Agency manifests itself in the urge to master; communion in non-contractual cooperation. Agency manifests itself in repression of thought feeling and impulse; communion in the lack and removal of repression.[29]

The powers dominate through a system that controls and constrains the possibilities of individuals. In this conception, the inclination toward self-centeredness lies at

25. Paul Ricouer, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (New York: Beacon, 1967).

26. Kraus, *Intrusive Gospel*, 96.

27. Kraus, *Intrusive Gospel*, 98.

28. Kraus, *Intrusive Gospel*, 98.

29. David Bakan, *The Duality of Human Existence: Isolation and Communion in Western Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1996), 14–15.

the heart of all human social and political systems. It is important to note that these understandings of the powers are not just hypothetical constructions. Bob Ekblad grounds our conception of the powers in daily categories as he encounters the powers' destructive reality in the training of pastoral agents inside contemporary Seattle jails and prisons.

> These powers are embodied in laws, rules, protocols, and activities such as profiling, categorizing, sanctioning, and relocating. They also manifest as addictions, mental health disorders, immigration holds, impending new charges, trials, and sentencing. They exert influence among inmates subservient to gang protocol and the code of the street. The powers are the ever-present landscape within which Jesus's mission must be somehow proclaimed and enacted.[30]

The Powers in the Works of Contemporary Missionary and Ministry Practitioners

In keeping with the assumptions of modernity, a significant theological reconstruction of the powers has occurred that shifted from viewing the powers as personal, spiritual entities to either social influences or the impersonal spiritual inclinations that lie behind them. In the modern imagination, the powers are real and influential, but certainly not personal and supernatural. Yet the traffic in this journey has not all been one way. Through the decades of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, numerous voices have been advocating for a return to earlier understandings of the principalities and powers. A few, relatively isolated cries have come from the halls of academia,[31] but the primary chorus has come from an interesting quarter, echoing out of the daily experience of ministry and missionary practitioners, generally finding a demythologized hermeneutic of the powers inadequate to address the realities of their daily labor.

One early European example of this can be observed in the experience of German scholar and pastor Rev. Johann Christoph Blumhardt, who in 1843 encountered an unexplainable manifestation of evil in the lives of two women while pastoring a small Lutheran Church in Möttlingen. Although he did not believe in evil spiritual beings, Blumhardt found himself in a great battle of prayer involving terrifyingly real dialogues with demons that spoke through the possessed women. The struggle reached a climax one night when the spirits left the women howling,

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30. Bob Ekblad, "Communicating Jesus' Liberating Love Amidst Hostile Powers," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 72 (2018): 255.

31. Some examples: Graham Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985); Michael Green, *I Believe in Satan's Downfall* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982); Peter T. O'Brien, "Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church," in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church,* ed. D. A. Carson (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1984), 110–50.

"Jesus is the victor, Jesus is the victor." There was an immediate transformation in the women's lives and a sudden revival in the church as dozens of people embraced the Christian faith.[32]

Michael Pocock is Senior Professor Emeritus of World Missions and Intercultural Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. Despite many years of overseas ministry and lecturing in mission studies, he candidly recounts a similar paradigm shift that took place in his thinking the first time he encountered a demonized person.[33] Kenyan philosopher and theologian John Mbiti humorously tells of an African student sent to Europe for academic theological education, which comprehensively failed to prepare him for the first task he encountered upon his return—exorcising an evil spirit from his aunt![34] Mbiti points notes: "Every African who has grown up in the traditional environment will, no doubt, know something about this mystical power which often is experienced, or manifests itself in the form of magic, divination, witchcraft and mysterious phenomena that seem to defy even immediate scientific explanations." Mbiti further documents a number of cases where Western-trained missionaries were forced to revise their worldview in the face of realities in the field.[35]

Several times now, this author has encountered pastoral situations in which people have exhibited behavior which is difficult to explain apart from the manifestation of a personal, evil, spiritual entity. On one occasion, a young professional woman was presented who, with both distorted facial features and voice, fired a near-continuous stream of vile and blasphemous language, which was instantaneously stopped with the simple command to, "Be silent, in Jesus' name." Assistance was then sought to prayerfully free this young woman from the evil that had tormented her for years, resulting in a dramatically transformed life.

The difference between this encounter and other interactions with people claiming demonic interference, but actually experiencing mental health issues, is significant. Addressing these two types of issues is fundamentally different in both engagement and result. This is supported by several empirical studies (though admittedly with small case sizes) where psychologists could clearly differentiate symptoms, diagnoses, and treatment between patients presenting with psychotic symptoms and cases involving spiritual activity.[36]

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32. Friedrich Zundel, *Pastor Johann Christoph Blumhardt: An Account of His Life* (Walden, NY: Plough Publishing House, 2010), 281–285. Blumhardt's story was popularized after inclusion in Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*. IV.3 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961*), 165.

33. Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rehhnen, Douglas McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 195.

34. Pocock, *The Changing Face of World Missions*, 11.

35. John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophies* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 253–254.

36. Millard J. Sall, "Demon Possession or Psychopathology: A Theological Relationship? A Clinical Differentiation," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 4 (1976): 288. For another

In the preface to Phillips and Coote's 1993 text, *Toward the Twenty-First Century in Christian Mission*, Lesslie Newbigin highlighted the subconscious syncretism that Western missionaries carried into developing world contexts where their Christian faith had been shaped and, in some ways, constrained by the naturalistic and rational assumptions of modernity. Supernatural considerations were treated with suspicion, or at least deemphasized. Therefore, missionaries often had no idea how to deal with events such as demon possession.[37]

Philip Jenkins asserts that the growing edge of the church worldwide is attuned to "a very strong supernatural orientation."[38] Jenkins makes the interesting observation that the "newest" Christianity of Latin America, Africa, and China is remarkably like the "oldest" Christianity that one finds in the Book of Acts with accompanying supernatural manifestations.

> These signs of power usually imply the concept of spiritual warfare, of confronting and defeating evil demonic forces. For African Christians, one of the most potent passages of the New Testament is found in the letter to the Ephesians in which Paul declares that "Our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the forces of evil in the heavenly places." However superstitious and irrelevant it appears to mainstream Northern Christians the passage makes wonderful sense in most of Africa as it does for believers in Latin America or East Asia.[39]

Michael Pocock's research from Nepal is revealing. In 1950, the amount of known Christians in Nepal numbered twenty-five. In 2005, there were over 400,000.[40] In his research investigating the means by which people embraced the Christian faith, the most frequent response related to people being troubled by demons which had resisted traditional Hindu remedies. Without specialist training, regular Christians seemed able to address these issues, consistently effecting transformational results.[41] Reflecting on the application of these experiences to Western culture in general, Pocock comments:

> There is no way that a growing, more supernaturally oriented faith would not influence the West in the same way that Western technology and culture have influenced the rest of the world. This is particularly true when a great deal of

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discussion of this issue see T. Craig Isaacs, "The Possessive States Disorder: The Diagnosis of Demon Possession," *Pastoral Psychology* 35 (1987): 263–273.

37. James M. Phillips and Robert T. Coote, *Toward the 21st Century in Christian Mission: Essays in Honour of Gerald H. Anderson* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 3–4.

38. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 7.

39. Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 129.

40. Pocock, *The Changing Face of World Missions*, 193.

41. Pocock, *The Changing Face of World Missions*, 193.

Western Christianity, particularly in Europe, seems to have stalled. It needs the help of majority world Christians because, in many ways Western Christianity has become indistinguishable from the secular culture that surrounds it.[42]

We shall address Pocock's assertion again shortly. Ernst Wendland and Samilo Hachibamba, both faculty of a Lutheran Seminary in Zambia, offer a fascinating piece regarding the cultural translation of Paul's teaching on principalities and powers in Ephesians into the culture of the Tonga people, an indigenous tribe of southern Zambia. One helpful insight from Wendland and Hachibamba relates to the personalized nature of the powers within the Ephesian economy. They assert:

> "Most modern speakers of English—those of a western background and worldview at any rate—tend to think of and refer to power only in an abstract de-personalised, and attributive sense. An essentially rationalistic, secularised, anti-supernatural worldview prefers to demythologise such passages in order to contextualise them hermeneutically for the modern mind."[43]

As we have seen, this results in the term "power" being applied to the religious, social, economic, and political structures of the ancient world[44] or to the inner spirituality of these institutions.[45] But this stands in significant contrast to the original biblical sense and context. Ephesus and its surrounding areas of Asia Minor was immersed in an understanding of personal powers in the latter part of the first century. Wendland and Hachibamba, explain: "For the multitudes that were obsessed with such pervasive superstitious beliefs, these powers were neither visible, nor inclined to be benevolent, but they were spiritual in nature and more often than not perceived to be diabolical in intention."[46] This meant that the powers needed to be continually placated or counteracted by supernatural means via a range of magical practices. Thus, Ephesus was a center of magical arts and "a home for magicians, sorcerers, and charlatans of all sorts."[47] Prominent among these was the cult of Artemis (also known as Diana) frequently associated with fertility and Mother nature. Arnold explains:

> The overriding characteristic of the practice of magic throughout the Hellenistic world was the cognizance of a spirit world exercising influence over virtually every aspect of life. The goal of the magician was to discern the helpful spirits from the harmful ones and learn the distinct operations and the relative strengths and authority of the spirits. Through this knowledge, means

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42. Pocock, *The Changing Face of World Missions*, 193.

43. Ernst R. Wendland and Salimo Hachibamba, "A Central African Perspective on Contextualizing the Ephesian Potentates, Principalities, and Powers," *Missiology: An International Review,* 28, no. 3 (2000): 342.

44. Caird, *Principalities and Powers,* 242.

45. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 5.

46. Wendland and Hachibamba, "Central African Perspective," 343.

47. Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 14.

could be constructed (with spoken or written formulas, amulets, etc.) for the manipulation of the spirits in the interests of the individual person.[48]

So, "in the conception and practice of the adherents of African religions, it is the occult world of lesser spirits and witches and sorcerers which is of dominant spiritual and existential concern."[49] The worldviews and metaphysical assumptions of believers from the developing world must contribute to the matrix of data through which we read the Christian Scriptures. This is one of the key insights that the discipline of anthropology has gifted to the Western world.

Craig Keener's massive volume *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*[50] is a comprehensive attempt to systematically address the philosophical and intellectual assumptions that prevent contemporary readers from accepting accounts of supernatural activity in the form of miraculous occurrences. In addition, Keener gathers an impressive collection of credibly attested, present-day events that fall within the miraculous category. Of particular relevance to this paper from Keener's work are two appendices entitled "Demons and Exorcism in Antiquity"[51] and "Spirit Possession and Exorcism in Societies Today."[52] Keener articulates his goal: "What I hope to show is that the accounts of possession and exorcism in the Gospels and Acts are plausible from a cross-cultural standpoint."[53] Keener points out:

> Possession experiences are widely attested in anthropological literature. But where the leading collectors of data on the subject have been anthropologists, whether actual spirits could be involved in some extreme cases is a matter of the interpretation of the data and can vary according to the philosophic interpretations.[54]

Missionary anthropologist, Paul Hiebert reports an experience/data-based conversion to a belief in personal spiritual entities. Serving in India, he eventually identified a personal blind-spot, resulting from "his scientific training (which) stressed a naturalistic, empirical approach."[55] Alongside this, his theological preparation allowed for the existence of only one spiritual being, God, but he lacked a functional

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48. Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 18.

49. K. Fernando, "Screwtape Revisited: Demonology Western, African, and Biblical," in *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons, and the Realm*, ed. A. N. S. Lane (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 122; as quoted in Wendland and Hachibamba, "Central African Perspective," 345.

50. Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).

51. Keener, *Miracles*, 769–787.

52. Keener, *Miracles*, 788–856.

53. Keener, *Miracles*, 788.

54. Keener, *Miracles*, 829.

55. Keener *Miracles,* 845.

category for supernatural activity that was not directly theistic. Struck by the correspondence between the biblical accounts and his present Indian context, he coined the phrase "the flaw of the excluded middle" to describe the significant spirit world between a sovereign God and the natural order. He eventually concluded that this understanding made best sense of both the biblical texts and the realities with which he was daily dealing.[56]

Missiologist Alan R. Tippett writes about the reality of "power encounters," such as exorcisms and the transformational capacity they carry: "Western missions might do well to face up to the statistical evidence that animists are being won today by a Bible of power encounter, not a demythologized edition."[57] Tippett asserts that in his Melanesian missionary experience, first generation Christians who relapse into paganism tend to be those who for some reason or other failed to experience faith through some act of power encounter. Such an encounter was often accompanied by the destruction of shrines and other paraphernalia which helped to mark a crucial point of decision and commitment.

The work of several academics has significantly raised the profile of a more personal understanding of spiritual powers in the Western academic economy. Peter Wagner, with extensive mission experience in Latin America, taught on the topic of church growth under Donald McGavran at the Fuller School of World Mission. In the 1970's he identified that church growth was most prolific amongst Pentecostal and charismatic churches. In 1983 Wagner taught a class called "Signs and Wonders" with John Wimber of the Vineyard Church. Cultural anthropologists Allan Tippett and Charles Kraft, also Fuller faculty, interacted with the class bringing "a deep awareness of the worldviews of traditional tribal peoples, sometimes called animism."[58] Pocock notes that as "missionaries and anthropologists, they had witnessed rites of possession and exorcism."[59] They also witnessed the impact "power encounters" (the ability to effect transformative outcomes) had amongst adherents to traditional folk religions.[60]

Critiques of the concept of a "power encounter" abound and must be taken seriously.[61] Such critiques often focus on the perception that power encounters promote confrontation and "power-over" others, which reinforce the very values

56. Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 54.

57. Alan R. Tippett, *Introduction to Missiology* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1987), 312.

58. Pocock, *The Changing Face of World Missions*, 186.

59. Pocock, *The Changing Face of World Missions*, 186.

60. Charles H. Kraft, "Contextualisation and Spiritual Power," in *Deliver Us From Evil: An Uneasy Frontier in Christian Mission,* ed. A. Scott Moreau, Tokunboh Adeyembo, David Burnett, Bryant Myers, and Hwa Yung (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 2002), 290–308.

61. See, for example Martha Fredericks, "Kenosis as a Model for Interreligious Dialogue," *Missiology* 33, no. 2 (2005): 212–213; Johan Verukyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 168–173.

the powers themselves use to subjugate humanity. From a missiological point of view, this carries potential to align with a "colonialist" agenda, now extensively critiqued, which we shall consider shortly. Concerns about the use of power and the sustainability of credible worldviews remain essential issues in this conversation.

One of the more extreme expressions of this personal approach to defining powers developed largely, again, through the work of Peter Wagner. This is called Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and was expounded in Wagner's books *Territorial Spirits: Insights on Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare from Nineteen Christian Leaders*[62] and *Confronting the Powers*.[63] The key assumption behind this practice is that through a process called spiritual mapping, spirits controlling certain areas can be identified, allowing them to be "bound" in the name of Jesus, limiting their effectiveness in opposing the gospel and often leading to significant and rapid conversions. Spiritual mapping is often practiced in conjunction with "identificational repentance," involving a representational group repenting on behalf of a larger group with regard to past sins.

While it is recognised that such an approach appears to have sometimes produced significant results, it is unclear whether the results are because of the spiritual warfare techniques or because the techniques were accompanied by focused efforts in prayer and evangelism which, in themselves, may have produced the results. Wagner's perspectives have received significant critique. Pocock and Van Rheenen list a number of key limitations: many of Wagner's ideas are not found in the Bible, nor are they practiced by Christians in the biblical narrative; they tend to turn prayer into a transaction rather than a means of entering into relationship with God; an overemphasis on territorial spirits reduces human responsibility in processes of repentance and restoration; and the practices may encourage a form of Christian "magic" and superstition.[64] Scott Moreau comments: ". . . tension is especially evident in the discussion on territorial spirits and spiritual mapping, in which one side trumpets identification and binding of territorial spirits as the key to world evangelization while the other condemns such practices as Christian magic."[65] Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare might therefore be conceived as an overcorrection to the secularizing influence of modernity which itself needs to be carefully considered and evaluated.

This raises important questions regarding the ethical issues created when worldviews clash. It is well known that the spread of Western culture was often

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62. C. Peter Wagner ed., *Territorial Spirits: Insights on Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare from Nineteen Christian Leaders* (Chicester, UK: Sovereign World, 1991).

63. C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Powers* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996).

64. Pocock, *The Changing Face of World Missions*, 191.

65. Scott Moreau, "Spiritual Warfare/Territorial Spirits/Demons," in *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations*, ed. John Corrie (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 371.

considered to be a primary task of missions throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was often considered a moral obligation to elevate indigenous populations to a higher standard of living enjoyed by Europeans. This usually was motivated by a theistic worldview that, contrary to prevailing opinion, identified the equal humanity of indigenous peoples. Referring to the early North American context, missiologist Craig Ott comments, "To neglect the virtues such as industriousness among Indian converts would be to deny their equal humanity."[66] Missionaries also often encountered poverty, illiteracy, and traditional practices such as slavery, Sati (the ritual burning of widows), and ritual child sacrifice that could not be ignored. Woodberry comments: "We should not lose sight of the positive legacy of missions in the areas of racial attitudes, education, civil society and colonial reform. Many missionaries resisted imperialistic endeavours, exposed abuses and fought for the rights of indigenous peoples."[67]

But this is not to underplay the massive damage done by the colonialist agenda which served to advance the esteem and profit of European nations at the expense of indigenous populations and their cultures. Loss of language, deconstruction of social networks, introduction of disease, displacement of values, and loss of identity were consequences for native groups following European colonial expansion. The relationship between "mission organization" and "colonial forces" was often complex. Sometimes missions were used to justify colonization and sometimes the church simply followed the colonial frontier, at times working hand-in-glove with the colonial authorities and at times adopting a more critical, restraining disposition.

But it was not unusual for missionaries to view host cultures with condescension. Both missionaries and indigenous populations tended to confuse the Christian faith with Western culture which led, often unintentionally, but sometimes intentionally, to the promotion of Western assumptions such as a materialistic worldview, individualism, and competitiveness, alongside various political dogmas from their country of origin. Francis Hiebert comments on recent critical perceptions of this dynamic:

> . . . in the twentieth century, missions became the whipping boy of secular post-modern critics. In a drastic swing of the pendulum, the social sciences began to deny their own Enlightenment theories about "civilizing" the so-called primitive cultures. Absolute cultural relativism and cultural absolutism became the order of the day. Changing another culture in any way, especially

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66. Craig Ott, Stephen Strauss, Timothy C. Tennant, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 167.

67. Woodberry, "Reclaiming the M-Word: The Legacy of Mission in Non-Western Societies," *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 4 (2006): 4.

the religion, was deemed cultural genocide. Missionaries came in for an exceptionally large share of the blame.[68]

But the colonization of the developing world also had converse implications. In addition to a growing awareness of the social destruction that colonization perpetuated, as the major colonial powers were slowly dis-membered through the twentieth century, indigenous populations steadily began to identify, articulate, and reclaim the uniqueness of their cultures that had been lost to varying degrees through the process. Of course, they could never return to what they were before colonization, but the situation also forced a sustained exploration of cultural self-awareness that had never previously been needed.

In this historical period the colonizers also woke up to find they had been changed by their global excursions. The engagement with alternative worldviews likely contributed to the intellectual milieu out of which postmodern thinking was birthed. This is very significant for our purposes, because the postmodern agenda called into question the very assumptions that drove the previously articulated demythologizing agenda.

But the transformation of the West continues. Ironically, as the Christian faith has flourished in the developing world during the last century, one of the unexpected outcomes has been "reverse mission," which refers to a purported historic shift in the direction of mission. Paul Freston suggests that reverse mission is closely linked to late modernity's evolving relationship between the global and the local, and is marked by two main elements: a reversal in the geographic direction of mission and a reversal in the direction of colonization.[69] In other words, it is marked by "an inversion of centre-periphery relations in Christianity, whereby the formerly colonised are now evangelising the former colonisers."[70]

So, mission is no longer conceived as an activity from Western cultures to the developing world. It is now from "Everywhere to Everywhere," to borrow from the title of Michael Nazir-Ali's influential text.[71] Global patterns of migration, alongside other globalizing factors particularly in relation to communication, have distributed the world's population in a manner never previously seen. Beside this, the shifting center of gravity of global Christianity has resulted in Europe and the West (traditionally the sender of missionaries) experiencing such decline that, in the minds of many, revitalization requires outside assistance. Harvey Kwiyani, a UK-based pastor originally from Malawi, writes, "The typical identity of a missionary in this

68. Francis F. Hiebert, "Beyond a Postmodern Critique of Modern Missions: The Nineteenth Century Revisited." *Missiology: An International Review.* Vol 25 (1997): 259.

69. Paul Freston, "Reverse Mission: A Discourse in Search of Reality?" *Society for Pentecostal Studies* 9 no. 2 (2010): 155–156.

70. Richard Burgess, "Bringing Back the Gospel: Reverse Mission among Nigerian Pentecostals in Britain," *Journal of Religion in Europe* 4 (2011): 432.

71. Michael Nazir-Ali, *From Everywhere to Everywhere: A World View of Christian Mission* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009).

century will no longer be that of a Westerner serving in some remote areas of Africa, but probably that of a Mexican, a Nigerian, or perhaps a Korean serving practically anywhere in the world."[72] In the same manner, Prayer Mission UK, a South Korean Mission group, have sent more than 300 Korean missionaries to the UK since 2010.[73] According to a report from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, half of the top twenty mission-sending countries in 2010 were in the "global south" including Brazil, India, the Philippines, and Mexico.[74] Though I am unaware of any empirical data exploring the impact of reverse mission on Western theological convictions, it is difficult to imagine that it has not accelerated the softening of traditional western assumptions and encouraged an openness to rethinking the metaphysical nature of principalities and powers. This could be an important and interesting area for further research.

In her comprehensive study of 488 diverse, ethnographically representative societies, Erika Bourguignon[75] discovered a majority of normalized beliefs with regard to personal spiritual beings and spirit possession in 74% of those societies, with significant minorities in many of the others.[76]

In an ever-increasingly globalized world, attentive to the need for intercultural dialogue, it seems inevitable that the hard assumptions of any one culture or worldview will increasingly be moderated, or at least informed by the perspectives of the majority. Given these assertions, we must obviously be attentive to our responsibility to respectfully learn from indigenous perspectives.

Conclusion

In a multi-cultural world, noted anthropologist Edith Turner[77] questions the ethics of imposing a traditional positivist paradigm on local cultures at all costs, despite the evidence favoring indigenous interpretations.[78] The ongoing potential for damage is significant. Nineteenth century missionary pioneer John Nevius frequently observed fellow Western missionaries encountering demon possession in China. Dismissing

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72. Harvey Kwiyani, *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in the West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 12.

73. http://prayermission.org/about.php. Accessed August 16, 2019.

74. https://gordonconwell.edu/center-for-global-christianity/publications/#2018. Accessed August 19, 2019.

75. Bourguignon (1924—2015) was for 40 years a faculty member at Ohio State University, eventually chairing the Anthropology Department.

76. Erika Bourguignon, "Spirit Possession Belief and Social Structure," in *The Realm of the Extrahuman: Ideas and Actions,* ed. A. Bharati (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), 19–21.

77. Edith Turner is the wife and professional partner of equally noted anthropologist, Victor Turner.

78. Edith Turner, "The Reality of Spirits," *Re-Vision* 15 no. 1 (1992): 28–32.

possession as a naïve phenomenon of pre-scientific cultures, he watched them sow despair into the lives of people often with disastrous results.[79]

Even where Western missionaries simply cannot accept the premise of supernatural beings, Tippett suggests they are better off acting within the belief system and worldview of the people with whom they are communicating. He recounts the experience of a Western missionary, Penny, working amongst a Melanesian people-group, who realized it was pointless to try to convince the local people that spirit forces don't really exist at all. In her mind, her prayers for them did not expel evil spiritual beings, but nevertheless she used Christ's name to free them from powers and systems which were controlling and defeating them. She comments:

> That this dynamic experience should be conceptualized in terms of personalized or spiritualized encounter, is perhaps a better way of formulating these vital and determinative experiences than our modern, sophisticated, disbelieving explanations in terms of chemicals mathematics and gastric juices-which, be it well noted, in the final analysis have to be described in symbols themselves.[80]

But caution is also needed in the other direction. David Powlison comments: "Both the disenchanted world of modern rationalism and the charmed world of pre-modern spiritism are wrong . . . the deliverance mentality often grafts Christian elements onto an underhung demonic and superstitious world-view, creating a hybrid perhaps acceptable to pre-modern minds. But the biblical Christian faith needs to stand alone; it should not be grafted onto other world views."[81] Wendland and Hachibamba refer to this phenomenon as the twin problem of syncretism and secularization.

> Those who tend to reduce life to spiritual warfare imagery accuse those who downplay the reality of the demonic of being secularists, while the latter accuse the former of being Christian animists. Both need to listen carefully to each other if discussion is to move forward; neither side accurately represents the full biblical picture.[82]

This is good advice. Both need to listen carefully to the other if discussion is to move forward. Perhaps rather than choosing between conflicting views of syncretism or secularization, we can identify the strengths of each and forge a better understanding of Hiebert's excluded middle way. Let us conclude with Susan Garrett's helpful comments regarding the need to creatively dwell in the tension between the two:

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79. John L. Nevius, *Demon Possession* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregal Publishers, 1968), 159.

80. Tippett, *Introduction to Missiology,* 319.

81. David Powlison, *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1995), 25.

82. Wendland and Hachibamba, "Central African Perspective," 355.

Whether evil angels and evil powers are ontologically real or mere projections of psychological, interpersonal, and inter-social forces may not matter in the end. The potential for damage—and, I will argue, the potential for victory in Christ—is just as great either way. So, let us refuse to forfeit the New Testament's personal language for the powers but instead continue to use that language . . . acknowledging . . . that the powers are always incarnated in people and structures and that we are complicit in them . . . let us see our mission as one of naming the powers, unmasking their pretensions to idolatry and their sinful domination of the weak, and redeeming them by calling them back to the Creator's purposes for them in this world. But . . . let us also insist that the power to redeem is not actually ours but Christ's—and that it is *real* power, power beyond what we as mortals can muster, not merely human power to unmask but *divine power to create anew*.[83]

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83. Susan Garrett, "Christ and the Present Evil Age," *Interpretation* 57 (2003): 380 (italics original).

Reading Ephesians in Dialogue with the Powers in Colossians

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Abstract: This chapter focuses on interpreting the powers in Colossians, a letter with close connections with the Letter to the Ephesians. It begins with three contemporary scenarios where the perception of the powers among indigenous Christians is contrasted with that of non-indigenous Christians. This demonstrates that any discussion of the powers is conducted in a culturally and theologically contested space. From the perspective of the positive reference to the powers in Colossians 1:16, it examines the more negative references in Colossians 1:13 and 2:15. It sets all these references against the background of Hellenistic cosmology, including the depiction of the powers in Plato's Allegory of the Cave, 1 Enoch 64:1–2, and Jude 14-15. The reference to angelic worship in Colossians 2:18 is also discussed. The chapter concludes by comparing the portrayal of the powers in Colossians and Ephesians, arguing that Western Christianity is right to emphasize the victory of Christ over all powers, but foolish to lose belief in the reality of the powers themselves.

Keywords: Powers in Colossians, Indigenous theology, Hellenistic cosmology, Plato's Allegory of the Cave, sinful angels in 1 Enoch, angelic worship, thrones, dominions, rulers and powers.

Introduction

One might rightly ask, "What is a chapter on Colossians and the Powers doing in a volume on Ephesians?" The initial answer lies in the close connection between the two writings, which is widely recognized. George H. Van Kooten, for example, describes Ephesians as "the twin letter" of Colossians, arguing that Ephesians is "a comprehensive and systematic commentary" on Colossians which enables their similarities and differences to be set out via a new scholarly synopsis of these two

writings.[1] So the inclusion of this chapter in a volume on Ephesians is a recognition that there is a close relationship between the two letters. Understanding the approach taken in Colossians to the powers will contribute to our understanding of the powers in Ephesians, by offering a synoptic parallel that brings both letters into clearer perspective.

First, however, I am going to locate this discussion of the powers in a contemporary setting via three scenarios that demonstrate that any discussion of the powers is conducted in a culturally and theologically contested space. This will lead to a provisional definition of the powers in Colossians and then an exegetical engagement particularly with Colossians 1:16, in dialogue with Colossians 1:13 and 2:15. I will then offer some reflections on the Hellenistic cosmology drawing on Plato's Allegory of the Cave, on the one hand, and on some Jewish apocalyptic influences on the other, as both Hellenistic and Jewish apocalyptic cosmologies provide useful contexts for interpreting Colossians. Returning to the Colossians' texts, I will conclude with a comparative consideration of the portrayal of the powers in Colossians and Ephesians.

The Powers in a Culturally and Theologically Contested Space

The first brief scenario is an autobiographical one, set in Papunya, a remote indigenous community located 149 miles north-west of Alice Springs, in the central desert of Australia. The three-hundred people of this community mostly speak Luritja, one of the central desert Aboriginal languages. They practice their traditional customs that reach back some sixty thousand years. Most of the people identify as practicing Lutheran Christians. The town itself dates back only to the 1960s, when a ration-station town was established, laid out in a shape representing four women digging for honey ants, a traditional dreaming totem. We were visiting Papunya, staying in a fibro-cement house which had a functioning 'swampie', an evaporative cooler that offered some relief from the fierce daytime heat. One morning we went outside to find a group of children pointing in an animated way at the outside wall near the swampie. Sure enough, there were dirty handprints high up on the wall. What we saw was obvious evidence that someone had done some maintenance work on the swampie. What the children saw, as they explained, were the handprints of spirits.

In this first scenario, western educated adults looking at handprints high up on a wall saw only what we assumed to be both logical and explicable, originating from a known, visible, presumably benign human action. For the children whose worldview is shaped by their culture and language, and confirmed by their Christian

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1. George H. Van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School: Colossians and Ephesians in the Context of Graeco-Roman Cosmology, with a New Synopsis of the Greek Texts.* WUNT 171 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 148, 236. Earlier synopses of the Greek text of Ephesians and Colossians are those by Goodspeed (1933), Wagenführer (1941), Mitton (1951), Reuter (1997) and Vleugels (1997).

faith, they saw the handprints high up on the wall near a point of ingress into a house where foreigners were staying as a sign of spiritual significance. They did not assume that their origin was necessarily of human origin, nor necessarily benign. Spiritual powers were real, active, and needed to be treated with care. The Christian faith is compatible with both these views. Although the western view might call the children superstitious, one cannot say *a priori* that one view is more compatible with the Christian faith than the other.

The second scenario is also located in a remote region of the Northern Territory of Australia. In November 2018, a young indigenous couple with their three year-old child were found dead, along with a twelve-year-old boy, their relative, about 390 feet from the family. They were over 2.5 miles away from their broken-down car. The car still had some food and water in it. Northern Territory police declared that the deaths were not suspicious, but resulted from the victims experiencing exposure and dehydration after wandering away from the car.[2] Within a week, dozens of people connected with the deceased young family arrived at another remote community, Ali Curung, armed with weapons, and in the ensuing riot killed a twenty-five-year-old man.[3] Whole indigenous communities were convinced that the deaths of the young family members were not due to exposure and dehydration, but to spiritual powers used by the men at Ali Curung in a longstanding feud that required payback.

In this second scenario, the western view of two incidents—the tragic death of the young family and the boy, on the one hand, and the riot that killed a man in Ali Curung on the other— acknowledges that in some way they are linked in peoples' minds, but sees the actual causes as resulting from: rivalry fuelled by widespread overcrowding, health issues, poverty and family violence, as well as alcohol, and lack of education and employment. Spiritual powers, their use/misuse, are not viewed in western discourse as relevant. There appears to western eyes to be no evidence to suggest any such thing. The indigenous communities, by contrast, are scornful of the notion that these young people would have died under these circumstances; these are desert people who manage heat and isolation every day, and the car still contained food and water. For indigenous people, the young family was driven from the car by "featherfoot" men.[4] So convinced were they that this was the obvious and only explanation, the riot targeted and dealt with the man deemed to be the main perpetrator of the deaths. The community of Ali Curung feared further reprisals,

2. "Child found dead near three other bodies and broken-down vehicle in outback," *The Guardian*, accessed 12/20/2019, https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/nov/08/boy-12-feared-missing-after-three-people-found-dead-near-broken-down-vehicle-in-outback.

3. "Northern Territory riot: one dead after armed clashes between dozens of people," *The Guardian*, accessed 12/20/2019, https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/nov/13/northern-territory-riot-one-dead-after-armed-clashes-between-dozens-of-people.

4. Private communication from a central desert woman related to an Indigenous policeman who attended the incident in Ali Curung. Regarding "featherfoot men," see Baldwin Spencer & F.J. Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1899]), 476-477.

and this led many of the inhabitants to flee. The powers held and practiced by central desert tribes are absolutely real to the indigenous people of the region.[5]

The third scenario is set in Sydney, October 2018, where the Religious Freedom Reference Group of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney put forward a proposal to their Synod that "church property must not be used for purposes which contravene the doctrines, tenets and beliefs of the diocese."[6] Among other things, indigenous smoking ceremonies, which seek to cleanse a place from spiritual powers, including the residual spirits of those who have died, were to be banned. However, within three days, the chair of the Religious Freedom Reference Group, Bishop Michael Stead, withdrew this aspect of the ban:

> "The original ban was not a ban on all smoking ceremonies, only those with a spirituality inconsistent with Christianity. However, on wider advice from Aboriginal Christians, we realised that we need to consult more widely, because the spiritual significance of smoking ceremonies differs in different places. Moreover, this discussion needs to be part of the wider conversation about reconciliation between the first peoples of this country and its later arrivals, and needs to be driven by indigenous Christians. It was clumsy to address this in a proper use policy, and I readily withdraw it, with deep apologies to the aboriginal community."[7]

This scenario illustrates the difficulty that Christian churches have in determining what aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture are compatible with Christian doctrine, and what aspects should be rejected as contravening doctrines, tenets, and beliefs of the church. In this third scenario, there was a desire in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney for clarity and consistency in the use of church property, but at the same time a lack of clarity about whether the powers that are being invoked in these ceremonies are spiritually significant to Christians—and if so, which smoking ceremonies may be spiritually inconsistent with Christianity. The controversy that arose in the light of the proposal led to the acknowledgement that reconciliation between the first peoples of this country and its later arrivals is crucial to the spiritual wellbeing of the Church, and that indigenous Christians are best equipped to lead the conversation about such policy. This scenario implies that the spiritual powers invoked in these ceremonies are real, but also acknowledges that there are different opinions as to whether the

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5. The cycle of revenge continues independent of the Christian teaching of Matthew 5:38–48. The reality of these powers is compatible with the Christian faith, but the use of them for revenge is not.

6. "Sydney Anglicans to ban SSM, yoga and Indigenous smoking ceremonies on all church property," *ABC*, accessed on 12/20/2019, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-10-19/sydney-anglicans-banning-ssm-yoga-on-all-church-property/10397748.

7. "Church use policy 'a shield not a stick,'" sydneyanglicans.net, accessed 12/20/2019, https://sydneyanglicans.net/news/church-use-policy-passes.

traditional practices associated with expelling evil spiritual powers contravene or are compatible with Christian teaching.

These three scenarios demonstrate that any discussion of the powers is conducted in a culturally and theologically contested space. Our understanding of such things as spiritual powers, where and under what circumstances they might be at work, whether they are uniformly malevolent or whether some are benign, and whether any ritual practices concerning spiritual powers are compatible with Christian doctrine, tenets and beliefs—all these things reflect our presuppositions, our experiences, our educational framework and, of course, our theological and denominational allegiances.

By approaching a discussion of the powers in this way, I am locating myself at the intersection of different viewpoints: those of traditional cultural groups, namely, the central desert peoples of Australia, the various denominations' missionary tradition of evangelizing these peoples, and the contemporary educated western Christian discomfort with allowing any space for spiritual powers other than those of God. This intersection affirms the reality of spiritual powers, both benign and malign.[8] It affirms the triumph over these powers by Christ's death and resurrection. It admits that Christian doctrine and practice is often neither clear nor consistent in relation to such powers.

Towards a Definition of the Powers in Colossians 1:15–16

In Colossians 1:16, the powers—ἐξουσίαι—are the fourth and final element of a list of things that have been created through Christ and for Christ. From the immediate context of this verse we learn several things. First, the powers (which can also be translated as "authorities"[9]) are both connected with and distinguished from thrones (θρόνοι), dominions (κυριότητες), and rulers (ἀρχαί). This invites some comment about what jurisdictions these different terms imply, but I will defer this until later. At this point it is sufficient to note that the powers is one of a set of terms denoting rule and authority, implying that they are to some degree distinct from one another.

Second, the context suggests that the powers (and other authorities) are connected with things both in the heavens and on the earth (ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς). A definition of these things will not be limited to political or earthly realities alone, nor will they be exclusively spiritual or heavenly realities.

Third, these authorities are correlated with things that are seen and things that are unseen (τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα). Just as Christ is the visible image or *eikon* of the invisible God (Col 1:15), the reality which is alluded to in this list is not limited

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8. At the very least, the *subjective* reality of spiritual powers is clear, as is demonstrated in the example of the death of the man at Ali Curung.

9. NAS, ESV, NIV, RSV.

to what is visible to the naked eye. The cosmos being evoked here is more complex than our senses might suggest.

Finally, and most importantly to the authors[10], the creation of powers, as well as thrones, dominions and rulers, is predicated on the authority of Christ. Each of these authorities has come into being through Christ's own authority. Because they were created through Christ and for Christ, they were created *good*.

Given these initial observations, a definition of the powers in Colossians will need to distinguish between the protological view of thrones, dominions, rulers, and powers as created through and for Christ, serving Christ's sovereignty—and therefore created *good*—and the specific negative phenomena of ἐξουσία referred to in Colossians 1:13 and 2:15, which indicate the need for them to be conquered and restored to right relationship with God. Colossians 1:16 gives a protological view, indicating what was true for all things, namely that they were created through Christ and for Christ—to bring Christ and the Father honor. The other references (1:13 and 2:15) indicate the need for Christ's salvific work, and hence are eschatological in scope.

The profoundly positive image of powers in Colossians 1:16 is therefore not a contradiction with the negative views of the power of darkness (Col 1:13) and the reference to Christ disarming them and leading them captive (Col 2:15). Rather, their story is—on a macro-scale—a similar one to that of human beings. The good creation (Gen 1:31), which tells of God's glory (Ps 19), had been distorted by hubris and sin, and is being made alive together with Christ (Col 2:13). The powers are also caught up in the salvation Christ achieved on the cross, in being disarmed and confidently exposed to public view (ἐδειγμάτισεν ἐν παρρησίᾳ, Col 2:15). This shows that their authority is only secondary and derivative; they have no ultimate power over the believer, and their apparent reign is passing away.

The language in Colossians 2:15 is of Christ's triumphal victory march, but we need not assume that the metaphor implies the same motive of scorn and derision as a Roman victory march. The rulers and powers are led captive to restore them to the original goodness of their creation. The public spectacle is a necessary affirmation to all that they are not ultimately sovereign. It is Christ through whom and for whom they exist.

I take the reference to the powers in Colossians 1:16 to be the foundational view. It points to their original purpose among the creation of "all things" (τὰ πάντα); namely to bring honor— through Christ and for Christ—to God. However, by becoming self-serving, these authorities have actively strayed from their purpose and have interposed themselves between humanity and the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col 1:13). They have effectively established a "kingdom" of their own, which is referred to as the "power of darkness." The believer must therefore be transferred

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10.   Paul and Timothy. For a discussion of the authorship of Colossians, please see Vicky Balabanski, *Colossians: An Eco-Stoic Reading.* An Earth Bible Commentary (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2020), 7–9, 154–166.

from their power into the kingdom of God's beloved Son. The cross was necessary, not just for the salvation of each person from their trespasses (Col 2:13), but to disarm the rulers and powers (τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας (Col 2:15) and to make a public example of them. The cross has therefore transferred the believer from their power, so that believers currently participate as citizens of the kingdom of the Son. The cross has also effected the disarming of the rulers and authorities, with the final denouement already visible to the believer and able to be glimpsed by all.

According to these observations, the powers in Colossians refer both to heavenly and earthly beings and authority structures that were created to reflect and serve their creator, but have risen up against their creator and served their own ends. This will serve as a provisional definition of the powers in Colossians.

The Powers and Hellenistic Cosmology

For Paul and his contemporaries, it was uncontroversial that a spirit world exists and affects humanity. For a glimpse into the significance of the spirit world in Hellenistic and Greco-Roman times, we can turn to the influential writings of Plato. Plato's Allegory of the Cave in the *Republic* alludes in passing to the intermediary world between humans and God in its description of an upper level of the cave. Above the chained prisoners, depicting humanity, there is a low wall where people are carrying various objects, and these are projected by the light of the fire, which casts shadows visible to the chained prisoners:

> Now imagine people carrying props of all kinds along this wall above the top of it and statues and other creatures made of wood and stone and fashioned in all kinds of ways. Some of those carrying these objects speak, others are silent as you would expect.[11]

This depiction of intermediary beings—neither belonging to humankind, represented as chained prisoners below, nor truly divine, belonging to the world of light above—portrays them as going about their business, largely unconcerned with human affairs. Some are audible to the human ear, others not. The Allegory depicts human beings becoming adept in interpreting the shadows, not the beings themselves.

In *Timaeus* 40–41, Plato touches on the origin of divinities. In the dialogue between Socrates and Timaeus, God is depicted as giving the stars and lesser deities the role of fashioning mortals, feeding them, and receiving them to themselves upon death. The following discourse depicts the "God of gods" speaking about the creation of humanity to the gods who "revolve manifestly" (i.e. the stars) and those who manifest themselves only as far as they choose:

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11. Plato, *The Republic*. Books 6–10. Loeb Classical Library 276, trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), VII 514c to 515a.

> But if by my doing these creatures came into existence and partook of life, they would be made equal unto gods; in order, therefore, that they may be mortal and that this World-all may be truly All, do ye turn yourselves, as Nature directs, to the work of fashioning these living creatures, imitating the power showed by me in my generating of you. Now so much of them as it is proper to designate 'immortal,' the part we call divine which rules supreme in those who are fain to follow justice always and yourselves, that part I will deliver unto you when I have sown it and given it origin. For the rest, do ye weave together the mortal with the immortal, and thereby fashion and generate living creatures, and give them food that they may grow, and when they waste away receive them to yourselves again.[12]

In this cosmogony, humans are dependent on these divinities for birth, sustenance, and at their death. These lesser gods are accorded primary responsibility for key issues in human existence—fertility and conception, the productivity of the seasons, and issues of mortality. Here we glimpse the sorts of issues for which people sought favor through cultic practices in the ancient world, and indeed in all traditional societies.

Plato's cosmos is populated with various lesser gods and intermediary beings. Plato writes in a context where the existence of powers is altogether uncontroversial. *Timaeus* distinguishes the Highest God, "the Maker and Father of this Universe"[13] from other causes (*aitiai*) and artificers (*dēmiourgoi*)[14] at various points, but at other points draws them into close relationship.[15] In doing so, he offers an orderly but unsystematized account of the universe.[16] Later systematizations led in different directions, including Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, and Marcionism.[17] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to trace these trajectories. Nevertheless we can note that while Plato's Demiurge is good,[18] and the lesser demiurges are to model themselves upon the Maker (*ho poiētēs*), the universe includes those things that are disorderly, discordant, and irrational.[19] The tendency to revert to disorder is given scope among mortals by transitory impulses:

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12.   Plato, *Timaeus* 41c–d. See Plato, *Timaeus. Critias. Cleitophon. Menexenus. Epistles.* Loeb Classical Library 234, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929).

13.   Plato, *Timaeus* 28c, τὸν ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντός ("the Maker and Father of everything").

14.   Plato, *Timaeus* 46e.

15.   Plato, *Timaeus* 68e.

16.   *Timaeus* 68e leaves open the possibility of distinguishing between the Highest God and the Demiurge, which later shaped Gnostic thought.

17.   For the reception and interpretation of the Timaeus, see J. Dillon, "The Timaeus in the Old Academy," in *Plato's Timaeus as Cultural Icon,* ed. G. Reydam-Schils (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press , 2003), 80–94; Nathan Powers, "Plato's Demiurge and the Providential Stoic God," *Classical Quarterly* 63.2 (2013): 713–722.

18.   The goodness of the Demiurge is first mentioned at 29a and is elaborated upon at 30a.

19.   Plato, *Timaeus* 30a, b.

> pleasure, a most mighty lure to evil; next, pains, which put good to rout; and besides these, rashness and fear, foolish counsellors both; and anger, hard to dissuade; and hope, ready to seduce. And blending these with irrational sensation and with all-daring lust, they thus compounded in necessary fashion the mortal kind of soul.[20]

Plato's *Timaeus* thus attributes evil to impulses and passions of human beings.[21] This view of the world has profoundly resonated with and influenced Christian theology, which also attributes evil largely to human hubris and sin.[22] Nevertheless, in apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings of the intertestamental and early Christian periods, intermediary beings were held to be swayed by comparable sinful impulses, leading them to sin and to prompt humans to sin as well. So, for example, in 1 Enoch we read:

> And I heard the voice of an angel saying, "These are the angels who descended upon the earth and revealed what was hidden to the children of the people, and led the children of the people astray to commit sin." (1 Enoch 64:1–2).[23]

The names and misdeeds of the fallen angels are a substantial focus of 1 Enoch, and of many of the other apocalyptic writings of the intertestamental period, and these teachings have influenced the hamartiology of various New Testament writings. We see this most clearly in the Letter of Jude, a Jewish Christian writing with a strong apocalyptic outlook,[24] which alludes in verse 6 to the story from 1 Enoch 6–19 of the angels "who did not keep their own position, but left their proper dwelling." In Jude 14–15, the prophecy of Enoch is cited, in which the future judgement of all by the Lord and ten thousand angels is invoked (1 Enoch 1:9). In the text of Enoch, the "holy ones" will execute judgment on the "wicked ones" and on all flesh, suggesting that—along with the judgment of humanity (all flesh)—angels were envisaged as both executing and receiving judgment. The visible and invisible world were held to be mutually permeable, and the powers were divided into those that serve God (i.e. the holy ones) and those that have turned to serving evil (i.e. the wicked ones).

Having noted some aspects of Hellenistic cosmology, drawing on Plato's *Timaeus* and on the influence of 1 Enoch on Christian apocalyptic thought, we return to the cosmology of Colossians. Paul's theology occupies a mediating space between the Greek cosmology of Plato and the Jewish apocalyptic thought articulated in the

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20. Plato, *Timaeus* 69d.

21. These are given a biological aetiology in *Timaeus* 86d, e.

22. See Romans 1:18–32.

23.   James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Vol. 1, Apocalyptic Literature & Testaments* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 44.

24.   Duane F. Watson, *The Letter of Jude*. The New Interpreter's Bible Vol. XII (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 476.

Letter of Jude. While Paul is clearly shaped by apocalyptic thought, he does not emphasize the role of angels or other powers, except occasionally in passing:

> For such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:13–14).

In order to gain further insight into the role of the powers in Colossians, we now return to that letter.

The Cosmology of Colossians

The problem of the powers (and other authorities) in Colossians is connected with the fact that the believer may suppose that these powers have ongoing authority over them, requiring certain practices related to food and drink, festivals, and calendrical observances (Col 2:16).[25] Paul and Timothy emphasize that the rulers and powers have been disarmed, and the believer need not—indeed *must* not—live as though they were subject to these authorities. Instead, the believer has, through baptism (Col 2:12), been raised through the same power of God that raised Christ from the dead and is therefore free from any such requirements. The Colossians are to embrace this confidence, without the need to humble themselves to these authorities (Col 2:18). The notion that the believer should avoid handling, tasting, or touching anything (Col 2:21) for fear of the powers is ridiculous! All indebtedness that they once may have had has been nailed to the cross (Col 2:14).

The reference to angelic worship (Col 2:18) invites further comment in relation to the powers. The phrase is ambiguous, as it can be understood as an objective genitive—with angels as the objects of worship, or as a subjective genitive, with the angels modeling the sort of worship that is required, namely of a superb angelic quality. I consider it unlikely that the Colossians were thought by the authors to be worshipping angels, as this passing comment would not suffice to correct such a substantial error. I argue elsewhere for the subjective genitive as the more plausible meaning in the letter itself.[26] However, this is not to say that in a cultural context influenced by Plato's *Timaeus*, readers could not have associated angels and the powers, and that reverence for these powers was an ongoing issue as the believers transitioned from their pagan worldview and practices to their new life in Christ. But the tone of Colossians is one of confidence that the believers are not subject to the powers, and that what is needed is for them to continue to be built up and established in the faith that they already are living in (Col 2:6–7). The powers

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25. I have set out a longer exposition of my understanding of the so-called "Colossian problem" in Balabanski, *Colossians: An Eco-Stoic Reading,* 9–14. I do not take the problem to be the introduction of a specific heresy or the arrival of a specific group of false teachers, but rather the attraction to certain Jewish and pagan practices for added security.

26. Balabanski, *Colossians,* 115.

have been conquered; the believers are free to live in Christ, having all the riches of assured understanding and knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself (Col 2:2). Having noted the attitude to the powers in Colossians, we now turn to make a comparison with the powers in Ephesians 6:12.

The Powers in Ephesians in Dialogue with Colossians

Ephesians 3:10 speaks of the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places coming to know the wisdom of God through the church. This endows the church with cosmic significance and shows a similar confidence to that expressed in Colossians that the believers currently participate in the purposes of God.[27] However, Ephesians 6:12 presents a contrasting picture:

> For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12 is "the most explicit reference to the believers' struggle against spiritual powers" in Pauline literature.[28] While it does not appear to be an interpolation,[29] it does stand in contrast to the earlier, more positive reference to the rulers and authorities in Ephesians 3:10, and so raises questions that have provoked considerable scholarly discussion. The key terms that are shared between Colossians 1:16 and Ephesians 6:12 are rulers (ἀρχαί) and powers/authorities (ἐξουσία). They are the final two terms in the Colossians' list, whereas in Ephesians they are the first two terms in a list articulating the struggle of the church against powers in the heavenly places. Ephesians goes on to name, not thrones and dominions, but more explicitly negative forces: literally the world rulers of this darkness (τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου) and the spiritual forces of evil. They are said to be in places that one would not expect, namely in the heavenly places. This is a move towards a more explicitly apocalyptic and pessimistic view of the forces aligned against the church when compared with Colossians. It emphasizes the current need for spiritual armor and weapons, showing that the battle is still raging. Nevertheless, the vivid metaphor of God's armor that follows should not obscure the fact that it is there to remind the believer of the power and protection afforded by God's truth and righteousness (6:14), the gospel of peace (6:15), faith (6:16), and salvation and the Spirit, namely the Word of God (6:17). The

27. Note that the phrase ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις—in the heavenly places— does not occur in Colossians.

28. Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 825.

29. Contra Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities. The Background, Meaning and Development of the Pauline Phrase Hai Archai Kai Hai Exousiai,* SNTSMS 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 104–10.

point is ultimately not the battle itself, but the fact that the believer is fully equipped by God to withstand any opposing force.

At the opening of the discussion of Colossians 1:16, I raised the issue of what jurisdictions the different terms "thrones, dominions, rulers and powers" imply. Van Kooten tentatively assigns the rulers and powers to the visible things, with reference to 1 Corinthians 15:23–28, and the thrones and dominions to the invisible, namely the astronomical influence of the heavenly bodies.[30] However, the closest external comparison is to be found in the Testament of Levi, which sets out a three-tiered orderly heaven and offers several parallels to Colossians 1:16 and Ephesians 6:12–13.[31] In Testament of Levi 3:8 the "thrones and authorities/powers (ἐξουσίαι)" are part of the heavenly host in God's presence. Given the further similarities between this second century BCE writing and Paul's language and ideas,[32] it seems best to assume that the list in Colossians 1:16 should not be subdivided into heavenly and earthly, but should be understood as comprehensive of both heavenly and earthly authorities and authority structures, without specifying their jurisdictions.

Conclusion

The significant similarities between the Letters to the Colossians and to the Ephesians should not lead us to overlook some important differences, particularly in relation to the powers. Colossians states that all things—including thrones, dominions, rulers, and powers, whether heavenly or earthly—have been created through Christ and for Christ. The subduing and restoration of the powers is already effected by Christ's death, known by believers and also visible to those who do not yet believe. The point of Ephesians 6:12 is a different one. The serious danger of the powers urges the believer not to become complacent in the face of very real and continuing evil, but instead to call on all the armor at their disposal. The contexts and timing of the letters were different, and the hortatory strategy used is also different.

We westerners are at a much greater distance from the worldview and cosmology of Paul and his co-workers than are the indigenous Christians of the central deserts of Australia. Aboriginal Christians have no difficulty in perceiving spiritual powers, whether benevolent or malevolent, and angelic beings; neither conceptualizing that they may be aligned with God, or may be serving evil purposes. Western Christianity is right to emphasize the victory of Christ over all powers, but foolish to lose belief in the reality of the powers themselves. Without a robust sense of the ongoing power of evil in this present age, we can lose sight of the cosmic role

30. Van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School,* 122–22.

31. Testament of Levi 3: 8-9, 8:2-3. These parallels are noted by Charlesworth in the margins of his edition of the Testament of Levi, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 789–791.

32. Testament of Levi 3:6, 8–9, 6:11, 8:2–3. There are further parallels with Pauline concepts in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. In particular, see the Testament of Judah 14:1, 19:1, 25:3.

that we as the church are called to play in making known "the wisdom of God in its rich variety . . . to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 3:10). May God grant us the humility to reconceive what "things invisible" may mean (Colossians 1:16).

Bonhoeffer and the Way of the Crucified: *Methodeia*, Doctrine, and the 'Powers'

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Abstract: The Greek word *methodeia*, the "schemes," "tricks," or "methods" of the enemy that move us away from Christ and from unity in his body, is uniquely found only within Ephesians 4:14 and 6:11. In Ephesians 4:14, Paul focuses on the unity of the body of Christ and the way Christians grow into unity and maturity with Christ is by avoiding the *methodeia* of the enemy. The term also appears again in Ephesians 6:11 where Paul urges believers to put on the armor of God to avoid the *methodeia* of the devil. In this chapter we consider Peter Rollins' theological movement of "Radical Theology" as being an example of *methodeia* which might disrupt the transformational unity of the body of Christ and against which we need to arm ourselves. We especially examine the purported reliance of Rollins' movement upon the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and to what extent Bonhoeffer may propose a still radical but, conversely, more clearly orthodox movement of deconstruction than that suggested by Rollins, one in which Christ alone must deconstruct the human "I" and supernaturally enable persons both to overcome sin and the devil and to do good in the world only in and through Christ, via the specific historic means provided by Christ.

Key Words: Apostolicity, a/theism, Body of Christ, Bonhoeffer, Church, Confession, Death of God theology, Deconstructionist, Devil, Ideologies, Institutions, Materialist, *methodeia*, Obedient Thinking, Orthodoxy, Pyrotheology, Radical Theology, Rollins, Sin, Systems, Temptation, The Word

Introduction

The Greek term *methodeia* is uniquely used by Paul in Ephesians to refer to "schemes," "tricks," or "methods" of the devil that are employed to move Christians away from unity with Christ in his body and then, in isolation, bring about their destruction. In this chapter we will consider Peter Rollins' theological movement of "Radical Theology," or alternatively titled "Pyrotheology," as an example of such

methodeia in which his movement disrupts the transformational unity of the body of Christ by leading us away from continuity and congruence with the core beliefs and practices of the Christian faith as transmitted via the apostles—including in Rollins' denial of the transcendent—in exchange for a form of "Christianity" that reduces the entire faith to relativistic acts of "love" in the material. In so doing we will especially examine the purported reliance of Rollins' movement upon the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and to what extent Bonhoeffer may propose a more radical yet orthodox movement of deconstruction than that suggested by Rollins, one that may prove more of a retardant for Rollins' "Pyrotheology" than an accelerant. We will show how Bonhoeffer proposes a movement in which Christ alone must deconstruct the human "I" and supernaturally enable persons to overcome obstacles to unity and freedom in Christ—especially the schemes of the devil—and to then progress to do good in the world only in and through Christ, in the unity of his body, via the specific Christ-ordained beliefs and acts given to the body by Christ to supernaturally form us.

Doctrine, Deceitful Schemes, and the Devil in Ephesians 4:14 and 6:11

The Greek term *methodeia* is only used twice within the New Testament. The term first appears in Ephesians 4:14 and it is then utilized by Paul again in Ephesians 6:11. Paul uniquely introduces this term to refer to "schemes," "tricks," or "methods" that originate with demonic powers and are employed, often through human agency, to move Christians away from unity with Christ in his body and to bring about their fracturing, isolation, and destruction. For Paul, the spreading of false doctrine is therefore a primary tactic by which the devil uses humans to attack the body of Christ.

In Ephesians 4, Paul stresses the necessity of the unity of the body of Christ. Toward achieving that unity, in Ephesians 4:14–15 Paul claims that Christians must remain in the "truth." Alignment with apostolic doctrine as delivered is not optional. Correct apostolic doctrine conveys what is true about Christ, but even more, surrendering to true apostolic teaching is a vital way by which persons surrender to Christ and are formed in unity in Christ. Therefore Paul urges believers to speak only what is true and so grow to maturity together in Christ rather than being led astray by the immature doctrines of human invention. By this *methodeia* ("schemes," "tricks," or "methods") Christians might depart from the truth, the love of Christ, and from unity in the body, all of which are held together only in Christ, in his body. In this instance, in Ephesians 4, when Paul first mentions the *methodeia*, they appear to be used by humans whose invented doctrines lead believers away from the truth of the Gospel, the love of Christ, and the unity of his body. However, Paul makes it clear in Ephesians 6 that the actual source of such doctrinal *methodeia* is supernatural. When Paul reintroduces the term *methodeia* in Ephesians 6:11 he makes it clear that the real source of the *methodeia* is the devil and, in 6:12–13, he adds that the enemies

against which the body of Christ are actually contending are demonic powers that believers can only defeat in Christ himself by putting on the armor of God to overcome the *methodeia* of the devil. The false doctrines of Ephesians 4:14 are not incidental but a primary means by which the devil works through humans to attack and inhibit the growth and unity of the body of Christ. He does so by leading believers away from not only true apostolic teaching from-and-about Christ but from the unity of the body that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, has been entrusted to both live within and transmit the life and teachings of Christ.

Consequentially, Paul similarly warned Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:1–2 that the Holy Spirit has said that false teachings are the chief means by which persons will be led away from the faith in the last days and that such teachings originate with demons working through human "liars." Paul adds in 1 Timothy 1:6–10 that the doctrinal "myths" of such lying teachers, in service to the devil, are in opposition to the "good doctrine" that originates with Christ, and which also leads to godliness. How was one to differentiate between merely human doctrine, originating with the devil, and the authentic teachings of Christ? Paul adds in 2 Timothy 1:10–14 that Timothy was only to pass on the "deposit" of teaching that came from Christ via the apostles, which Paul again claims in 2 Timothy 1:9 also leads to a "holy life" as a fruit that validates the authenticity of that teaching. Thus, teaching that was trustworthy was only that which clearly came from Christ, as transmitted in public by the apostles, and that led to love, righteousness, and unity in the body, centered in the person of Christ himself. Conversely, false teaching—which would include a denial of the spiritual realities Paul was calling believers' attention to—could be seen to originate with humans (though really being from the devil) and would produce division, isolation, and ungodliness. Thus in both Ephesians and in 1–2 Timothy Paul warns that the devil is using the *methodeia* of false teachings to not only attack individual believers, but also to wage war upon the body of Christ himself via false doctrines and theological error.

In this chapter we will explore an apparent contemporary example of such *methodeia* in Peter Rollins' theological deconstructionist movement that—while claiming support from Bonhoeffer—serves to separate current persons from unity with the apostolic faith and the body of Christ through the centuries via an attack on apostolic teaching about Christ and the body. Rollins denies the reality of supernatural powers or obstacles to faith and unity, which removes any need to guard against powers and principalities, doing away with both Paul's suggestion that the devil is the greatest enemy of the body and that Christians must put on the armor of Christ to guard against his attacks. He has turned both the devil and his *methodeia* into false ideologies that he alleges Christians have manufactured in order to manipulate persons into turning to Christianity and belief in a transcendent Christian God, and which Christians have manufactured as a panacea for problems he claims are only material and psychological in nature. Subsequently, Rollins has made orthodox

Christian belief in a transcendent God—and the necessity of the sacred practices of the faith given by Christ to believers to form the body in unity—into the very enemies of faith and unity. In so doing, he contradicts Paul and goes against apostolic teaching, which might suggest that Rollins' theology is itself a *methodeia* by which the devil might use humans to accomplish an attack on Christian belief and unity in Christ. Bonhoeffer would disagree with Rollins—and in alignment with Paul—he sees the devil as a real and present enemy who stands against unity in Christ and who wages war on Christ by attacking the members of his body with temptations to sin. To stand firm against the devil, believers must put on the armor of Christ via surrender to the apostolic teaching about Christ, the preaching of the true Word as transmitted by the apostles, and adherence to the sacred Christ-ordained practices given to the body for its formation, beginning with confession.

Rollins and Radical Theology: False Doctrine as *Methodeia*

The theological approach of "Radical Theology" has been primarily ideated by Irish philosopher Peter Rollins.[1] In "Radical Theology" Rollins has argued that the essential problems facing humans are not sin, death, hell, or demonic powers, but rather that all Christian beliefs, doctrines, and practices are ideologically bound and that such false ideologies are themselves the problem. This approach to theology stands contrary to the apostle Paul's emphases about the nature and function of doctrine and the powers in Ephesians. Nevertheless, for Rollins, deconstructing such systems, through both the death of ideologies and an experiential loss of God's presence, will free persons by helping them to embrace materialist actualities where both God and truth are experienced as radically subjective. K. S. Moody has also noted that Rollins' "Radical Theology," which she claimed has been influenced both by "Death of God Theology" and "a/theism," is a convergence of deconstructionism and materialism as seen in the work of a/theistic deconstructionists John D. Caputo and Slavoj Žižek,[2] the latter of whom Rollins has credited often in his magnum opus *Insurrection: To Believe Is Human To Doubt, Divine*.[3] Rollins has himself defined "a/theism," which he also

1. See: K.S. Moody, "The Death and Decay of God: Radical Theology and Emerging Christianity," *Modern Believing* 57, no. 3 (2016), 253–265. Moody has credited Rollins with being the foremost catalyst of "Radical Theology."

2. Moody, "The Death and Decay of God."

3. Peter Rollins, *Insurrection: To Believe is Human To Doubt, Divine* (New York: Howard Books, 2011), 38, 44, 46, 86. K.S. Moody ("Retrospective Speculative Philosophy: Looking for Traces of Žižek's Communist Collective in Emerging Christian Praxis," *Political Theology* 13 [2012]: 183, 189) also argued that Slavoj Žižek has had the greatest influence on Rollins' a/theistic deconstructionism. Žižek ("Dialectical Clarity versus the Misty Conceit of Paradox," in Slavoj Žižek and John Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?*, ed. Creston Davis [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009], 287) has declared that "Christianity is alive only in materialist (atheist) practices which negate it." Subsequently, Moody ("Retrospective Speculative Philosophy," 196) claimed that Rollins' Ikon community of "Christian a/theists" was following Žižek's template for materialist communes and practices as evidenced, for instance, in Rollins' talk

claimed to follow, as an experiential loss of God that moves beyond both theism and atheism, such as the "new atheism" of Richard Dawkins, which Rollins argued was only a "comfortable theoretical rejection of the divine,"[4] to embrace a deeper loss of God that Rollins asserted had "more in common with the Atheism we see expressed in Friedrich Nietzsche, whose blood-curdling proclamation of God's death . . . was deeply felt."[5] Rollins further defined his movement as a "fundamentally irreligious movement that has nothing to do with theism or atheism, or with doctrines,"[6] in which he aimed to "blur the lines between theism and atheism" by rejecting the "Good News" of Christianity for a "mature" doubt that "unravels" all knowing and meaning to "revel" in the "horror" of uncertainty, even of God's existence.[7] After the "death of God"[8] and all "knowing," he proposed forming materialist spaces for "being" in the world, where God and truth were reduced to existing in human acts.[9] Indeed, while Ephesians exhorts Christians to pursue spiritual maturity and health through avoiding "every wind of doctrine" and "human cunning" characterized by craft and "deceitful schemes," Rollins' *methodeia* involve the complete conflagration of Christian doctrine through an approach that he alternatively calls "Pyrotheology."[10] Rollins' pyrotheology is particularly striking (and ironic) when one considers it in the context of the "schemes (*methodeia*) of the devil" in Ephesians 6:11 which are characterized in part as "flaming darts" that must be protected against—not embraced—by means of the divine empowerment and protection that comes from the "shield of faith" (Eph 6:16).

In terms of Rollin's influence, both Moody[11] and sociologists Gladys Ganiel and Gerardo Marti[12] have especially noted Rollins' "Radical" or "Pyro" theology as

of "Retroactive Justification," wherein he claimed to be forming "a Christo-communist collective, an 'insurrectionary' force," that embodied the resurrection through materialist praxis. See Peter Rollins, "Retroactive Justification," accessed March 15, 2018, https://vimeo.com/21173208.

4. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 20–21.

5. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 20–21.

6. Peter Rollins, *The Divine Magician: The Disappearance of Religion and the Discovery of Faith* (New York: Howard Books, 2015), 6.

7. Peter Rollins, accessed January 6, 2020, http://peterrollins.net/?p=3739.

8. See Rollins, "Retroactive Justification." Rollins has embraced the "Death of God" movement for his own theology.

9. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 36. See also John D. Caputo, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct?: The Good News of Postmodernism for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 130. Caputo suggested forming "spaces for being," to place "experience" over knowing.

10. See e.g, Peter Rollins, "Pyrotheology," accessed December 19, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gY-VITTf7k4.

11. See K.S. Moody, "Resisting Conformity at the Margins of Marginal Christianity," The Religious Studies Project. October 9, 2014. Accessed February 2018, https://religiousstudiesproject.com/2014/10/09/resisting-conformity-at-the-margins-of-marginal-christianity-by-katharine-sarah-moody/.2014 and Moody, "The Death and Decay of God."

12. Gladys Ganiel and Gerardo Marti, "Northern Ireland, America and the Emerging Church Movement: Exploring the Significance of Peter Rollins and the Ikon Collective," *Journal of the Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions* (May 2014): 26–45.

being a catalyst for progressive elements of the Emerging Church (EC) movement and their successors. In my own research, I (Jonathan) have likewise traced Rollins' influence on EC theologians such as Brian McLaren,[13] Tony Jones,[14] and Ian Mobsby.[15] Rollins has also continued to influence young western Christians via his popular videos, blogs, and talks where he has repeated his thesis that persons must abandon all "knowing," such as belief in the physical resurrection of Christ, to instead engage in a subjective, materialist "life of resurrection."[16]

Attempting to justify his movement as still Christian, Rollins has also claimed theological support from Dietrich Bonhoeffer. For example, in his book *Insurrection*, where Rollins presented his vision for an emergent theology for a postmodern age, while leaning on Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, and Derrida, Rollins claimed to have been primarily inspired by Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* (LPP) for his own movement to deconstruct historic Christian beliefs, practices, and forms, which Rollins believed prevented persons from authentically "being in" the current world.[17] Rollins credited Bonhoeffer, for instance, for showing persons how to "overturn the church as it presently stands," including, Rollins claimed, "orthodoxy," so exchanging the "impotent God" of religion for an authentic God of "religionless Christianity."[18] Rollins further proclaimed in *Insurrection* that he was now completing Bonhoeffer's work, showing what "faith beyond religion might look like."[19] Rollins likewise presented himself as Bonhoeffer's theological successor in his inclusion of Barbara Brown Taylor's declaration, in Rollins' 2015 book *The Divine Magician*, that "Rollins writes and thinks like a new Bonhoeffer, crucifying the trappings of religion in order to lay bare a radical, religionless and insurrectional Christianity."[20]

13.   Brian D. McLaren, "Introduction" in Peter Rollins, *How (Not) to Speak of God: Philosophical & Theological Underpinnings of the Emerging Church Movement* (London: Paraclete, 2006). McLaren praised Rollins as creating the "first and most hopeful expressions to date of Christian theology being done in a postmodern context."

14.   Tony Jones, "I Am (Not) as Smart as Pete Rollins," Theoblogy, accessed February 2018, http://theoblogy.blogspot.com/2006/12/i-am-not-as-smart-as-peter-rollins.html. Jones gushed that Rollins' book *How (Not) to Speak of God* was the seminal "negative theology for the emerging conversation that is poignant, beautiful, and profound."

15.   Ian Mobsby, *Emerging & Fresh Expressions of Church* (London: Moot Community, 2007), 28–30. Mobsby praised Rollins' influence on the common belief, amidst progressive/emergent Emerging Church voices, that one must move past God as an "object" of knowledge to instead experience God as "radically subjective."

16.   Rollins, *Insurrection*, 180.

17.   Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (Munich: Touchstone, [1944] 1997) and Rollins, *Insurrection*, xiv-xv.

18.   Rollins, *Insurrection*, xiv.

19.   Rollins, *Insurrection*, xiv.

20.   Barbara Brown Taylor in Rollins, *The Divine Magician*, 1.

Rollins' Co-Opting of Bonhoeffer for a Repackaged "Death of God" Theology

In claiming to ground his a/theistic deconstruction of historic orthodox Christianity in Bonhoeffer's work, Rollins subsequently attempted to apply Bonhoeffer's "God of the gaps" theology—in which Bonhoeffer said it was wrong to "use God as a stop-gap for the incompleteness of our knowledge"[21]—to argue that Christians had misused the basic human psychological need for a "crutch," or for someone who could fix the world or give their lives meaning, to manipulate persons into seeing God as the solution.[22] Rollins' own antidote to such false "crutches" and constructs was for persons to "unplug from the God of religion," who could solve human problems, to instead enter a mode of "unknowing" where God's presence was viewed as absent.[23]

In comparison to Paul's vision in Ephesians 2:11–22, it is unclear how an absent God could correspond in any meaningful sense with the God who is said to be "dwelling" in the body of Christ as a temple by the Spirit (Eph 2:21–22). Likewise, the state of unknowing that Rollins describes as a solution to the problems he sees in Christian theology and experience stands in contrast to Ephesians 2:11–13 in which those who were "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise" are described as having had "no hope" because they were "without God in the world." This God, in verse 13, is then said to have come near to them in the person of Jesus Christ. Indeed, contrary to Rollins' ideal of "unknowing," the theology of Ephesians focuses on the maturity, spiritual health, and divine protection from the powers that come from knowing God. For Paul, in Ephesians, the love of Christ that we "know" (*ginōskō*) fills us with the fullness of God. This divine love is a love that "surpasses knowledge (*gnōsis*)" not a love that is devoid of knowledge. Knowledge of Christ's love, therefore, is a Spirit-ordained gift and a vital means by which believers experience God's fullness (Eph 3:19). This is the same love that grounds our unity in Christ (Eph 4:1–16) and that characterizes the manner of the Christian truth-telling about Christ that realigns the wayward doctrinal errors and *methodeia* that attempt to counteract or subvert the unity that comes through faithfulness to the Gospel transmitted by the apostles (Eph 4:15).

Contrary to the overall trajectory of Ephesians, Rollins claims Bonhoeffer's support for his own theological agenda without showing precisely how Bonhoeffer supported a "'Death of God' theology." He then delineates a "Death of God" movement as his solution to false constructs, referencing the cry of forsakenness expressed by Christ on the cross to contend that Christ, like Nietzsche, lost all certainty that there was a God who was "out there" and who "ensures life makes sense."[24] Further,

21. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 310–312.
22. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 9.
23. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 17.
24. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 27.

Rollins argued that "Jesus as Christ is cut off from his own essence on the cross"[25] and, thus, as Christ lost all hope, "God became an Atheist."[26] As such, rather than proclaiming the "Good News" of the resurrection, Rollins declared that Christ has continued to hang on the cross in "weakness."[27] Subsequently, current persons, Rollins charged, must undergo the "same troubling, terrifying process" that Christ endured by likewise losing God, hope, and meaning[28] being cut off from Christianity, its orthodox concepts of God, and even God himself, in terms of one's experience of God and certainty about him.[29] At last, after all "meaning is ripped away," Rollins said persons would find that there were no answers or purpose provided in exchange for the death of meaning, only "doubt, unknowing and loss"[30] since there was no God "out there" but God could only be had as a "presence that is made manifest in our very midst . . . in fully embracing" the secular world via a materialist "act of love."[31]

Therefore, Rollins' main thesis, which he boldly claimed was inspired by Bonhoeffer, was that, ironically, first, persons could know with certainty that Christ lost God on the cross in a way that revealed all religious belief and knowing as meaningless and insufficient. Second, in one's entering into death with Christ, persons must also experience the same loss of confidence in God's presence that Rollins then confidently presumed Christ experienced in order to "rupture . . . the way those beliefs function as a crutch to prevent the individual from actively participating in the difficult challenge of embracing the world."[32] In this state, once freed from false systems of belief, persons could enter a non-religious human community where God was found only in subjective acts of love and "being" in that community.[33] In embracing the subjective and material as all that could be had, humans could create spaces "where people are invited to suspend their interpretations of the world . . . reimagining the kingdom of God in a way that is not constrained by the presently existing system."[34] Third, Rollins suggested a new liturgical structure to guide persons through what he termed the "transforming trauma of Christ's death," via

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25. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 28.

26. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 20. Rollins' movement here mirrored Marxist a/theist Slavoj Žižek's own claims about the cross, such as are seen in the film *Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (directed by Sophie Fiennes and written by Slavoj Žižek [Blinder Films, 2012]), where he argued that Jesus' death, rather than being salvific, showed humans that "there is no God" or greater meaning, only humans who exist together in the material.

27. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 28.

28. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 29, 35.

29. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 47.

30. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 23.

31. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 120.

32. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 72.

33. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 119–121.

34. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 26.

the loss of God, including meditating on God's absence[35] such as, for example, via practicing "Atheism-for-lent."[36]

Subsequently, Rollins also critiqued an orthodox focus on supernatural realities or an eschatological salvation, calling for persons to instead enjoy the pleasures of the present world, living fully in the material without certainty of the transcendent or eternal.[37] He additionally lamented that persons who had stepped away from Christian religion to embrace doubts about God's transcendence or aide had, unfortunately, often turned back to the church as a "safety blanket," returning to a "false myth" that said that God was "out there" and could solve human problems.[38] Likewise, again citing Bonhoeffer as his influence in *Church in the Present Tense*,[39] Rollins argued that instead of returning to orthodox Christianity, persons should embrace the "basic goodness" of humanity and the secular world. To do so, he interpreted Bonhoeffer's call in LPP for the church to be the church "for others"[40] to mean that true faith was found in abandoning Christian religion to embrace the secular world in all of its worldly fullness: "For that is faith."[41] For Rollins then, materialist acts of love and justice amidst current contexts were the "essence" and *telos* of the faith. It is hard to imagine, though, that the apostle Paul would envision such a humanistic interpretation of faith that relies on the basic goodness of humanity, especially given that he characterized humans who are apart from Christ as being spiritually "dead" in their "trespasses and sin" and under the control of the "prince of the power of the air" as people who were "by nature children of wrath" (Eph 2:1–3).

Bonhoeffer's Key Contrasts with Rollins

At first glance, it could appear that Bonhoeffer's own seemingly radical theology provided tangential support for Rollins' movement via his concern about persons attempting to bind God or truth within human institutions or systems. In *Act and Being*, for instance, Bonhoeffer warned of the potential dangers of human references to an institutional church, orthodoxy as a system, or even to human hermeneutics or doctrines to claim to "have" truth or God, by which references persons could actually seek to place themselves over God, Scripture, and revelation.[42] However, a deeper

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35. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 73.

36. Peter Rollins, "Atheism for Lent," accessed March 4, 2018, https://peterrollins.com/atheism-for-lent/.

37. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 72.

38. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 72.

39. Peter Rollins, "The Worldly Theology of Emerging Christianity" in Scot McKnight, Kevin Corcoran, Peter Rollins, and Jason Clark, *Church in the Present Tense: A Candid Look at What's Emerging* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011), 28–30, 33–34.

40. See Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 486.

41. Rollins, *Insurrection*, 36.

42. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, vol. 2 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress, [1931], 2009), 92.

exploration of Bonhoeffer's theological corpus reveals more conflicts with Rollins' movement than support, especially in Bonhoeffer's focus on individual sin and Satan as being the greatest powers of destruction facing humanity, rather than human systems, and on salvation being only in and through the living person of the crucified and resurrected Christ, rather than via merely human communities and acts.

Bonhoeffer's Work Does Not Support a "Death of God" Theology

In considering Rollins' inference that Bonhoeffer advocated an experiential "Death of God," as Martin E. Marty has similarly shown in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's "Letters and Papers from Prison": A Biography*,[43] it is vital to note that attempts to claim Bonhoeffer in support of a Marxist atheistic "Death of God" theology were long ago rebuked by those who knew Bonhoeffer well and understood his Christology. Bonhoeffer's good friend, Paul Lehmann, for example, a Protestant liberation theologian who himself believed God was incarnate in current contexts,[44] nonetheless said that those who claimed Bonhoeffer for a "Death of God" theology, as Rollins has done, grossly misread Bonhoeffer's work:

> "Death of God" theologians are perhaps the most conspicuous of Bonhoeffer's misrepresentation. They have seized upon the *Letters and Papers from Prison* . . . "the world come of age," "religionless Christianity," "true worldliness" . . . these same phrases have been appropriated as a . . . "new essence of Christianity" which claims Bonhoeffer for the tradition of Nietzsche and celebrates him as a forerunner of a theology without God. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that . . . atheistic celebrations of Bonhoeffer are grievous distortions of his thought and spirit . . . there is no informed and responsible way claiming Bonhoeffer for a theology without God.[45]

Against such misreadings of Bonhoeffer, Edwin H. Robertson, in the preface to his translation of Bonhoeffer's *Christ the Center*, argued that the lens through which to understand all of Bonhoeffer's theology, ecclesiology, and approaches to Scripture was through his Christology, such as presented in *Christ the Center*.[46] Within *Christ the Center*—containing Bonhoeffer's lectures defending an apostolic Christology against a revisionist Aryan-Christology being popularized in the Germany of the 1930's—Bonhoeffer made it clear that even as persons sought to discover who Christ was for them, in their actuality, this did not mean persons could subjectively decide

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43. Martin E. Marty, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's "Letters and Papers from Prison": A Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

44. See Paul L. Lehmann, *Ethics in a Christian Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, [1963] 2006), 25, 47, 82.

45. Lehmann, *Ethics in a Christian Context*, 365.

46. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, trans. preface by Edwin H. Robertson (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 8–9.

who Christ was, since they must align with the Christ of "biblical fact" or it was not the historical Christ they were describing.[47] The Christ of biblical fact, Bonhoeffer argued, was a transcendent God incarnate in the world specifically in the person of Jesus Christ[48] and who could be "had" in the present only within the supernaturally formed body of Christ, which was Christ himself existing for humans as his body, rather than in merely human community.[49]

While Bonhoeffer did share some of Rollins' concerns about Christian institutions and systems making God into an object of faith, Bonhoeffer's main concern was not that such institutions and systems were false in their claims about God—and must therefore be abandoned—but rather that institutions and systems could be abused to maintain human control over an idea of God instead of surrendering to the actual living Word-of-God in the person of Christ. For example, he lamented that persons could wrongly create an "objectification of God" via "the Catholic canonization of . . . the church" or even in some theories of inspiration wherein persons could make God an object that was "there for the finding" by humans who, through their control of institutions and hermeneutics, might believe they were empowered to make trans-subjective claims about God or truth without authentically meeting or surrendering to the living God himself.[50]

At the heart of Bonhoeffer's own critiques of institutions and systems was his point that Christians should be leery of appealing to human systems or institutions to claim to "have God," or truth, since the sinful human "I" could reduce even God-given acts to a "doctrine, a principle, a system" without persons having surrendered to God who remained unbounded by human systems.[51] Yet, instead of seeking an experiential death to all Christian institutions and thought, and to God's presence, Bonhoeffer called Christians to live fully in Christ amidst the same "profane" world where he died for their salvation.[52]

Bonhoeffer Believed God was Transcendent and Fully Present in the Person of Christ

Bonhoeffer believed that it was only the living person of Christ himself who could bring persons into truth rather than humans placing themselves into truth via deconstruction or psychological experience. It was Christ alone who could save

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47. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 85.

48. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 46.

49. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 130–132.

50. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 92.

51. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, vol. 4 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress, [1937] 2003), 45–46. Also see Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 92, 111; Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 61, 486.

52. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (Munich: Touchstone, [1944] 1997), 486.

humanity via his salvific death. While Bonhoeffer did believe that Christ wished to break down the barriers of "false religious obligations and inhibitions,"[53] calling Christians to live fully in the world, in contrast with an a/theistic "death of God" theology he, again, did not believe that one must abandon belief in God's transcendence and view God as only existing within subjective human experiences and contexts. Rather, Bonhoeffer asserted that the resurrected Christ is both transcendent and fully present in the church, where he exists for humans as the body of Christ.[54] Bonhoeffer argued that persons may, thus, only live in truth and freedom in the world in and through the person of Christ, that is, in the body of Christ and not in the body of the human self or community.[55]

For instance, quoting Ephesians 5:14, "Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead," Bonhoeffer declared that one could not bring one's self into authenticity via human thought or action. Rather, it was only "God's word of creation itself that calls [a person] through the church to be awake," which called believers not only to a material life but to "life before God."[56] "Being awake," Bonhoeffer asserted, "is something a person cannot give himself . . . God must call a person to this being awake . . . to be awake means to live before God alone."[57]

Subsequently, when Bonhoeffer said this in LPP, namely, that God "who makes us to live in the world without the working hypothesis of God is the God before whom we stand continually . . . Before God, and with God, we live without God,"[58] he was yet again showing his suspicion of placing confidence in human knowing, institutions, and systems. Furthermore, according to Bonhoeffer, God was asking humans to give up their power and control—to give up their very selves—in surrender, not to the darkness and unknowing of a psychological death to God's presence, but in surrender to the person of Christ himself who, rather than remaining powerless, "wins power and space in the world by his weakness."[59] It was precisely in Christ's faithful act of surrendering his power in dying, which Christ endured in faithfulness, that he could save persons, rather than simply being lost with them.[60]

Therefore, humans were asked not to give up belief in Christ's objective presence and aide but to fix their eyes more fully upon Christ who, in his sacrificial surrender on their behalf, could now bridge the gap of separation between God and humanity. This, of course, is a central theme in Ephesians (cf. Eph 2:13–17). Christ

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53. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 61.

54. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 46–48.

55. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 106.

56. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Berlin: 1931–1932*, vol. 12 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 221.

57. See Bonhoeffer (*Berlin: 1931–1932*, 301) where he references Colossians 2:3 in which we are brought into truth via the wisdom and knowledge available in Christ alone.

58. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 479.

59. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 479.

60. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 479.

was uniting persons with God rather than, as Rollins has argued, showing all belief to be futile. The best praxis for humans then, in Bonhoeffer's view, was not to focus on their own forsakenness, unknowing, or on a deconstruction of Christian systems. These approaches could allow humans to, in actuality, remain in control of both their own deconstructions and subsequent reconstructions of new human systems. Rather, contrary to Rollins, and in concert with Ephesians, Bonhoeffer instructed believers to look upon Christ in faith.[61] In looking to Christ, persons would also see that in his death, the Father had not abandoned Christ, nor humanity, but was reconciling all things to himself, destroying all separation, and offering salvation. Humans were no longer lost if they were in Christ:

> In the body of Jesus Christ God is united with humanity . . . the world is reconciled with God . . . [in] Jesus Christ God took upon himself the sin of the whole world and bore it. There is no part of the world, be it never so forlorn and never so godless, which is not accepted by God and reconciled with God in Jesus Christ. Whoever looks on the body of Jesus Christ in faith can no longer speak of the world as if it were lost, as . . . separated from Christ.[62]

Bonhoeffer repeated this refrain in LPP, saying that, in his dying, Christ did not leave persons to feel abandoned but comforted in the reality that he had now made all things new.[63] The act of dying amidst the darkness was, for Christ, an act of rescue and redemption. So then, for Bonhoeffer, the death of Christ was not the terror Rollins proclaimed it as, nor a loss of God, but, conversely, it was thoroughly comforting because of Christ's conquering of our separation from God and his rescue of the lost.[64]

Bonhoeffer Believed the Principal Enemy of the Body was Satan and his Power of Temptation

Instead of advocating an experiential loss of God in exchange for merely human community and acts, Bonhoeffer believed that God was specifically incarnate in the world in the person of Christ, who alone united humanity with God and placed them into reality in his body and not in merely human community and acts. In addition to this, Bonhoeffer provided another problem for Rollins' a/theism by declaring that the key impediments to a new life of truth and freedom in Christ were individual sin and the power of the actual person of Satan, as the "prince of this world," to tempt humans to sin.[65] While Rollins suggested that all religious belief, including belief in

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61. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, vol. 6 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress, [1949] 2005), 53.

62. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 53.

63. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 65.

64. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 65.

65. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall/Temptation: Two Biblical Studies* (New York: Touchtone, [1959] 1997), 110.

the supernatural, was a primary obstacle to an awakened life of freedom and "love," Bonhoeffer taught that the true obstacle was Satan who, as a "power, as a liar and as accuser," can drive persons into the "darkest night" of isolation and death via the power of temptation.[66] The space for isolation and doubt that Rollins seeks to create as a place of freedom is for Bonhoeffer the place of death where the devil seeks to trap believers. In referencing Ephesians 6, Bonhoeffer added that it was only Satan who truly bound humans by tempting them to sin, so separating them from the body and binding them in death.[67] Bonhoeffer added in *Life Together* that a person's sin is the only thing that ultimately destroys them.[68] Bonhoeffer further claimed that humans could not overcome Satan's power of temptation to sin via merely human means: "No creature can withstand temptation in his own strength. He must fall. So great is the power of Satan (Eph 6:12)."[69]

For Bonhoeffer (as for Paul in Ephesians), the devil could not be defeated by human insight or effort, but only in the power of Christ who had already defeated temptation and sin on behalf of humans. Every human effort to overcome temptation and sin in the flesh was "doomed to failure" but persons could escape death if they would "flee to the Crucified."[70] It was God who now supernaturally empowered his followers, clothing them as one body in Christ, through whom God defeated temptation and sin on their behalf; it is "the victory of Jesus Christ which [believers] now share."[71] It was Christ himself who was the armor of Ephesians 6 and who alone could set humans free if they would "humble" themselves "under the hand of God" and at last find protection from Satan in the "death of Jesus."[72] In *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer added that how Christians were to put on Christ was initially via surrender to Christ in confession of sin[73] and, subsequently, by surrendering to the Word and sacraments as given to the body by Christ for their continual process of being clothed in Christ.[74]

Bonhoeffer Believed that Confession of Individual Sin was Required for Freedom

An additional problem for Rollins is Bonhoeffer's adamant claim that, as an alternative to the obstacles to life and freedom provided by sin and Satan, Christ

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66. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 65.

67. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 65.

68. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, vol. 5 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress, [1939] 2005), 115.

69. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall/Temptation*, 109.

70. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall/Temptation*, 118.

71. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall/Temptation*, 118.

72. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall/Temptation*, 118.

73. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 110–119.

74. See Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 110–119; cf. *Act and Being*, 129, 329; *Christ the Center*, 74; Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 56.

made himself a barrier to a life of freedom and love in the world. Bonhoeffer said, "Christ does set up a barrier," not the need to deconstruct ideologies and experiential certainty, but rather "the gospel, the person of Jesus Christ."[75] He added, Christ "stands between us and God . . . and all other men and things."[76] Consequentially, before persons could overcome sin and Satan or advance to acts of love in the world, they first had to surrender to Christ—who stood before them as an obstacle to their freedom—via confession of sin. To offer the life and freedom found in Christ without repentance would be to tender "cheap grace," which was "the forgiveness of sin . . . proclaimed as a general truth" that functioned sufficiently apart from "repentance" and "confession."[77]

So then, while Bonhoeffer agreed with Rollins that one must embrace a transformative death and deconstruction before advancing to mature faith and life in the world—and that such a deconstruction happened at the cross—for Bonhoeffer the deconstruction required for a "breakthrough" to an awakened life of freedom in the world was more devastating than that advocated by Rollins. Bonhoeffer held that it was God who must deconstruct humans via the singularly painful death of one's self in confession of sins to God and before others, rather than humans deconstructing the Christian faith in ways that allowed them to still retain their pride and control. The act of confession, in its indignity, was especially vital to evidence that one had surrendered to the Christ of Scripture who himself was humiliated as he bore humanity's sins and bid persons to come and die with him, surrendering one's "old-self" in its pride.[78] Thus, what must be forsaken was not one's belief in God's presence but one's sin nature, which was also the true root of false systems.[79] Only in the humiliating act of confession could one be deconstructed by God, reorienting one's focus from the self to Christ. Bonhoeffer also warned that those who refused the necessity of confession were trying to be "as God" who alone has no sin.[80]

Bonhoeffer did not, therefore, allow persons to conduct philosophical, psychological, or experiential deconstructions, and then to then claim to have advanced to a "mature" faith and being in Christ or in the world.[81] Bonhoeffer repeatedly stressed that it was individual sin that destroyed persons and it was only

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75. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 106.

76. Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 95–98.

77. Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 45–48.

78. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 111–112.

79. See Joel D. Lawrence, "Death Together: Thanatology and Sanctification in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer" (PhD diss., Jesus College, University of Cambridge, UK, 2006). Lawrence has argued that many scholars have misunderstood Bonhoeffer's vision of how Christians might exist "for others" in the world because they misunderstood his soteriology and thanatology. Lawrence argued that, via Luther, Bonhoeffer believed that the root of human problems was the "heart turned inward on itself" and confession of sin to God and before others was how humans died to the self.

80. Lawrence, "Death Together," 112.

81. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 92, 94, 131.

in confession and forgiveness of sins, not via psychological experiences—including the types of psychological experiential methods advocated by Rollins—that Christ placed persons in truth.[82]

Consequentially, while Bonhoeffer cared about materialist realities and situations of injustice, such as can be clearly seen in his fight against Hitler, he argued that it was only as persons surrendered themselves to Christ—instead of to a psychological "unknowing"—that persons were then made able to love their neighbors and do good in the world.[83] For Bonhoeffer, one could only accomplish good for others in the world from within the living body of Christ.[84] In this body, the church, believers must also, while living in Christ within the world, give up attachments to the secular world and cling only to Christ, rather than, as Rollins suggested, give up attachments to God to embrace the secular world.[85]

Bonhoeffer Believed in Obedient Thinking and Surrender to Christ-given Agents of Revelation

Bonhoeffer, in contrast to Rollins, grounded all belief (orthodoxy) and practice (orthopraxy) in the incarnate Christ existing as the body of Christ[86] rather than in systems or institutions. Yet, for Bonhoeffer, there must also be evidence that one had actually met the Christ of Scripture. This was evidenced by subsequent steps that Bonhoeffer articulated by which persons might center their lives in Christ.[87] These steps included: confession of sin, followed by surrendering oneself to the Scriptures, creeds, and sacred rites of the apostolic faith in "obedient thinking" and practice.[88] Bonhoeffer claimed, "[F]aith is only real . . . only becomes faith in the act of obedience."[89] Thus, against Rollins' belief that all Christian belief and practices must be deconstructed and replaced with subjective experiences and new liturgical structures, Bonhoeffer maintained that the apostolic canon and the core historic beliefs and sacred practices of the faith, including obedient preaching of

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82. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 115.

83. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 127.

84. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 130–132.

85. Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 99.

86. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theology Study of the Sociology of the Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 127.

87. See Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 140. Bonhoeffer critiqued Barth as having promoted a "positivism of revelation," which to Bonhoeffer meant that Barth had negated the need for the body of Christ by allowing individual revelation to be a sufficient means of knowing and following Christ.

88. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 130–132. See also Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 74.

89. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 69.

the Word and the sacraments and rites,[90] must not be altered but surrendered to as Christ-given agents of revelation, and the means by which one centered their life in Christ after being deconstructed in confession.[91] All Christian life, work, thinking, and preaching was to be practiced within the community of faith in the body of Christ. Even theology, Bonhoeffer said, must be done only by and for the body of Christ, and only in obedient thinking—meaning thinking that is not detached from the church and is based on the Word--since only "the community of faith knows that the word which is addressed to it, and which theology has for its subject matter" only makes sense where Christ is present and "confirms it in each instance."[92] Within the new life of the body there was no "unknowing" or need to abandon one's self to the darkness of doubt, as Rollins suggested a mature person should do, but rather, for Bonhoeffer, Scripture made all things clear for those who received the word together in the body in the presence of Christ.[93]

Similarly, against the temptation to revise Scripture through the lens of the current culture,[94] Bonhoeffer warned that the Church must stand by Scripture as received from the apostolic witnesses, as a sacred agent of revelation above the human desire to be relevant in the current age. Bonhoeffer argued, "Where the question of relevance becomes the theme of theology, we can be certain that the cause has already been betrayed and sold out."[95] Thus, Bonhoeffer saw Scripture as he also saw the church: both were sacred instruments of revelation whereby Christ chose to reveal himself via the "sacred canon" and the "miracle of his presence in the Church," where "he bears witness to himself as there in history, here and now."[96] It was also in the living body where Christians would realize that the Christ who revealed himself "now" was the same eternal and unchanging Christ "which the Scriptures deliver to us," coming "by no other way than by the Word of the Scripture," rather than being a Christ of the current cultural or subjective views.[97]

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90. See Richard Beck, "Insurrection: A Critique," Experimental Theology, February 9, 2012. Accessed February 22, 2018, http://experimentaltheology.blogspot.com/2012/02/insurrection-critique.html. Beck argued that Rollins failed to address the importance Bonhoeffer placed on "religious rituals directed toward God as 'object,'" which Bonhoeffer taught were to be kept in private, within the community of faith, due to a secular "world come of age" not understanding them.

91. Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, 56; Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 130–132; *Christ the Center*, 72.

92. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 130–132.

93. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 129.

94. See Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 2–3. Heschel has shown that Hitler, in fact, did what Bonhoeffer warned against, creating a Nazi-bible that removed references to miracles, Christ's divinity, and Judaism.

95. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords: Letters, Lectures and Notes 1928–1936*, ed. Edwin H. Robertson (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 308–310.

96. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 72.

97. Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 73.

Bonhoeffer then, unlike Rollins, seemed to refuse to depart from the "appointed witnesses" of Scripture on their testimony of who Jesus is and how persons are called to follow him. For Bonhoeffer, to try to deconstruct religious systems or belief in God's presence via psychological experience or to embrace the world, as Rollins suggested, without being first transformed by Christ would be to retain control over one's beliefs and deconstruction, thus perpetuating sinful human "self-assertion" by placing the "I" of self over God, revelation, and the other. Instead, for Bonhoeffer, the primary way for persons to be placed in a "God-given reality" in which one was, subsequently, able to authentically exist and act in Christ, and love their neighbor in the world, was not via deconstruction of Scripture, orthodoxy or doctrines. Nor did Bonhoeffer conceive of engaging in an orthopraxy of materialist love. Rather, it was through surrender to Christ in a death-to-self primarily evidenced by confession of one's sins. On the other side of that death, Christians who were given new life together in Christ could then speak theologically and participate in love, justice, and reconciliation in the world via Christ himself.[98]

Conclusion

In this chapter we have considered how Rollins' theology exemplifies how human doctrines and theology might become a form of *methodeia* that Paul warned against in Ephesians 4:14 and 6:11, by which supernatural enemies might use human teaching to move Christians away from Christ and unity in his body. Doctrines and theology such as Rollins' that are presented as Christian but that lack continuity and congruence with apostolic teaching, can be especially dangerous because they seemingly emanate from a member of the body, and thus can appear to come from underneath the armor that the body wears for protection. Rollins also seeks to further clothe his theology with the appearance of truth via sheltering under Bonhoeffer's reputation. Rollins' theology appears to especially be a form of *methodeia* because he not only contradicts Paul's teaching that the true enemies of the body are the devil and sin, but Rollins further claims that belief in supernatural realities—even the presence or aide of God—are merely human ideologies used to manipulate persons into false belief and that block persons from mature faith. Against Rollins' teaching, Bonhoeffer—in agreement with Paul—shows that the devil is in fact the primary enemy of Christ and his body against which believers can only find victory in the living, eternal person of the crucified Christ who is tangibly present for believers in the body of Christ. For Bonhoeffer, how a person enters into Christ, in his body, is by dying to one's self and surrendering to Christ via confession of sin. Subsequently, they will remain in the body through obedient adherence to the true Word and the sacred acts that Christ ordained for the formation of his body, leading to humility, unity, righteousness, and alignment with apostolic teaching.

98. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 487.

Conclusion: Ephesians and the Powers

Joshua M. Greever

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There is little doubt that Paul's letter to the Ephesians holds a central place in our biblical understanding of the Powers. With this in mind, in this volume we tried to analyze closely the presentation of the Powers in Ephesians, and to use our analysis of the Powers as a window into exploring some of Paul's other major themes in the letter. Specifically, analyzing the Powers in Ephesians contributed to our understanding of the letter's theology, soteriology, ecclesiology, discipleship, and missions.

With regard to theology, the letter's doctrine of God is discerned more clearly in relation to the Powers in Ephesians. Eric Covington showed that Thomas Aquinas used the treatment of the Powers as an opportunity to reflect on God's power, which is infinite and thus incomparably greater than that of the Powers, who are created and whose power is derivative and finite. Additionally, Christ's exalted status— "far above the heavens/above every name" (Eph 1:21)—demonstrates that his status at the right hand of God is linked with God's own status, and his power is incomparably greater than theirs. Whether or not Aquinas was right in his angelic hierarchical classification, his lectures are a salient reminder that a study of the Powers in Ephesians enables us to grasp more clearly the incomparably great power of God.

Further, in the chapters by Dan Darko and Luke Hoselton, analyzing the Powers in Ephesians elucidates the letter's soteriology. Darko reminded us that salvation in Ephesians includes the notion of being saved from the tyranny of the Powers, and that God's accomplishment of our salvation included his defeat of the selfsame Powers (Eph 2:1–3). Hoselton also reminded us that salvation in Ephesians is inextricably bound up with God's act of new creation, a theme that pervades anthropology, ecclesiology, eschatology, and cosmology in the letter. God's act to save in Christ is therefore summarized by the notion of resurrection (Eph 2:4–6). This new creative act is done in union with Christ, such that believers are exalted in the heavenly places with Christ and share in his victory over the Powers.

Similarly, the three chapters on Ephesians 6:10–20 cast light on the intersection between soteriology, ecclesiology, discipleship, and missions in the letter. Mark and Nancy Kreitzer reminded us that the armor is God's own armor, and that the power to live the Christian life is found in Christ. Christians should recognize the ongoing reality of spiritual warfare and stand strong against the devil's schemes in reliance on the Spirit's power through the word and prayer. Even though Christians belong to Christ, they still need to fight temptation lest they give a foothold to the devil (Eph

4:26–27; 6:16). And though conversion marks the beginning of the Christian life, Christians need to mature and grow in their faith (Eph 4:13–14). Joshua Greever reminded us of the climactic role Ephesians 6:10–20 plays in the letter as a whole, and that the call to put on God's armor entails the call to rest in and appropriate the victory over the Powers that Christ already accomplished. John Frederick's treatment of the same passage, on the other hand, urged that the armor of God is corporate, and that the call to stand against the Powers therefore is the church's missional mandate for social engagement against the Powers who are manifest in systems or ideologies. These three chapters on Ephesians 6:10–20 highlight not only the significance of the passage in the letter but also the complexity of applying its directive to the Christian life and the church.

Analyzing the Powers in Ephesians also clarifies the task and nature of missions as well as the kinds of schemes the devil uses against the church. Simon Gomersall and Vicky Balabanski reminded us that missionaries from the West have sometimes failed to reckon with not only the worldview of the indigenous peoples to whom they share the gospel but also the worldview of the biblical authors themselves. In order to bring the gospel effectively to a people, we must grasp and uphold the biblical witness concerning the nature of the Powers and how Christ's victory over them affects and enables evangelism and church planting. Moreover, non-Western indigenous peoples often have a clearer belief in or grasp of the reality of spiritual beings invisible to our eyes. Because of the supernatural worldview of the biblical authors as well as that of non-Western indigenous peoples, missiological training should incorporate preparation to engage a people's supernatural worldview with the biblical worldview. As we undertake such cultural engagement, Jonathan Sharpe and Jerry Pillay reminded us of the danger of false doctrine that the devil uses to hinder the church's unified faith in Christ. They suggested that the "Death of God" theology avowed by Peter Rollins and others is, in contrast with the approach of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, exactly the kind of *methodeia* the devil concocts against the body of Christ (Eph 4:14; 6:11).

Thus, this volume's analysis of the Powers in Ephesians opens further vistas into theology, soteriology, ecclesiology, discipleship, and missions. Even though some Christians can have an unhealthy fascination with angels and demons that draws away their worship from God, gratitude for the gospel, and vigilance in the Christian life, this volume reminds that a biblical angelology should serve orthodoxy and orthopraxy. It should recalibrate and refocus our attention on an orthodox doctrine of God, a renewed appreciation for the gospel, a balanced expectation for the Christian life, and a clear sense of the church's true enemy and mission. Conversely, a right discernment of orthodoxy will protect the Christian and the church from fearing the Powers or being discouraged by their persistent reality in the present evil age.

We conclude with a final word about hermeneutical approaches to Ephesians and its supernatural worldview. Not only did Balabanski rightly note that the Christians

in Ephesus believed in supernatural Powers, but Darko also rightly affirmed that Paul himself, along with the early Christians, believed in the existence of a spiritual and hostile being known as the devil. While many modern scholars have a hard time accepting the reality of the devil or the existence of such supernatural spiritual beings, finding it much easier to demythologize the Powers as merely evil institutions on earth, Paul and the early Christians did not have such a hard time conceiving of such beings. This reminds us that Christianity, and Ephesians in particular, possesses a supernatural worldview that holds to the existence of supernatural beings who either serve God or are antagonistic towards him. We do an injustice to the worldview of the early Christians and Paul's letter to the Ephesians when we fail to interact with them on their own terms. Our hermeneutical approach must be to resist the urge to make the biblical text say what is most palatable to our modern ears or mindset. Rather, faithful biblical interpretation seeks to read the text of Scripture on its own terms and according to its own worldview.

Towards that end, we hope that this volume is a salient contribution to the field of Ephesians scholarship and, more broadly, to Pauline scholarship and biblical studies. We hope that this volume will spur further reflection on the biblical presentation of the Powers, and that this in turn would clarify and enable greater theological reflection and doxological joy.

Soli Deo Gloria,
John Frederick and Joshua M. Greever (editors)

Book Reviews

O'Malley, John W. *When Bishops Meet: An Essay Comparing Trent, Vatican I, and Vatican II.* **Cambridge: Harvard Belknap, 2019, pp. 240, $24.95, hardback.**

John W. O'Malley, professor of theology at Georgetown University, has established himself as one of the most learned and thoughtful historians of the great councils of post-Luther Roman Catholicism. Having previously published separate monographs on the Council of Trent and on the First and Second Vatican Councils, this slim volume represents a capstone to his work in this area, offering a reflection upon how modern Catholicism has developed since the Reformation with particular focus on its conciliar actions.

The book is arranged thematically rather than chronologically, with each chapter comparing the Councils in terms of a particular topic. Part One raises three basic questions: What do Councils do? Does Church teaching change? Finally, who is in charge? Part Two looks at the categories of people involved: popes and their curia, theologians, laity, and The Other—meaning non-Roman bodies, Orthodox, Protestant, and non-Christian. Part Three then asks what difference the Councils made and whether there will be another one.

Protestant readers will find much that is of interest here. O'Malley is adept at explaining the different dynamics of the three Councils in their historical context. Protestant readers will find the book to be very helpful in this regard as it gently but firmly puts to death numerous popular misconceptions. We learn, for example, that Protestants were invited to be involved at Trent and reform—real, theological reform—was at least for a time a possibility; that the dogma of papal infallibility did not go uncontested at Vatican I and, in its approved form, is a far more restricted idea than is generally thought; and, finally, that Vatican II was a much more diffuse and complicated affair than either later Catholic conservatives or liberals have sought to make it. Perhaps most interesting has been the rise to prominence at and since these gatherings of theologians (as opposed to bishops) as a real force within the Church and, after Vatican II, of the laity itself as an influential body. What the book does so well is show that the concept of a council, at least in terms of how it transacts its business, has varied over time. Rome—and many of her Protestant critics—may believe that she herself is unchanged and unchanging but the history of these three Councils indicates otherwise, at least in terms of who exerts influence and how they exert it.

Despite these strengths, at times O'Malley glosses over key facets of Roman church history. For example, on pp. 57-58 he claims that bishops were starting to defer to Rome by the third century and that this became more pronounced once Christianity was the dominant religious force in the Empire. Yet on p. 7 he states that Rome

and the West played mainly marginal roles in the first seven ecumenical councils, a position he reiterates in modified form on p. 59, where he says they played roles ranging from important to marginal. Is this a case of O'Malley's love of his church pulling him one way, the historical facts pulling him in another? When we remember that ancient prelates in Baghdad considered Constantinople to be the western bishop, historical and geographical relativity would seem critical in assessing Rome's claims to universal supremacy.

Another questionable claim appears on p. 103. O'Malley maintains that it was only with the advent of universities in the thirteenth century that theologians emerged as an influential category of teachers separated from the office of bishop. Although it is perhaps pedantic to note, universities did not emerge in a vacuum but from (among other things) a tradition of independent teachers of theology (Peter Abelard being only the most famous). In addition, the whole monastic tradition of an earlier era had produced numerous theologians who were not bishops.

As he looks to the present and the future in the final section, O'Malley is optimistic. It is interesting that he praises the 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si*, as a great example of post-Vatican II social concern. More traditional Catholics have identified it as a Trojan Horse by which the pope is making room within the church's teaching and practice for elements of the sexual revolution. Benedict XVI only merits a mention for his role at Vatican II, when the later conservative pope worked in alliance with the very unconservative Karl Rahner. His papacy is neglected completely—which is a shame, given that Ratzinger/Benedict might be one of the most theologically adept men ever to have been Bishop of Rome. As to whether there will be another council, O'Malley is hopeful that there will a Vatican III, albeit the now vast number of bishops would make logistics difficult and agreement on almost anything harder to reach.

This book is a fitting capstone to O'Malley's four-part series on the great Councils of Roman Catholicism. Readers, including laypeople and students, will find their understanding both of the councils and Catholicism enhanced. And Protestants may be compelled to think about how their churches have responded to challenges over the years and how well-equipped they are to address those of the present and the future.

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Bergren, Theodore A. *A Latin-Greek Index of the Vulgate New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018, pp. 274, €114.00, hardback.

Readers who are interested in textual criticism of the New Testament will recognize the value of the Old Latin and Vulgate translations for accessing early forms of the text. The translations make available textual forms from roughly the second through

the fourth centuries, while the impact of the translations on the biblical text and wider Christian history extends much further. Although the Latin translations are sometimes overlooked in New Testament textual criticism because of the number of Greek manuscripts that are extant, students of the Apostolic Fathers are not in the same fortunate position. For many texts that have been brought together in this collection, the Latin translations provide key textual evidence due to the paucity of manuscripts. Theodore Bergren's index offers an important resource for anyone interested in Greek and Latin texts in early Christianity.

Bergren is an emeritus professor in the Religious Studies Department at the University of Richmond. He has written commentaries on Fifth and Sixth Ezra and has also compiled *A Latin-Greek Index of the Vulgate New Testament* (Scholars, 1991). He is thus well-placed to assist those who are working on early Christian Latin translations. The expanded volume under review is set out in a similar way to other bilingual dictionaries and concordances with which readers might be familiar. It is based on Latin headwords. Greek words are placed underneath and indented slightly. The Latin entries represent words found in the Vulgate New Testament or Latin Apostolic Fathers. They are thus terms utilized by early Christian translators, since these texts were originally composed in Greek. The Greek entries underneath the Latin headwords indicate terms for which the Latin headword is used as a translation. In addition, each Greek entry is keyed to two other Greek-Latin indexes to be discussed in the following paragraph. For those who are working on Latin translations of early Christian writings, a key benefit from Bergren's index is thus that they can quickly see what Greek expressions may underlie the Latin text that they have in front of them.

Besides a working knowledge of the languages, two of the key tools for anyone researching Greek and Latin texts are Alfred Schmoller's *Handkonkordanz zum griechischen Neuen Testament* and Heinrich Krafts's *Clavis Patrum Apostolicorum*. These books allow readers of the Greek New Testament and Apostolic Father's to look up a Greek word, find where it is used elsewhere in the corpus, and discover the translations that are employed to render the Greek word into Latin. Bergren offers an index to allow readers of the Vulgate and Latin Apostolic Fathers to find the Greek words translated by the Latin word which they are currently examining. In other words, it enables one to reverse the order. For example, if one is reading the Latin text of Polycarp's *Philippians* 11.1 and wonders what Greek word might lie behind Polycarp's description of himself as "saddened" (*contristatus*), they could open Bergren's index, look up the relevant word and find that there are four or five Greek words translated by *contristare* and *contristari*. In addition, the index is keyed to the page numbers in Schmoller and Kraft so that one can undertake further examinations of how various terms function in early Christian translations.

For anyone engaged in studies of the Latin New Testament or Apostolic Fathers, this book is essential. Without the *Index*, one would need either to look up the Greek text of the passage that they are studying or guess the relevant Greek word.

Only after this could one look up the word in Schmoller or Kraft. Bergren's index provides a time-saving measure that enables one to keep their focus on the Latin text while quickly gathering data on Greek words that the Latin word in question is used to translate. In addition to saving time, scholars of Polycarp and the Shepherd of Hermas are able more easily to consider the Greek text that may lie behind those sections of their text for which a Greek text is not extant or is fragmentary (Pol. *Phil.* 10.1–12.3; 13.2–14.1; Herm. Sim. 9.30.1–10.4.5 [107.1–114.5]). By knowing what Latin words are employed to translate particular Greek terms, one may hope more accurately to retroject a viable Greek text for these portions of early Christian documents. Because attention would also need to be given to the particular translation practices utilized by the translators of the texts, a retrojection would need to be done with more precision than Bergren's index allows on its own. However, the *Index* provides a very useful place from which to begin and to expand one's data set in difficult cases.

The *Index* also offers a starting point for translation word studies. For example, συγχαίρω (*sunchairō*; I rejoice together) is translated in the Vulgate with both *congratulari* (Luke 1:58; 15:6, 9; Phil 2:17–18) and *congaudere* (1 Cor 12:26; 13:6). Both Latin words are suitable translation choices, but the question arises: why did Jerome alter his word choice? Is it anything more than stylistic variation or translator's prerogative? Bergren's work also enables one to get a sense of how Latin translators rendered Greek words. To take one example, the word κληρονομέω (*klēronomeō*; I inherit) is variously translated into Latin as *hereditatem capere, heredem esse, hereditare*, and *hereditate possidere*. One glance at this list shows that all of the translations include the stem *hered-*, from which come the English words *inherit* and *hereditary*. However, the diversity of renditions raises questions about why a translator may have preferred one option over another. Finally, for the philology enthusiasts who may be reading this review, it is also intriguing to note which words were more easily transliterated rather than translated. Examples include *gazophylacium* (γαζοφυλάκιον; *gazophylakion*; contribution box), *gaza* (γάζα; *gaza*; treasury), and *genealogia* (γενεαλογία; *genealogia*; genealogy).

As useful as this volume is, however, it is not without two limitations. First, some Latin words in the index are missing Greek entries that they translate. For example, *consistens* and *consistenti* are used in 1 Clem. inscription for παροικοῦσα (*paroikousa*; sojourning) and παροικούσῃ (*paroikousē*; sojourning). However, παροικέω (*paroikeo*; I sojourn) is not listed in the *Index* under either *consistens* or *consistere*. Likewise, arguably the best Vulgate manuscripts of Herm. Mand. 6.1.1 (35.1) employs *paenitentia* to translate ἐγκράτεια (*enkrateia*; self-control), but no record of this is made in the *Index*. These examples are minor, but the translation choices are noteworthy for anyone attempting to paint a robust picture of Greek and Latin translations in early Christianity. The second matter to observe regards the bibliography. Studies of the Latin Shepherd of Hermas have been made easier with the

publication of two recent editions of the Vulgate and Palatine translations (Christian Tornau and Paolo Cecconi, *The* Shepherd *of Hermas in Latin: Critical Edition of the Oldest Translation* Vulgata, De Gruyter, 2014; Anna Vezzoni, *Il Pastore di Erma: Versione palatina, con testo a fronte*, Le lettere, 1994). However, these works do not appear in Bergren's bibliography. To be fair, the *Index* is keyed to the works of Schmoller and Kraft. Kraft's *Clavis*—the relevant work for the Shepherd of Hermas—was first published in 1963 and updated most recently in 1998. The fault of this second point does not, therefore, lie with Bergren. However, the presence of new editions points to the need for continued study of the Latin New Testament, Latin Apostolic Fathers, and the translation practices that were utilized in compiling them. Bergren's *Index* is an enormously useful tool for students of early Christian texts and translations. It expands and, with respect, makes almost obsolete Bergren's previous valuable index of the Vulgate. For researchers who engage in textual or translation studies of early Christian texts, this book deserves the highest consideration. For the libraries that support such research, this reference tool is indispensable.

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Koerpel, Robert. *Maurice Blondel: Transforming Catholic Tradition*. South Bend, IN: Notre Dame Press, 2018, pp.278, $55.00, hardback.

In the introduction to his book, Robert Koerpel insightfully observes that it is a "paradox of history that Blondel has become one of the most influential, least well-known, and consistently misunderstood figures in Catholicism" (p. 2). Indeed, Blondel's philosophy of action, which led to accusations of immanentism as well as naturalism, nevertheless infiltrated French theology to such an extent that twentieth-century French debates over the relationship between nature and the supernatural are inconceivable apart from his philosophy. Koerpel's focus, however, is to revisit a different area of Blondel's influence—his idea of tradition, which Blondel developed at the height of the Modernist Controversy. During this time Blondel's orthodoxy was questioned within circles of ecclesial influence. Blondel's essay, *History and Dogma* (1904), emerged out of the controversy, and yet took hold in the French theological imaginary in a way that extended far beyond that particular debate with Alfred Loisy. As Koerpel notes, key Catholic figures such as Jean Daniélou, Yves Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu, Edward Schillebeeckx, Karl Rahner, and Henri de Lubac all sought to recover a deeper sense of the meaning of tradition, and to find in tradition a source of reform and renewal. Koerpel's project, in part, similarly intends to recover in Blondel's idea of tradition a resource for contemporary engagement, especially for an English-speaking audience. To that end, Koerpel engages in something akin to "retrieval;" he pays meticulous attention to the historical situation out of

which Blondel's argument emerges, drawing it into constructive conversation with modern thinkers.

In *History and Dogma*, Blondel sought to address an increasing skepticism towards the validity of dogma in his day. The emerging study of religion from a historical perspective in the nineteenth century contributed to a loss of confidence in biblical and ecclesial authority. Blondel observed that so long as "Christian facts" (history) and "Christian beliefs" (dogma), had appeared to coincide, there was no urgency to work out how it was that the Church had moved from history *to* dogma. What is required, he suggested, is an account of the Church's third epistemological way, that is, the means by which the double-step is taken between history and dogma, a synthesizing principle that is distinct from, but mediates between, history and dogma. Blondel wished to show that there is more than one way of attaining of Christian knowledge, more than a single avenue by which the Church has recourse to its Lord. For Blondel, this means is to be found in the tradition of the Church, re-understood first and foremost as faithful action rather than as an intellectual deposit.

One of Koerpel's great contributions in this book is the way he draws not only on *History and Dogma* (which is translated into English), but on Blondel's corpus more broadly (much of which remains untranslated) in order to deepen the reader's understanding of what Blondel means by "tradition." In so doing, Koerpel is able to show how it is that a term so loaded with baggage in the wake of the French Revolution (not to mention in the Modernist Controversy) could have proved so fruitful for the young philosopher. So, for example, Koerpel connects Blondel's idea of tradition to his earlier use of Leibniz's *vinculum substantiale*, as well as to his later foray into the epistemological distinction between real and notional knowledge. The goal is to demonstrate how, for Blondel, tradition, as a bond, is capable of mediation between polarities: history and theology, epistemology and ontology, nature and the supernatural. Following Blondel, Koerpel stresses that what in theory is divided, finds unity (without confusion) in practice. Since tradition is, primarily, the living synthesis of faithful praxis, it has the capacity to reconcile antinomies.

In emphasizing this running theme in Blondel's broader corpus, Koerpel also hopes to problematize, or at least soften, the critique lobbied against Blondel by Yves Congar, who saw in Blondel's understanding of tradition a devaluation of tradition's more explicit sources and a prioritizing of its implicit and vital character. Contra Congar, Koerpel argues that Blondel's intention was to locate in tradition the unifying means by which the dialectical movement between implicit and explicit, real and notional, takes place. However, whether Koerpel is able to completely assuage Congarian angst remains an open-ended question. Despite Blondel's insistence on the unity-in-distinction between real and notional knowledge, the implicit and the explicit, it seems he nevertheless continued to prize, in describing how tradition effects its synthesis, one side of the dialectic as the primary driver (faithful action and implicit knowledge). This in turn meant that what constitutes the visible marks of

tradition remains somewhat vague in Blondel (who can be forgiven, as a philosopher and not a theologian, of abstaining from articulating tradition's visible manifestations in more detail). Koerpel, however, argues that by "faithful action" Blondel did have in mind praxis that intimately linked tradition with a particular ecclesial identity— that is, the sacraments and the liturgy. Nevertheless, it would be left to someone like Congar to articulate more clearly and with greater historical depth the explicit sources of tradition, its "monuments," which on the one hand helped to distinguish the Catholic tradition from other traditions, but on the other hand ran the risk of identifying tradition too closely with its effects. The danger there is always that of a return to a more juridical mindset. If Blondel was in danger of saying too little, Congar was in danger of saying too much. Still, one can read their respective expositions as complementary and mutually-reinforcing, and it seems Koerpel's comparison of the two leans in that direction.

The book's outline is as follows: In Chapter 1, Koerpel focuses on Blondel's philosophical reception, showing that the young philosopher wished to steer a course between positivism and spiritualism. It is here that Koerpel also introduces the reader to Leibniz and his impact on Blondel's philosophy of action. Chapters 2-4 provide a robust account of the particular *sitz-im-Leben* that generated Blondel's *History and Dogma*. This includes an examination of the dominant neo-Thomist account of tradition (which Blondel termed "extrinsicism"), the epistemological crisis of "representation" in idealism, and finally, the "historicism" of Alfred Loisy and its connections with John Henry Newman. Chapter 5 examines the noetic value of action for Blondel, while Chapter 6 delves more deeply into the particular argument found in *History and Dogma*. Chapters 7-8 broaden the scope of discussion again, with a foray into the question of the relationship between epistemology and ontology in dialogue with the likes of Congar, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, and Heidegger.

Koerpel strikes a very good balance between careful exposition and constructive engagement, introducing Blondel with clarity to an English-speaking audience, for whom Blondel still remains all-too peripheral. Koerpel shows why Blondel's work continues to resound over a century later, and why his idea of tradition remains a rich resource for contemporary theology. Undoubtedly, this book will contribute greatly to Blondel scholarship, as well as to continued debates over the theological and philosophical significance of tradition.

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Lynch, Thomas. *Whence and Whither: On Lives and Living.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2019, pp. 248, $18, paperback.

Thomas Lynch is a funeral director, critically acclaimed poet, essayist, and the author of five collections of poems and four books of essays. His notable work titled, *The Undertaking: Life Studies from the Dismal Trade* (1997), won the Heartland Prize for non-fiction, the American Book Award, and was a finalist for the National Book Award. Widely considered one of the most skilled writers and thinkers on death and the meaning of living, Lynch's work has appeared in several internationally influential publications, including the *New Yorker*, *Harper's*, *The New York Times*, and the *Paris Review*, among others. Lynch is also a frequent guest poetry reader, keynote speaker on the topics of the last things, the life of faith, and medical ethics, in venues all over the English-speaking world, as well as a guest lecturer in universities, churches, institutes, and libraries.

In the preface to *Whence and Whither*, Lynch presents the overall premise of the book, which also stands as the common human predicament—"every human whoever was or is or will be will wrestle with these mysteries: the beauty of our being and the desolation of our ceasing to be" (p. xi). According to Lynch, humans are the only creatures plagued by questions about the religious and existential mysteries, namely: "How did we come to be? Where are we bound when we die? Does the abyss on either edge of our linear history include us being in it? What does it all *mean?*" (p. xi). The collection of writings in this book turns out to be Lynch's humble attempt to wrestle with these mysteries and make sense of the senseless human quandary—we live, we die, and then what?

The book is comprised of sixteen chapters, each of which contributes to Lynch's wistful "wrestling match" with the mysterious "whence and whither" questions of the human experience. In this collection of material from lectures, essays, poems, personal and impersonal stories, and a play, Lynch demonstrates his exceptional ability to reflectively and evocatively ponder the meaning of life, death, and what comes next in ways that are never depressing, occasionally amusing, always thoughtful, and absolutely inspiring.

Each chapter serves as a stand-alone contribution to the whole book. For this reason, I will highlight two chapters that caught my attention. First, in the somewhat startlingly titled chapter, "Some Thoughts on Uteri and Womb," Lynch contemplates the awe and wonder of the womb, which he describes as the first frontier of our humanness, the "seedbed and safe harbor whence we launch, first home and habitat, the garden of delight's denouement" (p. 61). Lynch further elaborates on the female reproductive parts and uses empowering language to articulate that women are not the "weaker sex," but rather, females seem to be the fiercest, the ones without which nothing happens (p. 63). All of this leads Lynch to describe the "animal sobs" of a bent over mother, graveside for her toddling boy's burial, as she wraps her small arms

around her midsection, feeling the grief most intensely in her most hidden places, the seedbed of her uterus, "vacated with pushing and with pain, and vanquished by her child's death" (p. 66). Second, in "The Good Funeral and the Empty Tomb," Lynch expounds on a theme that is woven into the entire work: the living going the distance with the dead. Lynch explains that what separates humans from all other creatures is that since we are the species that contemplate the existential mysteries of being and ceasing to be, our humanity is directly linked to how we respond to mortality. In short, Lynch suggests that "how we deal with our dead in their physical reality and how we deal with death as an existential reality define and describe us" (p. 134). Building on this, Lynch critiques the North American cultural trend of bodiless obsequies (memorial services and "celebrations of life") as being renunciations of an essential undertaking and fundamental humanity (p. 137). In contrast, he argues that a *good funeral*, one equipped with four essential and definitive elements—the corpse, the caring survivors, a narrative that settles peace between the two, and the disposing of the dead—is the best response to the signature human concern of what to do about a dead human, and the best way for the living to go the distance with the dead (pp. 136-138). Lynch continues his critique and suggests that perhaps if the dead were more welcomed in church, maybe the living would return (p. 142).

The reader will celebrate Lynch's openness to discuss his life as a state of flux, namely living in the tensions between community and marginalization, orthodoxy and apostasy, authority and autonomy, belonging and disbelief (p. 152). Applause is also warranted for the creative approach to presenting his reflections on the whence and whither questions. The innovative combination of literary genres (i.e. poems, essays, a play, etc.) makes this work accessible and engaging to a range of multifarious readers. However, this strength could also become a weakness. At times the material is difficult to follow, specifically when thoughts and themes cannot be traced easily, even within the same chapter. In addition, unfavorable criticism will come from Lynch's overtly pessimistic comments toward the church, but particularly the Roman Catholic church. Although Lynch does demonstrate a level of ecumenical sympathy in his praise of heroic, reverend clergy of multiple denominations, it is difficult to find one positive comment about the Catholic church, the tradition that has shaped his faith, both for the good and the bad.

For potential readers, namely students of biblical studies, a note of caution is necessary: this book offers no formal or exegetical treatment of the biblical text pertaining to death and afterlife. At times Lynch refers to the Bible and makes connections between Scripture and the topic of his discussion, but he states clearly that exegesis is beyond his expertise. If one is hoping for a biblical perspective on life and living, then this book is sure to disappoint. For the student of theological studies, however, there is much to be gathered from these reflections. Lynch challenges the existence of God, discusses openly the reality of living in the tension between faith and doubt, and compels the reader to reevaluate the intersection between his or her

views of individual eschatology and theological anthropology. And ultimately, the theologian is confronted with the implications that emerge from the reappraisal.

This thought-provoking book introduces readers to the complexity of human reflection on the existential questions of human existence. Reading this book will naturally elicit an internal "wrestling match" that grapples with question: "How did *I* come to be the one *I am*?"

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Milbank, Alison. *God & the Gothic: Religion, Romance and Reality in the English Literary Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2018, pp. 354, hardback. $44.35.

Although traditionally seen as a marginal form within the wider world of English literature, the Gothic novel has become increasingly popular with both academic researchers and students since at least the 1970s. Lending itself to a diversity of theoretical and critical approaches, from the psychoanalytic to the Marxist, the Gothic novel has spawned a host of academic monographs and a thriving field of Gothic studies. That said, a surprisingly small amount of attention has been given to the theological and religious elements within this kind of writing—an oversight which stems from both literary studies lack of comfort with the theological and the reticence of theology to take seriously the heterodox and heretical Gothic. Happily, this lacuna has started to be corrected, with increased scholarly attention being given to the intersection of theology and Gothic writing. Into this area, Alison Milbank, associate professor of theology and literature at the University of Nottingham, has produced what will be the landmark text for years to come and an indispensable guide for both students of the Gothic and researchers of theology and literature.

Building off the work of Charles Taylor, particularly the important study *A Secular Age*, Milbank posits the emergence of the Gothic as being a specifically English Protestant phenomena. Tracing the roots of the Gothic back to the reformation, Milbank argues that the core function of this type of writing is a kind of imaginative and religious mediation that emerges due to the breaks with the Roman Catholic Church—absent of an ecclesiastical structure that could mediate between God and humanity, cultural forms emerged which could fulfill that mediating function. Rather than lapse into easy binaries, Milbank makes the more sophisticated argument that the Gothic marks an "unease with rational dissent and with a Protestant lack of mediation between God and humanity" (p. 4). The book seeks to demonstrate this with close detailed readings of Gothic novels from the late eighteenth century to the very end of the nineteenth century. The aim is to both "theologise" Gothic writing and to challenge the notion of the Gothic's literary marginality as it "holds the historical and the poetic, the real and the romantic in constant play" (p. 5).

The individual chapters proceed in a broadly historicist approach with close attention being given to theological and social contexts from which the texts are produced. The four parts of the book move from the long reformation and the early Whig Gothic, to a smaller section of Scottish Gothic, then onto the Irish Gothic before the concluding section, which deals with some of the key Gothic novels of the fin-de-siècle. From the opening section the chapters cover the work of Ann Radcliffe (a long-standing interest of Milbank's) and Matthew Lewis before finishing with a fascinating chapter on the work of Mary Shelley and the epic poetry of Dante. Milbank's reading of *Frankenstein* places it within Shelley's body of work as a whole, by arguing that there is a "developing theology in her novels which accompanies her religious development towards an embrace of orthodox Anglicanism" (p. 124). The readings of Shelley's and Dante's work outlines a fascinating literary theology of creation, forming a "sophisticated theology of the imagination, wholly in accord with Anglican conceptions of freedom of the will, in which divine grace completes nature" (p. 142).

From there, the next section on Scottish Gothic concerns itself with Calvinism but avoids the expected step of merely dealing with total depravity. The chapter on Hogg and his landmark novel, *Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, provides a striking theological anthropology and a positive way of dealing with the divided self, rather than reading in terms of a divided or fractured subjectivity (a point made by much psychoanalytic criticism on the Gothic). Duality, we are told, is an "existential reality which enables self-questioning and humility" (p. 167).

As the nineteenth century progresses, Milbank reads the Gothic as becoming, more, not less religious, for as Anglicanism develops it becomes more theologically nuanced and more able to explore that *via media* between God and man, mediating theological and religious experience with a greater degree of control. The section on *Jane Eyre* shows the ways in which the theological Gothic can "question the natural and reveal what lies beneath" (p. 268) in its combining of the classic Gothic entrapment plot and a Christian conversion narrative. One of the best final sections of the book is its treatment of Bram Stoker's *Dracula,* which in its hunt for a middle way produces a rich and ecumenical theology that draws together the traditional and the modern, the Catholic and the Anglican in its search for an effective and united front against the threat of the vampire. The novel's protagonists, known as the "crew of light" within the text form a model of Christian community that at the close of the novel is perpetuated in the birth of a child—a "productive outcome of these acts of self sacrifice" (p. 243).

At the book's close, Milbank turns to the ecclesiastical Gothic produced by high-Anglican writers such as M. R James. As with the writers of the Whig Gothic, these late nineteenth century writers repeat the double gesture of a desire to escape the Catholic past whilst mourning what has been lost. James particularly seems keenly aware of the medieval mediatory practices of religion in the past (not

a surprise given his own academic background) and Milbank makes a compelling argument for taking James far more seriously than much materialist or secular Gothic criticism does.

At the conclusion to the book, Milbank's argument about the Gothic as essentially a model of religious historiography constantly refiguring and reexamining theological practice in the light of shifting wider religious and cultural contexts. As the nineteenth century advances the Gothic tends to lose its anti-Catholicism (as shown in Stoker's ecumenicism). As Milbank touches on in the Epilogue, the concerns of the Whig Gothic are, in many ways, still behind much of the contemporary Gothic, which (as Simon Marsden has pointed out) is also deeply fascinated with theological ideas. Whilst some may find Milbank's insistence that the Gothic is inherently Anglican a claim that is somewhat contentious (and one which raises the distinct possibility that Anglicanism is inherently Gothic), the book raises powerful arguments about the deeply religious nature of the Gothic and provides a compelling and uniquely Anglican vision of literary analysis. It will be an indispensable work for scholars of the Gothic and should serve as a spur for imaginative theologians to give the Gothic far more detailed attention.

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Brown, David and Gavin Hopps. *The Extravagance of Music*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018, 352 pages, $89.99, Hardcover

David Brown is an Anglican Priest, Emeritus Professor of Theology, Aesthetics and Culture, and Wardlaw Professor at the University of St Andrews. His work explores the relationship between theology and philosophy, and most recently, the interactions between theology and the arts. Gavin Hopps is Senior Lecturer in Literature and Theology, and Director for the Institute for Theology, Imagination and the Arts (ITIA) at the University of St Andrews. His research focuses on theology and the arts, with particular interests in Romantic literature and contemporary popular music.

The Extravagance of Music presents an optimistic and generous understanding of music's potential to allow for divine encounter. At the heart of the book is the notion that music is inherently "extravagant"—a term that Brown and Hopps root in its medieval origins, *extrā vagārī*, meaning to stray outside boundaries or to go beyond limits. This "generous excess" that music provides can potentially mediate our experiences of a similarly generous, extravagant God. The study challenges previous well-chartered but significantly more constrained conceptions of the theological possibilities of music. These have tended to focus on certain styles, or have limited music to its ability to refer to what has already been revealed to us via other means. By consciously pushing beyond these constraints, Brown and

Hopps invite the possibility, at least, that music can actually say something *new* to us about God.

In fact, *The Extravagance of Music* is all about pushing past boundaries. Often theologians have confined their musico-theological enquiries to a single music tradition, but a major strength of Brown and Hopps' book is that it transcends this narrowness by considering music not only in the Western "classical" style, but also in the world of popular music. This results in a book of two distinct halves, characterised by two seperate authorial voices: in part 1 Brown walks us through the relatively well-trodden domain of Western art music, although he travels beyond the more typical territory of sacred music to concentrate on overtly secular instrumental music. Hopps goes further in part 2, pushing beyond the borders of the Western classical tradition to consider the potential of popular music. As a result, the territory traversed in *The Extravagance of Music* is illuminatingly wide, but the relative separateness of the authors' discussions is mitigated only to a limited extent by the books' tie-together introduction and conclusion chapters. Brown and Hopps essentially leave it up to the reader to bring together their accounts in a multi-layered understanding of music's extravagant possibilities.

The book crosses borders, in particular, imposed by two prominent scholars: theologian Jeremy Begbie, and philosopher Roger Scruton. One of the strengths of *The Extravagance of Music* is that Brown and Hopps are able to show how the denominational and cultural prejudices of these scholars can give rise to overly restrictive musico-theological worldviews. Jeremy Begbie's ideas about God and music, for example, while often insightful, are nevertheless conceived within the very specific paradigm of his Reformed faith, with all its uncompromising lauding of Scripture, and its innate guardedness against idolatry. Brown and Hopps challenge Begbie's refusal to accept that music can have any revelatory potential beyond its ability to refer to Scripture, instead inviting an openness to the possibility that music can provide something over and above mere aesthetic experience or strict Scriptural reference, which can lead to genuine revelatory experiences of the divine.

Hopps also gives short shrift to Roger Scruton's wholesale dismissal of pop music's theological value, pointing out his lack of experience in the field, and questioning his ability to make such judgements. Drawing upon his own considerable pop music expertise, Hopps presents a nuanced account of popular music's theological potential, rooted in the "new" musicology tradition where scholars have moved beyond the analysis of abstract musical works, towards a realisation that the meaning of music can only really be known in the act of listening or performing (or in the words of Christopher Small [1998], in the act of *musicking*). Through this lens, the banalness or "semantic lack" of certain types of pop music can actually function as a theologically productive "affordance structure", which according to Hopps potentially, "elicits the listener's emotional investment and imaginative

participation" (p. 287), orientating them towards God and potentially engendering epiphanic experience.

For a student of biblical and theological studies, *The Extravagance of Music* presents an openminded and expansive theory of music as a gateway to the divine. And while Brown and Hopps invite the reader to join them in "going beyond" previously charted territory, their ideas are rooted firmly in more traditional, well-established concepts of music. This potentially allows for valuable grounding in some of the core philosophical, theological and aesthetic theoretical underpinnings of music and the sacred, from Platonic notions of Harmony of the Spheres, to the whole question of aesthetic reception. Indeed, the reader will come away from the book not only having traversed the boundaries with Brown and Hopps, but also having a much better idea of where, historically, these boundaries have been drawn.

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Lockett, Darian R. *Letters from the Pillar Apostles: The Formation of the Catholic Epistles as a Canonical Collection*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017, pp. xviii + 255, $33.00, paperback.

Darian R. Lockett (Ph.D., University of St. Andrews) is Associate Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University. He has previously authored *An Introduction to the Catholic Epistles* (2011) and *Understanding Biblical Theology* (2012), and these works reflect two of his main areas of research: Biblical Theology and the Catholic Epistles. The present volume, *Letters from the Pillar Apostles*, offers an intersection of the above two research fields (p. ix).

Lockett's present volume emerges from a recognition of the lack of studies related to the hermeneutical importance of the Catholic Epistles as a discrete unit or collection within the New Testament canon (p. xiii). The main intention of the book is to argue that "it is both historically and hermeneutically plausible to receive and read the Catholic Epistles as a canonically significant collection" (xvii).

Commencing his work with a critical survey of previous hermeneutical approaches that have attempted to read the Catholic Epistles as a collection with some degree of coherence in canonical context, Lockett wishes to further advance from previous studies by putting an appropriate emphasis on the balance between history (i.e., the historical situations of each individual letter) and theology (i.e., the theological placement of the letter as a whole within the New Testament) – "a balance that uniquely only the concept of canon can maintain" (p. 27).

For Lockett, 'the concept of canon' is identified with 'a broad notion of canon,' – that is, the entire process of composition, redaction, collection, arrangement and final shaping altogether leads to the formation of the canon. In so doing, on the

one hand, Lockett wishes to hold together the concepts of canon and Scripture and, on the other hand, the entire canonical process, from composition to canonization, is to be understood "as a historically interrelated and hermeneutically significant process" (p. 58).

The main body of his argument (chapters 3 to 6) presents a survey of the Patristic, manuscript, paratextual and compositional evidence. Thereby, Lockett wishes to demonstrate that this evidence together leads to the traces of "collection consciousness" or "canon consciousness" – that is, "[t]o varying degrees, authors, editors, and compilers were aware of the canonical process in which they participated" (p. 51). This evidence specifically includes 1) the "indirect" evidence of the early and Patristic citation or use of the Catholic Epistles in the early church along with the early manuscript tradition, such as papyrus, parchment fragments and major codices; 2) paratextual evidence including collection and arrangement of texts (within a larger, multi-text book roll or codex), super- and sub-subscripted titles, reading aids such as textual division, *nomina sacra*, author *bios*, *hypothesis*, or *kephalaia*, and the presence of a colophon; 3) the use or citation of the same Old Testament in the Catholic Epistles and the common use of the same catchwords or catchphrases – especially, a repeated key word or concept; 4) framing devices (*inclusio*) and themes in the Catholic Epistles.

Lockett comes to a conclusion that "one can discern a collection consciousness within the Catholic Epistles such that they should be read and interpreted as an intentional, discrete canonical sub-collection set within the New Testament" (p. 231). Furthermore, "such collection consciousness, though not necessarily in the preview of the original authors (being perhaps unforeseen, yet not unintended), is neither anachronistic to the meaning of the letters nor antagonistic to their composition" (p. 231). Therefore, for Lockett, the concept of canon does not obscure the meaning of these texts but rather "the canonical process by which the texts were composed, redacted, collected, arranged, and fixed in a final canonical form constitutes a necessary interpretive context for these letters" (p. 231).

This present volume offers a precious insight into one of the oft-neglected topics in New Testament studies and deserves a due commendation. As Lockett himself asserts, "[w]hereas the four Gospels and Paul's letters have received copious attention, these letters, in comparison, constitute the distant shores of a seldom traveled land" (xiii). Despite a few studies undertaken concerning the so-called "General Letters" or "Catholic Epistles," rarely has any of them "consider[ed] the possibility of interpreting the Catholic Epistles as a discrete collection" (xiii). The rarity of his study is certainly of special importance in biblical studies, especially for those who are specializing in the Catholic Epistles.

Another strong feature of his study is his holistic emphasis on history and theology. His thorough survey of the gradual canonical process, from composition to canonization (particularly, chapters 3-6), strongly demonstrates a connection

between the original texts (compositional intention) to the later developments in the early church (canonical intention). In that respect, many critical studies that have casually undertaken "the academic disconnect and overdrawn separation of Biblical studies and early church history" are seriously questioned and challenged in the present volume (p. 51, 232). Further, by emphasizing (what Lockett refers to as) "collection consciousness" or the intrinsic and self-authenticating qualities of the biblical texts, he makes a successful case that "the canonical process…is not an external force imposed upon the text by institutional powers, but rather, was driven along by a recognition of pressures within the texts themselves" (p. 237).

However, his work does present minor weaknesses. First of all, although he emphasizes the balance between history and theology, he hardly explores and investigates the historical or *Sitz im Leben* elements of each individual canonical writing. In fact, most of the evidence presented in the book is virtually reception-historical, and this may draw criticisms from more traditionally oriented scholars for favoring canonical intention. Is Lockett favoring canonical evidences over historical investigation of each canonical writing, or is he simply favoring theological/canonical interpretation?

Second, Lockett wishes to find canonical connections between the Catholic Letters to such a degree that he somewhat loses the sight of each letter's distinctiveness and its benefits to canonical theology. The canonical meaning does not blossom only when each canonical writing coheres with one another, but also when each canonical writing distinctively contributes its diversity. In that sense, the connection and commonality we find in and between the Catholic Epistles are certainly valuable but the diversity must be reckoned with as well, especially if we want to fully take into account the value of compositional intentions inherent in each letter. In the end, I find Lockett's work not sufficiently sensitive towards compositional intention.

Overall, I assess that the book is a success concerning its main goal – that is, to show the plausibility that the Catholic Epistles can be read as a canonically significant discrete collection. This study certainly encourages students towards further research into the significance of the Catholic Epistles vis-à-vis the biblical canon. I strongly recommend it to the students who are interested in the study of the biblical canon and the Catholic Epistles.

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Naselli, Andrew David. *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology.* **Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017, pp. 432, $30, hardback.**

Andrew David Naselli is Associate Professor of New Testament at Bethlehem College & Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is also a pastor at the North Campus of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Moundsview, Minnesota. Before coming to Minnesota in 2015, Dr. Naselli was D.A. Carson's personal research assistant. In addition to his teaching and pastoral responsibilities, he writes regularly at Andynaselli.com and has written many scholarly and lay-level journal articles and books. In fact, he is currently one of the editors of a massive dictionary project: G. K. Beale, D. A. Carson, Benjamin L. Gladd, and Andrew David Naselli, eds. *Dictionary of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, forthcoming [~2022]).

Dr. Naselli's *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (*HUANT*) is his only book on New Testament hermeneutics. *HUANT* is the companion volume to Jason S. DeRouchie's *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017). The sheer volume and diversity of material that Naselli has compacted into roughly 350 pages (excluding the appendices, glossary, bibliography, and indices) is rather impressive.

HUANT breaks down into twelve chapters—which correspond to the "twelve steps from exegesis to theology." Chapter 1 ("Genre") begins with *genre* instead of *textual criticism* because, as Naselli points out, before you begin the work of a textual critic, "you already have a sense for the sort of genre you're in" (p. 15). Chapter 2 ("Textual Criticism") provides five basic steps for evaluating variant readings: (pp. 38–42). On pp. 42–43, Naselli also offers a brief overview of the phenomenon and inconsistencies of the "KJV-Only View." Chapter 3 ("Translation") is a chapter that not only helps the student and pastor understand what makes an "excellent" translation (pp. 50–52) but also provides a very useful overview of a translation spectrum. Chapter 4 overviews the grammar of biblical Greek and how understanding grammar is crucial to biblical exegesis. Chapter 5 is all about how one can apply the grammar from chapter 4 to tracing a biblical author's logic via sentence diagrams, phrasing, arcing, and bracketing. Chapter 6 ("Historical-Cultural Context") demonstrates to the student and pastor the importance (and dangers) of understanding "the situation in which the author composed" (p. 162) a given book of the Bible. Naselli argues that staying aware of "extrabiblical information is essential to understand the Bible" (p. 164). Chapter 7 centers around a passage's literary context and the importance of reading that passage in light of its most immediate context until its whole-Bible canonical context (pp. 188–189). As is expected, Dr. Naselli assumes not only a theological, but a literary continuity that spans the Testaments of the Bible. This

chapter also contains a very helpful chart that maps out the approximate minutes and hours it could take one to read any book of the Bible in one sitting. Chapter 8 is about the importance of word studies, and how merely one word can drastically effect one's exegetical conclusions.

When we come to Chapter 9 ("Biblical Theology"), Naselli shifts from a historical-grammatical framework to a framework more theologically-oriented. He begins with biblical theology, which he describes as "how the whole bible progresses, integrates, and climaxes in Christ" (p. 230). In Chapter 10, Dr. Naselli demonstrates how historical exegetes and theologians can (and should) influence our own exegesis and theology. Chapter 11 deals with systematic theology. For reasons stated below, this chapter is probably the weakest chapter in the entire book. And finally, Chapter 12—the final "step" from exegesis to theology—is on "practical theology," a chapter devoted to how the church should "apply the text" to herself and the world (p. 309).

The strengths of Dr. Naselli's book are obvious. For one, he has kept the main body of his text under 350 pages. Dr. Naselli's prose is simple and clear, yet sophisticated. Second, like his prose, Naselli's content is simple enough to reach a layperson and the beginning student but critical enough to reach the serious student and scholar of the New Testament. Third, this book was written by a pastor—one who loves God, his flock, and other Christians. This is reflected in the opening words of the Preface: "I love God, and I love studying his Word and his world. I wrote this book to help you study the New Testament" (p. xxv).

Despite its clear strengths, *HUANT* comes not without any minor downsides. I will briefly focus on one: Naselli's chapter on systematic theology (ST). The issue with this chapter, in my view, is his fundamental understanding of systematic theology—namely, that ST merely "answers the question 'What does the whole Bible say about _____ [fill in the blank]?'" (p. 283). This foundational assumption of ST ignores the *organic ontological connections* between God *in himself* (*a se*) and other attributes that flow from God, especially God in relation to creation. Naselli's treatment of ST seems more like a scientific tabulation of data than a systematic unpacking of various divine attributes in relation to the One (*theo-*) whom scholars, students, and pastors study (*-ology*). Naselli's view leads him write this about ST: "While biblical theology is organic and historical, systematic theology is relatively universal and ahistorical" (p. 293). To call ST "ahistorical" at best ignores the biblical-theological roots of ST (which are fundamentally *historical*) and at worst turns the Bible into a search engine that quickly generates simple answers to any biblical doctrine. Thus, for Naselli, ST is merely an efficient way to compile all the biblical data on a given topic in order to quickly pronounce a resolute conclusion of a particular biblical teaching. And again, the problem with this understanding of ST is that it ignores the real philosophical, biblical-theological (and therefore historical) roots of ST.

Nonetheless, despite this critique, the book is well worth the purchase. I hope to have shown that students of the NT will greatly benefit from Naselli's work. Furthermore, this book will likely be seen in many seminary classrooms and on many pastor's bookshelves for years to come.

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Burridge, Richard A. *Four Ministries, One Jesus: Exploring Your Vocation with the Four Gospels.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019, pp 242, $17.09, paperback.

Rev. Professor Richard A. Burridge is the Dean of King's College London where he serves as a professor of biblical interpretation. In 2013 he became the first non-Catholic to receive the prestigious Ratzinger Prize. Burridge is a member of the General Synod of the Church of England and served on the Evaluation Committee for ordination and theological education.

Four Ministries, One Jesus examines the somewhat mysterious "call" of those entering into vocational ministry. Though designed with the Anglican context in mind, Burridge addresses all faith traditions in his engaging and articulate manner. The introduction to *Four Ministries, One Jesus* clarifies that this edition began as a collection of addresses given at an ordination retreat for the Diocese of Peterborough in England and serves as the foundational context for the instructions given by Burridge. The author divides the gospels into four categories of ministry: the teaching ministry of Christ in Matthew, the pastoral care of Christ in Luke, the suffering servant in Mark, and the divine spiritual life of Christ in John. Each chapter includes a perspective on the life of Christ, a practical application for those entering ministry, tips for prayer and reflection, then a final charge to continue in this aspect in one's ministry.

While there are countless resources examining the difference between the four gospels, Burridge's approach to seeing each account through the lens of ministerial calling is unique. By examining each gospel and their portrayal of Jesus, Burridge gives a holistic challenge for those entering the ministry. Burridge builds on his previous work, *Four Gospels, One Jesus*, in which he addresses the multifaceted aspects of Christ's earthly ministry. Though not required to understand and appreciate this work, familiarity with the later volume would aid the reader in grasping the context for Burridge's discussion as he addresses those considering vocational ministry. Burridge makes no attempt to defend his chosen topic for applying each gospel to one entering vocational ministry and offers no novel ideas in his application, though his chosen topics are essential for the aspiring minister.

In the first section, Burridge places a high priority upon the teaching role of the minister. One of his best exhortations is to remind those anticipating ordination

that, "A well-prepared missional candidate understands that the candidacy process is the beginning of a lifelong process of learning and formation for leadership" (p. 22). Burridge is committed to life-long learning and reminds the reader that no ministry career is fulfilling without diligent study for the benefit of those he (or she) serves. This introductory section is perhaps Burridge's strongest because he maintains growth in one's teaching is always done to serve others. A minister who does not commit to leveraging the resources available in today's vast array of knowledge is inexcusable.

In the second section, Burridge adjusts by examining Luke rather than Mark. There is no stated reason for this order, but it flows well in his analysis of Christ and benefits the reader. Pastoral care is the application of one's teaching ministry, and caring for hurting souls demonstrates the truthfulness of one's preaching. This portion is perhaps Burridge's weakest because the majority of his thought comes from citing the ordination practices of various denominations. Though what he says is clear and compelling, there is little new information. However, one line stands above the others in his final exhortation. He instructs those entering ministry to submit themselves to the pastoral care of others. The trap, he claims, is that "it is all too easy for those of us undertaking pastoral care of others to start to believe our own propaganda…" (p. 86). Under the supervision of other trusted leaders, one is able to pour out one's life in the true service of others.

In his section on the gospel of Mark, Burridge paints the minister as a reflection of Christ as the suffering servant. The suffering presented is a result of the cosmic struggle between Satan and God, and those who serve the Savior are destined to encounter resistance and oppression. The antidote for this is twofold. First, Burridge exhorts the aspiring minister to remember his or her strength comes from the Holy Spirit and not one's ingenuity. Second, one must observe the pattern of Christ in retreating to a solitary place after the flurry of ministry. Burridge gives practical advice to develop a pattern of rest and enjoy the companionship of others. While there is little engagement with scripture in his admonition, this portion contains pastoral wisdom seasoned with years of ministry experience. Regardless of one's faith tradition, they would do well to observe the practical encouragement presented by Burridge.

Finally, the gospel of John calls the reader to participate in the divine life of Christ through observation of the sacraments and prayer. Those of the Free or Baptist church traditions (such as the author of this review) may be tempted to easily discount Burridge's theological perspective of the sacraments without pausing to glean from his wisdom. While this section relies heavily on the Anglican and Lutheran view of the sacraments, the call to see these ordinances as symbolic of the communal life of God's people is helpful if one can set aside the theological disagreements. Rather than focusing on the individual nature of the call, Burridge encourages the reader to reflect upon the communal nature of spirituality and how it is essential to those who

serve in a ministerial context. Though at times Burridge is confusing as he diverges into personality tests and other modern contemplative practices, a careful reader can navigate this portion to glean some helpful bits of wisdom in seeing the call to ministry as a call not merely to an individual, but *from* a people *to* a people.

Burridge gives no apologies for his conversational style in this book. One reads as if listening to a mentor describe the joys and challenges of serving the people of God. While helpful and pastoral, there are moments when the awkward outline dilutes otherwise helpful information. This volume reads more like a recording of lectures rather than the helpful handbook it desires to be. Though Burridge admirably attempts to widen his audience to those of different faith traditions, at times, his multi-denominational approach is confusing and even unhelpful. Burridge would have served the reader better if he had focused on his Anglican practices and then added commentary in ways he perceived would be helpful to those of other denominational traditions.

Additionally, Burridge attempts to present practical steps for application as the reader examines his or her call to ministry. These sections are cumbersome and quickly glossed over if one does not take careful care to practice them, causing the reader to miss beneficial wisdom. While his raw content his helpful, it suffers from the format chosen. The work would better serve the reader if care had given to clarifying the outline and reformatting the presentation of material to make the application more accessible to the reader. For those considering creating an ordination process or for those who are seeking to reflect on their ordination experience, *Four Ministries, One Jesus* could be a helpful contribution in developing one's training emphasis. However, the novice reader who is wrestling with a personal call to minister to the people of God would benefit more by choosing other works on this topic. *Four Ministries, One Jesus* is a noteworthy and readable reflection best reserved for a seasoned minister desiring personal renewal, but an unhelpful resource to those exploring vocational ministry.

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Gardner, Paul. *1 Corinthians. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018, pp. 811, $49.99, hardback.

Paul Gardner received a Ph.D. from Cambridge University. After being ordained as deacon (1980) and later priest (1981) in the Anglican Communion, Gardner undertook a curacy at St. Martin, Cambridge. He then taught at Oak Hill Theological College for seven years, before undertaking parish ministry in Cheshire for over a decade. He served as Archdeacon of Exeter from 2003 to 2005 and as Senior Minister of ChristChurch Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, Georgia from 2005 to 2017.

Gardner's *1 Corinthians* focuses on verse-by-verse exegesis of the original Greek of 1 Corinthians. Each unit of the letter gets its own chapter (e.g., 1:1-9 = Chapter 1; 1:10-17 = Chapter 2; etc.). At the beginning of each chapter, Gardner summarizes the literary context and offers a one- or two-sentence summary of the main idea of the pertinent passage. Following is a translation presented in graphical layout, to show the flow of thought in the text. Then comes a summary of the unit's structure and an exegetical outline. Next, Gardner offers verse-by-verse explanation of the text, heading each verse with the Greek text. Each chapter concludes with a section applying the theology of the relevant passage. Many chapters contain one or more "In Depth" sections, excurses that explore select translational issues in greater depth.

An introduction to the volume treats background matters. In addition to treating the usual issues (author, date, audience), this chapter offers a reconstruction of the main problem behind the letter. According to Gardner, there was "one underlying problem" in the Corinthian church (p. 32): some of the Corinthians claimed possession of the spiritual gifts of wisdom and knowledge and so became spiritually arrogant. In response, Paul preached humility as embodied in the message of the cross.

The commentary concludes with a chapter on the "Theology of 1 Corinthians," drawing together some of the themes that the commentary treats throughout (God, the Lordship of Christ, the Christ crucified, the holy Spirit, the church, idolatry and demonology, immorality and sexual ethics, and the resurrection of Christ and his people).

The commentary is engagingly written, and Gardner brings the text to life with imaginative descriptions that elaborate on the settings described in the text.

Gardner is generally up to date in his interaction with the secondary literature. For instance, he is current in his discussion of verbal aspect (e.g., p. 682). Yet, he uses the old language of "rich" and "poor" to describe groups in the Corinthian church (pp. 507, 518), while more recent scholarship has shown that "rich" is probably an overstatement.

Gardner tends toward a formal correspondence approach to translation, rendering words that appear in different contexts in the same way each time they occur (e.g., *anakrinein* in 2:14-15; 10:25 [p. 464]; *diakrinein* in 11:29, 31 [p. 516]. Occasionally this creates a problem. For instance, Gardner wants the word *mystērion* in every instance to mean "things pertaining to God's wisdom and his plan of salvation in Christ" (p. 724), although in 15:51 this word seems to refer to some specific revelation that Paul has received about the resurrection, a still-future event.

A couple of other matters of translation are of note. Helpfully, Gardner translates *charismata* as "grace-gifts" (following James Moffatt), pointing out that the word "spiritual" (*pneumatika*) is not used while also highlighting the fact that charisms are gifts from God (pp. 63-66). Gardner decides to use inclusive language to translate *adelphoi* (explaining his decision on p. 78).

Some of Gardner's interpretations are unique. Gardner interprets *koinōnia* to mean "covenantal participation," referring to God's calling of a holy people to himself and the expectations of promise/blessings and judgment/curses, thus apparently deciding against a mystical interpretation. Gardner suggests that Paul's discussion of "conscience" is not about "moral conscience" but about "self-awareness" of one's status in church; for instance, the "weak" were those who were insecure of their status (pp. 464-5). Gardner suggests that the informant at dinner (10:28) was trying to make a point about his own freedom, and that Paul objects to the eating of idol-meat only because he objects to vaunting about one's spiritual maturity or knowledge (p. 465). Gardner takes the minority view that *pneumatika* in 14:1 refers to "spiritual *people*" (pp. 526-7), and he insists on this point rather relentlessly throughout his commentary on chapters 12-14. He understands the verb in 12:31a as an indicative: "you *are earnestly desiring* the greater gifts" (p. 553). He adopts the variant reading of the final verb in 14:38. He takes *idiōtēs* and *apistoi* as references to the same group (p. 614). He imposes a very narrow interpretation of the exhortation for women to keep "silent" in 14:34-35 (p. 637).

A theological slant seems to determine his interpretation of spiritual gifts. He goes beyond the text in interpreting prophecy as exposition of the scriptures rather than as a more charismatic phenomenon (e.g., pp. 538, 549, 564; see also p. 616), and in equating "psalms" with "praising God with the words of Scripture that the Spirit has brought to their mind" (p. 624).

Helpfully, Gardner frequently strives to reconcile those of different doctrinal camps by cutting through some of the confusion of terms (e.g., on tongues on p. 598). While he qualifies his language carefully where he knows he risks disagreement with his target audience (e.g., on premillennialism on p. 683), where he strongly disagrees with a position, his rhetoric can become biting (e.g., in the "In Depth" section on 14:33c-35).

Although placement of the chapter on "Theology of 1 Corinthians" at the end of the commentary may help reinforce what the readers have encountered throughout the commentary, this material would be less easily overlooked if it were included in the introduction (where it usually appears).

A few errors should be noted. Gardner wrongly takes the anarthrous participle *didonta* in 14:7 to be adjectival (p. 603). On p. 665, he mentions "[s]ix major though often related views," but he goes on to list five (p. 666). On p. 691, he says that 15:29-34 "divides into three [sections]," but he goes on to describe four. He misunderstands Talbert's position on 15:29 (p. 693).

This commentary is one of twenty volumes that comprise the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series. All volumes, including this one, are written by notable evangelical scholars. While the series is designed for those who have two or more years of coursework in biblical Greek, all students of the New Testament will find these volumes useful. The commentary nicely balances

critical interpretation with practical application, and Gardner is well attuned to contemporary issues (e.g., p. 687). While the commentary engages in critical interpretation, Gardner has little patience for "mirror-reading" (e.g., pp. 665, 692) and remains focused on the theological and practical dimensions of the text.

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Jongkind, Dirk and Peter J. Williams, eds. *The Greek New Testament*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017, pp. 526, $39.99, hardback.

Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge, England, and edited by Dirk Jongkind and Peter Williams, *The Greek New Testament* (TGNT) is a new critical edition of the Greek NT. Based on the critical edition by Samuel Prideaux Tregelles (1813-1875), it utilizes a documentary approach that "aims to present the New Testament books in the earliest form in which they are well attested" (p. vii). The focus of the work, therefore, is on "directly verified antiquity" (p. 507) as seen in the text and the features of the earliest Greek manuscripts. In terms of its structure, the edition is simple and straightforward: a two-page preface is followed by the Greek text of the NT, which is in turn followed by a twenty-page introduction to the edition that explains some of its features.

Since the focus of the edition is on the "directly verified antiquity" of the text and features of the earliest manuscripts, it is distinct in several ways from the Nestle-Aland and United Bible Societies Greek New Testament editions (NA28 and UBS GNT5, respectively). First, the text of the critical edition is "attested in two or more Greek manuscripts, at least one being from the fifth century or earlier" (p. 506). There are no conjectural readings, nor is there reliance on the readings in the versions or patristic citations. Likewise, while the editors recognized their evidentiary value, the witness of medieval Greek manuscripts known as minuscules was not deemed sufficient in itself to support the editors' textual decisions. As it turns out, the text of the TGNT is almost identical to that of NA28 and UBS GNT5 (for a minor difference, cf. Jude 5). The disputed ending of Mark is included in TGNT, with a note from minuscule 1 printed between 16:8 and 16:9: "In some of the copies, the evangelist finishes here, up to which (point) also Eusebius of Pamphilus made canon sections. But in many the following is also contained" (p. 107, editors' translation). Interestingly, the *Pericope Adulterae* (John 7:53-8:11) is relegated to a footnote in the apparatus, in keeping with the earliest Greek witnesses.

Second, the TGNT presents the particular features of the Greek manuscripts, especially orthography (spelling, breathing marks, accents), paragraph markings, and the order of the NT books. Regarding orthography, the TGNT replicates the ancient tendency to use ει for ῑ, and ι for ῐ in certain books (e.g., γείνομαι instead of γίνομαι in Mark), although no attempt was made to standardize such. Further,

on account of their relative absence prior to the use of minuscules, absent are many non-dative iota subscripts (e.g., Mark 6:56, ἐσώζοντο instead of ἐσῴζοντο). "Because of the important historical information that breathings and accents may contain," the breathings and accents are included "in their early widely attested form" (p. 513), even though such often post-date the earliest attested letters.

Additionally, the TGNT replicates the ancient paragraphing method known as "ekthesis," in which the first line of a new section protrudes into the left margin. Even though the paragraph marks may differ from the modern consensus, these provide the reader with an ancient testimony to a text's structure.

Also, the TGNT follows the order of the NT books as found in the majority of early, whole-NT Greek manuscripts. The order is as follows: Gospels – Acts – General Epistles (James – Jude) – Pauline collection (Romans – Hebrews) – Revelation. This order, which is not the only attested order in the manuscripts, is attested in the early Christian canon lists as well, and thus is an early attested alternative to the commonly recognized order today.

Due to a focus on the text and early manuscript features, the TGNT, in contrast with NA28 and UBS GNT5, does not include marginal notes (e.g., suggested cross-references or citation sources), headings, quotation marks (cf. italicization of OT citations in NA28), or variant markers in the text. Additionally, besides the introduction to the TGNT, in which is listed the primary Greek witnesses (papyri and majuscules, and a few minuscules), no appendices appear (cf. the several appendices in NA28). The minimal apparatus on each page is because "we believe that this edition's chief significance, like that of Westcott and Hort, lies not in its apparatus but in the text itself" (p. 507). The TGNT is, therefore, designed to focus the reader on the text, not on addenda.

The TGNT's focus on "directly verified antiquity" is valuable, not only for the ancient text it produces but also for its historical value. The standardization of spelling and book order in the NA28 and UBS GNT5, as well as their utilization of modern paragraph markings, can have the deleterious effect of removing the reader from the ancient features of manuscripts. Hence, the value of the TGNT is its ability to raise the reader's awareness of the historical state of affairs in the earliest Greek manuscripts.

Further, the value of the TGNT is its focus on the text itself. The attention to the early Greek manuscripts is a commendably conservative point of departure for any attempt to arrive at the original text. And as helpful as addenda may be, the Greek words themselves are that which God has revealed and therefore should hold a place of primacy and focus.

Still, a focus on "directly verified antiquity" comes at the cost of omitting that which is also valuable: other manuscript evidence, appendices, and apparatus. The editors' decision not to include as primary evidence the minuscules, versions, or patristic citations lessens the support their text might have otherwise enjoyed. To be

sure, the editors are aware of the value of this other evidence (p. 507), but the point should be pressed that (1) some of the versions are themselves quite ancient (e.g., Latin codices) as are the patristic citations, and (2) later manuscripts may attest to early readings (i.e., earlier manuscripts are not always better than later manuscripts). Even if this evidence is not "direct," it is still ancient evidence.

Also, it is unclear how the editors decided on the text when their text-critical principles conflicted. For instance, if multiple early Greek manuscripts attested a reading that, at the same time, appeared to arise from a scribal error, on what basis did the editors make their decision? In the next few years, the editors plan to produce a textual commentary, which one can hope will answer some of these questions.

For some, the variegated spelling and the inclusion of unexpected accents (e.g., the indefinite pronoun τίς is accented) may provide a minor challenge to Greek readers. Similarly, the absence of headings may obstruct the casual reader from locating a text quickly, or the absence of marginal notes may hinder the scholar or pastor's awareness of a citation or allusion in the text. Nevertheless, the TGNT's focus on the text of the Greek NT should commend itself to all those who care about the original text of the NT. Those with an interest in ancient Greek manuscript features will also find this edition stimulating, particularly the hermeneutically suggestive method of "ekthesis." The TGNT is not intended to replace but to complement the NA and UBS editions, and it should stand alongside of them as yet another outstanding critical edition of the Greek NT.

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Lee, John A. *The Greek of the Pentateuch: Grinfield Lectures on the Septuagint 2011–2012*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 384, $99, hardback.

John A. Lee is Senior Research Fellow at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, where he taught Greek for 27 years. His recently published *The Greek of the Pentateuch: Grinfield Lectures on the Septuagint 2011–2012* is an expansion of his 1983 revised dissertation *A Lexical Study of the Septuagint Version of the Pentateuch* (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1983). Whereas his revised dissertation sought to demonstrate the lexical correspondences between Pentateuchal Greek and *koine* in general, *The Greek of the Pentateuch* seeks to demonstrate from the Pentateuch itself that the linguistic "instrument the translators deploy is *fundamentally Greek*" (p. 2). In other words, Lee makes a case for *why* and *how* we can know that the translators of the Pentateuch primarily utilized the language of their time. To support his thesis, Lee relies heavily on ancient classical Greek literature, third-century BCE papyri, and even modern Greek—all of which he presents countless examples. Seven chapters and eight lengthy appendices make up Lee's book.

Chapter 1 provides "illustrations of the important 'evidence' in studying the Greek of the LXX" (p. 39), which is comprised of numerous examples—both ancient and modern, both in abundance and in sparsity—in order to "demonstrate what evidence may be available when looked for, the conclusions that can be drawn from it, and the necessity of making use of it" (p. 6). Chapter 2 demonstrates that the language of the Greek Pentateuch does not only share vocabulary with other *koine* literature, but other literary phenomena. For example, translators "gave rein to personal taste, made use of stylistic variation (*variatio*), adjusted the choice of word to the social context, and brought in features of the official style where they seemed appropriate" (p. 77). Chapter 3 builds upon the previous chapter by demonstrating *how* the translators' higher education readied them for such linguistic diversity. Lee shows how in the ancient Greco-Roman and Byzantine worlds there were three levels of education: the first level "taught the rudiments of reading and writing … At level two the student analysed texts and studied details of language … [And] the third level trained elites fully in the arts of rhetoric" (p. 79). By analyzing key vocabulary and phrases in relation to the Hebrew and other ancient Greek literature, Lee concludes that the translators "had an education beyond the basics up to a higher level, at least to the end of the second stage of the ancient Greek curriculum" (p. 120). Chapter 4 further constructs Lee's argument: the translators were native speakers of the vernacular Greek. Because the translators made generous use of idiomatic renderings—renderings that could not have been known by non-native speakers— the arguments of the first three chapters are confirmed: "the Pentateuch translators had nothing less than native-speaker competence" (p. 172).

Chapter 5 argues for explicit collaboration between the translators. Five premises support Lee's conclusion: "that there were five translators; that the translation was completed in a short time; that the 'dictation mode' is unrealistic; that the Pentateuch was treated as a unit; and that the translators worked concurrently" (p. 208). Lee's sixth chapter before his summary chapter (ch. 7) argues that the translators, though in collaboration with one another, exhibited a freedom to choose between natural Greek renderings or unnatural, "Hebraic" renderings. Lee's methodology in this chapter looks at "Hebrew idiom and vocabulary" (p. 212) and shows that the "translators applied themselves to finding ways to turn a difficult and alien idiom into acceptable Greek without losing it altogether" (p. 239). Ultimately, Lee concludes that "the degree to which each ['natural Greek and Greek affected by Hebrew interference'] contributes is unquantifiable, but it cannot be said that one predominates over the other. The translation is a *Greek* text with a Hebraic *flavor*" (p. 257).

The book concludes with a summary chapter and eight detailed appendices including various tabulations of many Greek and Hebrew particles, verbs, and phrases. Lee has provided the field of Septuagint studies with a treasure. For the most part, Lee's arguments and conclusions seem quite viable, but one wonders if he overlooks

and overstates his case at times. Two examples will highlight this point. First, Lee notes the "frequent match of νῦν οὖν to ועתה" (p. 103). He then writes "but while νῦν equates in meaning to עתה ('now'), οὖν can hardly be motived by ו- ('and') (p. 103). His basis for this conclusion is that νῦν οὖν, when translating ועתה, is typical Greek that is not dependent upon its Hebrew *Vorlage*. Though νῦν οὖν is "natural Greek" (p. 103), Lee fails to recognize that ועתה in Hebrew discourse does not just encode temporality ("now"), but also logical inference ("so now," "so then," "therefore"; see See Christo H. J., E. van der Merwe, Jacobus A. Naudé, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 2nd ed. [London: T&T Clark, 2017], 452 [§40.39]). Therefore, it is easy to see why the Greek translators would use the "natural" construction νῦν οὖν to translate ועתה because νῦν οὖν is a *proper* equivalent of ועתה as a whole.

Second, and more broadly, Lee fails to clarify an important facet of in his very thesis for the Greek of the Pentateuch being "fundamentally Greek." He argues that the Greek of the Pentateuch is generally unmotivated by its Hebrew *Vorlage*. That is, it is not a "Hebraized" translation—a translation that betrays various natural linguistic features that constitute the Greek of the day *as Greek*, though he does not deny clear Hebrew interference (p. 257). Unfortunately, Lee does not parse out this distinction between a "Hebraized" Greek and a Greek translation that simply bears the stamp of typical Hebrew interference. Lee leaves the reader with this question: at what point does a translation become so obscured by its *Vorlage* that it betrays the natural linguistic phenomena *inherent* in the language of the translation? By virtue of being a translation, there *must* be various linguistic phenomena that are unmotivated by a *Vorlage*. For example, on page 123 he writes, "These are features of *native* Greek *idiom* that have *no counterpart* in Hebrew and are not required by the original." Certainly Greek idiom has no one-for-one counterpart, because Greek and Hebrew are two distinct languages. Conclusions and arguments like this seem to validate Lee's claim for a *fundamentally Greek* translation, but one wonders if Lee believes a translation radically obscured, or in our cased "Hebraized," by its *Vorlage* could still contain idiomatic renderings. That is, how much Hebrew interference has to occur for the Greek of the Pentateuch to be considered "Hebraized," the very label Lee argues against?

All things considered, Lee's *The Greek of the Pentateuch* has contributed significantly to the burgeoning field of Septuagint studies. This work will no doubt set the standard for further work upon the language of the Septuagint.

<div style="text-align: right">Colton Floyd Moore</div>

Jobes, Karen H. and Silva, Moisés. *Invitation to the Septuagint.* 2nd ed. Baker: Grand Rapids, 2015, pp. xxi + 408, $38.00, paperback.

Jobes and Silva's *Invitation to the Septuagint* is a thorough and readable introduction to the field of Septuagint studies. Jobes served as professor emerita at Wheaton College and has written extensively on topics related to the Septuagint and the New Testament while Silva has taught at several academic institutions and served as a past president of ETS. He has written extensively in the areas of hermeneutics. Because of the areas of expertise represented by Jobes and Silva, the reader should rightly approach *Invitation to the Septuagint* with high expectations.

The book is divided into three main sections followed by several extremely helpful appendices and indices. The book begins with a short introduction. The introduction briefly and concisely explains the importance of Septuagint studies and how it relates to the OT and NT (1-9).

The bulk of the book is divided into three sections. Part 1 is a discussion of the history of the Septuagint (chaps. 1-4). Here, the authors introduce the reader to the field. They discuss relevant terms in chapter 1 and introduce the reader to the historical origins of the translation (13-24). Moreover, a helpful discussion of later translations and recensions are discussed in chapter 1 and 2. Modern editions and translations are introduced in chapter 3 while a helpful discussion of the LXX as a translation brings the first part of the work to an end (chap. 4).

Part 2 of the book deals with the Septuagint in biblical studies, and thus, is a discussion of more complex and less elementary topics. The language of the LXX is discussed in chapter 5 and the discipline of textual criticism occupies chapters 6-7. The influence of the discoveries of manuscripts near the Dead Sea and their influence on our understanding of the LXX is found in chapter 8, and a survey of the importance of the LXX for the study of the NT is located in chapter 9. Finally, in chapter 10, the authors illustrate the principles taught throughout the book by means of interpreting three LXX passages (Gen 4:1-8; Isa 52:13-53:12; Est 5:1-2 with addition D).

After introducing the student to the field of the LXX and surveying several more advanced topics, the authors survey the current state of Septuagint studies in part 3 of the book. They do this by first providing biographical details about LXX scholars of past generations (chapter 11). Several current issues are then discussed at the end of the book including the topics of lexicography (chap. 12), syntax (chap. 12), textual criticism (chap. 13), and theology (chap. 14).

Several appendices are worth mentioning. Appendix A lists major LXX organizations and research projects while appendix B is a bibliography of major reference works. There is also a helpful glossary (appendix C), a discussion of versification in appendix D, and a guide to interpreting the apparatus of the Göttingen edition.

Invitation to the Septuagint has several strengths. One unexpected strength is its readability. First, the glossary found in appendix C helps the student become acquainted with terms relevant for the study of the LXX. Translating relevant Greek and Hebrew words, phrases, and verses also facilitates reading and comprehension. Moreover, the bibliographic discussion of past Septuagint scholars added a helpful and personal touch to a field that can be quite technical. Overall, students will enjoy the readability of this work.

Another strength of the book is that it not only teaches helpful principles essential to interpreting the LXX, but it illustrates these principles. Chapter 10 is devoted toward this aim. Effectively, the student has two opportunities to learn the principles of interpreting and using the LXX. First, these principles are taught explicitly throughout the bulk of the book. Second, they are taught implicitly as the authors walk the student through how to interpret and understand the LXX. This pedagogical practice is a clear strength.

Finally, one should mention that the authors include a discussion of the symbol and the abbreviations used in the Göttingen edition of the LXX. The Göttingen edition is a scholarly reconstruction of the LXX with full apparatus (see a discussion of it on pp. 353-355). Reading the apparatus is important since it provides vital information about readings deemed secondary; nonetheless, comprehending the vast amount of data included here is difficult. Therefore, the inclusions of a guide to these symbols and abbreviations is a welcomed and applauded addition to the book (Miles VanPelt is credited with compiling and translating the guide and Jeremiah Coogan has revised and corrected it). The authors have not only introduced the students to the field of the LXX, they have equipped them to use of the fields most important resources.

Overall, *Invitation to the Septuagint* is a welcomed addition for the beginning and advanced student of the Septuagint. The work successfully introduces the reader to the field in part 1 before guiding them through more complex topics. Students will find this text to be more user friendly than other handbooks to the LXX while providing up-to-date information about the state of the field.

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Kynes, Will. *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature": The Birth, Death, and Intertextual Reintegration of a Biblical Corpus*. Oxford University Press, 2019. 352pp. $78.24, hardcover.

An Obituary of "Wisdom Literature" divides into four sections: Introduction, Historical Metacriticism, Genre Methodology, and The Reintegration of Wisdom Literature. The introduction establishes Will Kynes' methodological critique of wisdom literature. Wisdom literature is a modern scholarship invention and Johann

Bruch is the Wellhausen of Wisdom (p. 4). Kynes' genre-method combines theories of a constellation metaphor and turns the referent into a three-dimensional reference (p. 12). Scholars should put to death wisdom literature as a genre, then reevaluate wisdom: categories, genre, schools, and concept (p. 18). Wisdom must first be understood as a concept and not a category that unites other corpora together (p. 22).

Section I focuses on Kyne's Historical Metacriticism on wisdom literature and he divides the section into three chapters. The first chapter describes the rise of wisdom literature as a category and the rational for the demise of wisdom literature. The imminent demise arose through the spread of wisdom literature into every discipline with an ever-changing definition. The second chapter buttresses Kynes' argument on the historical precedent of the definition of wisdom literature within the Enlightenment. He establishes the existence of a flimsy foundation for a purported wisdom category in ancient traditions (p. 80). The third chapter traces how Johann Bruch gave birth to the wisdom literature category. Bruch's categorization influenced others to categorize wisdom literature from the rest of the canon. Wisdom literature became a mirror that would reflect those who interpreted it and Kynes argues that this mirror needs to be broken so that we create a mosaic instead (p. 104).

In Section II, Kynes develops his own genre methodology whereby he argues for the constellation of text approach. Genre patterns a text into a network for explanatory power and interpretive influence beyond the sum of their parts (p. 113). Genre is a formalized shorthand of intertextuality. Kynes stipulates, "Genre features do not exist in texts as much as between them and therefore not in their authorial creation but in their readerly comparison" (p. 115). Thus, the constellation approach moves the text to a multi-dimensional approach and sees text participating in genres without ever belonging to them (p. 124). In section three, Kynes applies his methodology on how wisdom literature should be reintegrated into the canon through analyzing the intertextual network of Job, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs.

Will Kynes charts a new path for the study of "wisdom literature" for the 21st century, but unlike previous attempts Kynes' inventive approach assesses the previous categories. Kynes brings to light Johann Bruch's influence on the formation of the so-called wisdom genre and intends to uproot his false methodology that developed from this scholarly construct. An Obituary of "Wisdom Literature" is primarily a methodological treatment of wisdom literature as genre.

The present work contributes in two distinct ways: (1) the discovery of Johann Bruch as the father of wisdom genre and (2) reorienting wisdom methodology to a constellation of texts approach. Johann Bruch was swallowed up in footnotes and pushed to the periphery, but Will Kynes revives his importance for the development of wisdom literature. Kynes summons biblical scholars to reexamine their categories, but also to dig deeper than surface level publications. He provides an example of excellent scholarship. Although, scholars will disagree with his conclusions they must reexamine the evidence in light of his study.

Kynes proposes a three-dimensional approach to the text which he calls a constellation method. Kynes, in a personal message, says, "The constellation approach is unique to me as far as I know though others have touched on it." A strength but weakness with the present work is Kynes' methodology. The weakness is that he spends only one chapter developing his methodology then providing test cases in the various corpora. The strength of his approach is that he develops the discussion for genre studies. Kynes should elaborate his methodology in a further work since his provides a distinct methodology. Although, Kynes is a young scholar he shows promise to contribute to the field of Old Testament. This author has waited with anticipation for over a year for the publication of this book.

An Obituary of "Wisdom Literature" is a resource that touches on a broad level in Old Testament studies. Those considering wisdom's place in the canon should read Section I to orient themselves with direction of the field. Kynes provides the most comprehensive and succinct summary of wisdom literature to this date. His summary does not rehash old paradigms or information but presents fresh insights into the issues. Scholars investigating hermeneutics and genre will be enriched by chapter five where Kynes describes his methodology. Pastors will benefit from his last section where he treats Job, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs with his methodology.

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Rea, Michael C. *The Hiddenness of God*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018, 198pp., $30.00, hardcover.

Michael C. Rea is Rev. John A. O'Brien Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Center for Philosophy of Religion. In this book, Rea deals with two problems induced by divine hiddenness. They are [1] the argument against the existence of God, most notably by J. L. Schellenberg; and [2] the challenge of the idea of God's love. Rea's approach to the issues involves two steps to respond to these two problems respectively. The first step involves two arguments to show that the hiddenness problems are based on an unfounded assumption about divine love. The first argument, in Chapter 2, is that Schellenberg's problem is based on a concept of God which is different from and fails to target specifically *Christian* belief in God. For Rea, the problem of divine hiddenness is fundamentally "a problem of violated expectations" (p. 25).

In Chapter 3, Rea argues that the concept of God in biblical portrayals emphasizes two key attributes, personality and transcendence, which are woven together while they are also in tension with each other. In short, we cannot understand divine love without the light of divine transcendence, and vice versa. However, most contemporary religious persons and philosophical literature tend significantly to downplay the aspect of divine transcendence in favor of the aspect

of God's personality, and consequently the idea of divine love is derived from ideal parental imagery, which is acquired from an empirically philosophical reflection on the best model of human love (pp. 35-37). For Rea, we cannot have a fully transparent understanding of divine love simply by reflecting on human paradigms of love (p. 54); all these philosophical portrayals of attributes of God are, at best, analogical (p. 51). It also means that even if our expectation of God's divine love is violated, it does not necessarily follow that God is not good; it may be because God's divine goodness is significantly different from creaturely goodness; and thus Schellenberg's problem is unsuccessful as an argument against the existence of God (p. 57).

In Chapter 5, Rea argues that even if we set aside the source of divine revelation, there is still reason why we should not identify divine love by reference to idealized human love. Generally, philosophers conceived ideal human love as involving two desires: unlimited desire for the good of the beloved, and unlimited desire for union with the beloved (pp. 65-69). However, these desires may conflict with each other. Furthermore, the idea that God is unlimitedly devoted to human good is inconsistent with the view that God is perfectly personal rather than mechanical; indeed, God has a unique personality in promoting non-anthropocentric good. It would be bad for God to give up all his own pursuit to serve unlimited human goods. It is also doubtful that God would desire union with the beloved in an unlimited way because human beings may not be a fitting object for such unlimited union with God (pp. 76-77).

Although hiddenness cannot refute the existence of God, it may support the negative valenced analogies of God as a distant and neglectful lover. This is Rea's second step of responding to divine hiddenness. In Chapters 6 and 7, Rea argues that the availability of divine encounter experience is indeed much greater than the commonly credited literature. The encounters, Rea finds, are not ecstatic mystical ones, but "more common, phenomenologically low-grade sorts of encounters" (p. 91). Rea calls them "garden-variety divine encounters" (p. 115). By referring to T. M. Luhrmann's interpretation, such religious experience is the result of the exercise of a learnable skill, one that lets the subjects experience natural phenomena as the presence of God (p. 94). The hiddenness problem is usually based on the assumptions that the only real, important religious experiences are sensational, or that experiencing God requires "special causal contact with God" (p. 97). However, Rea argues that many believers' reports of religious experiences are non-sensational, and can be experienced in our ordinary worshipping life. It is also not mediated; as he states, "a religious experience is an apparent direct awareness of either (a) the existence . . . of a divine mind; or (b) the fact that . . . a testimonial report communicated by others has been divinely inspired" (p. 130).

Based on the uniformity assumption which states that the way God communicates with humans in biblical times is the same way he communicates in contemporary times, Rea assumes that the religious experience of Moses on Mount

Sinai in Exodus 19-20 was just like a contemporary experience of the same sort. On Mount Sinai, Moses heard the voice of God while people of Israel heard thunder. For Rea, the difference between Moses' experience and the more general mundane kind of religious experience does not lie in their level of stimulus, but their level of cognitive processing (p. 110). They had the same stimulus; the difference was just because of their cognitive difference resulting from training. Rea rather calls Moses' religious experience "cognitively impacted experiences involving natural stimuli" (p. 108).

In Chapter 8, Rea is concerned about people whose relationships are intensely conflicted with God. Rea makes three arguments through reflection on the book of Job and Lamentations that are "two scriptural portrayals of intensely conflicted divine–human relationships" (p. 138): first, the theophany at the end of Job shows that God takes Job's grievance seriously. Second, God's validation of lament and protest are part of a broader pattern of God's relationship with Israel. Third, participating in a relationship with God as shown in the Bible is also accessible to anyone who has a concept of God and is willing to try to participate in such relationship. Based on Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, Rea in Chapter 9 argues that even for those who have experienced religious trauma or have no concept of God, the sufficient condition of participating in a relationship with God is just by trying (p. 163). Trying to seek God is easy; it can be achieved so long as one is able to participate in a personal relationship, is receptive (not indifferent) to finding God, and has "a desire to find something that one conceptualizes by way of a concept of God" (p. 169). In our seeking God, we are already participating in a reciprocal relationship with God, even if we are not consciously aware of God, and thus we cannot refute the idea of divine love simply by virtue of not providing a conscious reciprocal relationship (p. 175). Finally, Rea concludes that there is no reason to believe that divine love is more appropriately characterized in a negative valenced analogy than a positive one. In the face of the phenomenon of divine hiddenness, Christians do not need to move to either atheism or non-personal deism.

One important contribution of Rea's book is that he not only responds to the philosophical challenge of the existence of God, but also to the existential problem of God as detached and neglectful. He deals with these two problems together by an interdisciplinary approach which attempts to integrate ideas both by philosophical literature, and by biblical and theological studies. While it may not convince those atheists and anti-Christian thinkers, it can provide a rational justification of Christian faith for believers in the face of struggles of divine hiddenness. However, Rea's account may conflict with Catholic spirituality. For instance, Rea explained that St. Teresa's experience of divine hiddenness may be due to her persistent engagements with the sufferings of others which have shaped her cognition and "make it hard to experience God's love and presence" (p. 136). In Rea's account, St. Teresa seems to be experiencing depression. However, in Catholic tradition, such experience is called

a "Dark Night of the Soul" which is a spiritual transformative experience. When it ends, one's life is transformed, and becomes more faithful and wondrous again.

However, the idea of a "Dark Night" seems to assume that God will occasionally and deliberately hide himself from human beings and stop communicating with Christians, even though it is for the sake of their spiritual transformation. Indeed, Rea does not deny the tradition of a "Dark Night of the Soul". In a footnote, he cites the writing of St. John of the Cross and argues that such purification "involves God's deliberate action to block one's sense of God's presence" (p. 96, n. 9). Rea assumes that "God is always and everywhere intending that people experience as much of God's love and presence. . . . God is constantly communicating" (p. 135). For Rea, the experience of divine hiddenness is because of the condition of human cognition which might be influenced by sin, doubt, suffering or block deliberately by God. Rea seems to assume that God is always present and will never hide himself from human being. If so, a few questions come to mind. First, how does Rea explain Jesus's experience of having been forsaken by the Father in the event of crucifixion? Second, was Jesus's cognition also influenced by his suffering or blocked by the Father? And, third, was Jesus not aware of his own cognitive condition at that time? Rea's theory seems to imply an answer of "yes" to the second and third questions. However, these imply that Jesus was under delusion and lacked self-understanding during his crucifixion. Neither answer seems acceptable by traditional Christians.

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Pruss, Alexander R. and Joshua L. Rasmussen. *Necessary Existence.* **Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 223, $64, hardback.**

In *Necessary Existence*, Joshua Rasmussen (Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Azusa Pacific University) and Alexander Pruss (Professor of Philosophy, Baylor University) aim to defend the coherence and plausibility of the existence of a concrete being that exists of necessity, that is, a being that cannot fail to exist that can stand in causal relations (call this being "CNB" for short). While many of the ideas in the book have their origin in a series of previously published journal articles by Rasmussen, there is a great deal of new material in the book that will be of interest to those working in metaphysics and philosophical theology. The book is composed of nine densely packed chapters, each chock-full of rigorous, careful, and even-handed philosophical argumentation. A short review like this cannot possibly do justice to the clarity, creativity, and force of the philosophical arguments crafted in the book.

Philosophical arguments in support of a CNB have played an important role in the history of Western philosophy, specifically as it pertains to arguments for theism. Such arguments commonly appeal to some aspect of contingent existence (events, facts, or things that exist but could have failed to exist), together with

what are known as causal or explanatory principles, as grounds for inferring the existence of a CNB. What makes *Necessary Existence* so significant is the way it demonstrates the cogency of a variety of underexplored *modal* arguments leading to the existence of a CNB.

The book begins with a helpful introductory chapter that situates the topic of necessary (concrete) existence within the context of contemporary analytic metaphysics and physics. In addition, the authors present the results of what they call the "Necessary Being" survey, an informal and interactive online survey (www. necessarybeing.com) designed by the authors to gauge ordinary intuitions regarding the concept of a necessary being.

In chapter two, Rasmussen and Pruss employ a standard account of the nature and logic of metaphysical modality, what is metaphysically necessary and possible. The overall aim of this second chapter is to clearly state and minimally justify the particular modal system—system S5 (whose characteristic modal axiom is ◆□P→□P, i.e., if possibly necessarily P, then necessarily P)—that is *assumed* throughout the book and explicitly employed in many of the modal arguments for the existence of a CNB. For those without prior background knowledge in modal logic and metaphysics (and/or are unfamiliar with the sorts of symbols routinely deployed in symbolic logic), the chapter will prove challenging.

After explicating and defending a more traditional argument from contingency in chapter three (with a barrage of refutations to standard objections from David Hume and Immanuel Kant), Rasmussen and Pruss turn in chapter four to what is arguably the most innovative aspect of the book, namely, the development and defense of a variety of *modal* arguments from contingency. Chapters four through six are devoted to the defense of two modal arguments from contingency in particular, "The Modal Argument from Beginnings" (4.2) and "The Weak Argument from Beginnings" (5.3) (including a novel contribution to the area of modal epistemology in chapter six). Due to space limitations, I will focus exclusively on "The Modal Argument from Beginnings" (MAB) for the existence of a CNB. MAB relies on the following modal causal premise: "for any positive state of affairs *s* that can begin to obtain, it is *possible* for there to be something external to *s* that causes *s* to obtain" (p. 69). From this modal causal principle, together with the premise that it is *possible* for there to be a beginning of the state of affairs *being the case that there exist contingent concrete things*, it follows not only that it is *possible* that a CNB exists, but that a CNB does in fact exist (by modal system S5 which I explicate briefly above). Note what MAB does *not* affirm: that the state of affairs *being the case that there exist contingent concrete things* must actually have an external cause or explanation. In employing a weaker causal principle than standard arguments from contingency, the authors contend that MAB avoids all the standard objections that are thought to weaken traditional arguments from contingency—e.g., MAB allows

for the possibility of (i) an uncaused contingent thing, (ii) causal loops, and (iii) wholly "internal explanations" (p. 72).

In chapter seven, Rasmussen and Pruss carve out a distinct pathway to the existence of a CNB, this time from the necessary existence of abstract objects (numbers, mathematical entities, sets, propositions, universals, etc.). Consider the following three assumptions: (a) necessarily, abstract objects exist; (b) necessarily, abstract objects depend on concrete objects; (c) possibly, there are no contingent concrete objects. If (a)-(c) are true, they together imply the existence of a CNB (given the S5 modal system). While Rasmussen and Pruss ably defend the necessary existence of abstract objects along Aristotelian or conceptualist lines, they acknowledge that the argument will carry little weight with those who stoutly reject the existence of necessarily existent abstract objects—i.e., nominalists who reject (a)—as well as those who are committed to abstract objects yet reject the claim that they depend on concrete objects—i.e., Platonists who reject (b).

In chapter eight, "The Argument from Perfections", the authors consider yet another argument for a CNB that is inspired by the work of Kurt Gödel. Call a "positive property" a property that confers some degree of value on its bearer. We can briefly summarize "The Argument from Perfections" as follows. Consider the property *existing necessarily* (N for short) and the property *possibly causing something* (C for short). Given several plausible assumptions (viz., that if A is positive, then ~A is not positive and if A is positive and A entails B, then B is positive) it follows that if N and C are each positive properties, then their conjunction, N&C, is possible (see the argument from *reductio* for this modal claim on p. 151). And if it is possible that a necessary being that can cause something exists, then such a being actually exists (again, given the modal system S5: possibly necessarily p implies necessarily p).

The book concludes with a treatment of what the authors consider to be six of the most compelling objections to the existence of a CNB (the authors consider the objection—labeled "Costly Addition"—the most compelling, which states that an ontology without concrete necessary existence is less theoretically costly). The authors close the book with an appendix consisting of a "slew of arguments" (p. 195) for the existence of a CNB. While the arguments outlined in the appendix are merely argument-sketches (and not full-scale defenses of the arguments), there are no less than thirty-two additional philosophical arguments that, if sound, converge on the existence of a CNB.

Readers of *The Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* will perhaps benefit the most from the author's sound rebuttal of historically influential arguments against the existence of a CNB from David Hume and Immanuel Kant. Chapter three considers and refutes five standard Humean arguments (the conceivability of non-existence, universe as necessary being, the plausibility of a conjunctive explanation of the universe, the fallacy of composition, no contradiction in there being an uncaused, contingent being) and two Kantian arguments against the existence of a

CNB (that arguments from contingency rely on the ontological argument, existence is not a property). Much of contemporary theology has, for too long, lived in the shadow of Hume and Kant regarding the cogency of philosophical arguments for the existence of a necessary being. Rasmussen and Pruss are to be commended for not only subjecting these well-worn criticisms to withering critique, but for their constructive contribution and defense of the concept of concrete, necessary existence in philosophical theology and metaphysics.

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Moreland, J. P., *Finding Quiet: My Story of Overcoming Anxiety and the Practices that Brought Peace*. Grand Rapids, Mi: Zondervan, 2019, pp. 220.

J. P. Moreland is distinguished professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology and director of *Eidos* Christian Center. With degrees in philosophy, theology and chemistry, Dr. Moreland has taught theology and philosophy at several schools throughout the United States. The author has numerous books, he has also served with Campus Crusade, planted two churches, and spoken at hundreds of college campuses and churches. Dr. Moreland has been recognized by *The Best Schools* as one of the 50 most influential living philosophers in the world (back cover).

Finding Quiet (FQ) is an autobiographical testimony by Dr. Moreland about the trials and victories he has had over clinical depression which lasted for decades in his life. He writes in the Preface "The book you hold in your hands is an honest revelation of my own struggles with anxiety and depression, along with a selection of the significant spiritual, physical, and psychological ideas and practices that have helped me most. I am not a licensed therapist, and this book is not meant to be a substitute for professional or psychiatric help. Rather, my intent is to come alongside you, my reader, as a fellow sufferer and to share my experiences and some ideas and practices that may be fresh and new to you. (p. 13)"

The book is divided into six sections:

1. Human persons and a holistic approach for defeating Anxiety/Depression

2. Getting a handle on Anxiety and Depression.

3. Spiritual and Psychological Tools for Defeating Anxiety/Depression Part 1.

4. Spiritual and Psychological Tools for Defeating Anxiety/Depression Part 2.

5. Brain and Heart Tools for Defeating Anxiety/Depression.

6. Suffering, Healing and Disappointment with God.

Chapter 1 is a provocative discussion about the primacy of Scripture and the role of extrabiblical knowledge and techniques via psychology and psychiatry. Moreland makes a good case for the engagement of all knowledge and techniques as long as nothing contradicts the Word of God. He has a balanced emphasis on the material and immaterial aspects of humanity.

Chapter 2 relates to how a person can acquire a better understanding of his/her own history of anxiety. One of the greatest causes of anxiety is stress which then leads to general depression. He defines anxiety as "a feeling of uneasiness, apprehension, or nervousness. (p. 52)." He argues since the majority of anxiety is produced by inherited factors and circumstances; a high level of self-compassion is needed to lead to a happy life. Self-compassion includes kindness to oneself, paying attention to mindful suffering, and recognition that some suffering is common to the human experience (p. 59).

Neuroplasticity is the focus of chapter 3. The brain has the ability to form new patterns of connections and thought processes. Morland recommends a four-step process: 1) Relabeling the thought, 2) Reframing the perception, 3) Refocusing the attention, and 4) Revaluing the experience.

Contemplative prayer is part 2 of the process of the spiritual and psychological toolbox. He recommends ACTS (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication) as well as a five-step process of quiet contemplation and reflection. The five-step process has some ambiguities, but the essence is humble reflection with an attitude of gratefulness for what God has, does and can do.

Chapter 5 discusses the role of medications under the supervision of a primary care physician or psychiatrist. Although no specific medications are mentioned, the general contention is that as human beings, we have material frailties that at times must be addressed with earthly chemistries. Antianxiety or antidepressant medications can be part of the healing process when taken under medically supervised conditions. He argues that these are special "vitamins" for the brain to help in the healing process.

The last chapter deals with disappointment with God when we do have get the answers to prayer as quickly as we desire. Moreland draws on lament Psalms to help the reader identify with the pain and frustration of past saints who struggled with the great questions of pain, suffering and injustice. Like any other book that addresses theodicy, the reader will probably not be satisfied until there is an answer to prayer for relief from his/her anxiety or depression. Identifying with others who have lived through such circumstances should strengthen our faith that God will work all His good purposes together for those who love him.

I would recommend this book to anyone suffering from anxiety or depression. There is no need to accept all the book so as to benefit from some of the book. Those in pastoral or counselling ministries will benefit from the biblical, theological, spiritual and psychological perspectives that are covered.

<div align="right">

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Inman, Ross D. *Substance and the Fundamentality of the Familiar: A Neo-Aristotelian Mereology.* **New York, NY: Routledge, 2018, 304, $145.00, hardcover.**

Ross Inman is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth Texas and also serves as the senior editor for the journal *Philosophia Christi.* He holds an M.A. in Philosophy from Talbot School of Theology and a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Trinity College, Dublin. He also completed research fellowships at the University of Notre Dame and Saint Louis University. Based upon this Inman has the necessary credentials and training to wade into the difficult waters of mereology in his book on the fundamental nature of substance.

Mereology is about wholes and their parts, determining which is most fundamental to identity and existence. The typical views in mereology affirm either the whole as prior to its parts or the parts as prior to the whole. Inman, on the other hand, defends a *via media* thesis that at least some intermediate composite objects like people, trees, and tigers are the most fundamental objects, being substances in their own right. Rather than following Monism or Pluralism about fundamentality in whole, where either the bottom or the top of the material chain is most fundamental, on his view, objects such as humans can be understood as fundamental (p. 4). Hence his title about the fundamentality of the familiar. Common sense dictates that objects such as tigers are "fundamental" in some sense. The smallest physical objects or the largest physical object are not exhaustive options in mereology. There is a place for intermediate substances that are not the largest object and are composed of several parts. The need for his book arises from not only a gap in mereology (most contemporary expositions of mereology find the smallest microphysical parts of the universe to be fundamental) but from a gap from within his own metaphysical camp—that of contemporary Neo-Aristotelian analytic metaphysics. It fills the void by defending an intermediate view of substances (p. 3).

Inman begins by defending what he calls "serious essentialism." This is not a novel defense to Inman but one found in many metaphysicians fond of medieval scholasticism or Thomism. Serious essentialism claims that the world and its objective *de re* modal structure is carved out by the natures of things. Alternative attempts like modal essentialism are insufficient for discovering the carvings of these joints (p. 11). To know the fundamental natures of things and the grounds of metaphysical necessity and possibility requires something far more serious and fine-grained than what is often provided within the modal gloss alone. Not all metaphysical necessities are on par with one another because some are structured or ordered in ways that give definitive identity to an object (p. 24). Inman provides several examples to explain why this is so—mostly borrowing from and following Kit Fine's influential article "Essence and Modality" from 1994.

Next, Inman explicates the nature of grounding and essence. By 'grounding' Inman means a "non-causal, metaphysical priority relation that obtains between composite objects and their proper parts" (p. 54). He provides several potential options for what constitutes grounding before settling on what he calls "essential grounding" which is inspired by John Duns Scotus. Essential grounding requires it to be part of the essence of an object that it exists only if its parts exist (p. 68).

Chapter 3 is dedicated to defending the priority of substance. He endeavors to promote the thesis that no fundamental entity has another fundamental entity as a proper part. Given this, there can be no more than one fundamental entity on the hierarchy of composition. Inman admits this "plays an absolutely central role in my overall neo-Aristotelian metaphysic of material objects" (p. 85). So, in contrast to the commonly held belief that all chains of metaphysical dependence run *through* intermediate composite objects, Inman believes some terminate *in* them (p. 90). For Inman, a mixed view is possible. S*ubstances* are metaphysically fundamental and are either simple or prior to their parts while *aggregates* are posterior to their parts or to the substance of which they are parts (p. 94). From this he provides his definition of substance which is something that is ungrounded and a unity (p. 98).

Inman then turns to critique, focusing primarily on the popular thesis of Part-Priority which thinks the smallest parts of the world are fundamental and prior to their wholes (p. 115). He explains how such a thesis cannot account for either chemical structure or biological structure. This is so because it is scientifically proven that some properties transcend their physical parts. There are facts involving natural properties instantiated by composite objects that are irreducible to facts about their natural properties alone—they cannot exist apart from the composite (p. 143).

Once he has sufficiently cast doubt on Part-Priority he shows the utility of his thesis for several metaphysical puzzles. Next he shows how substantial priority makes sense of when composition occurs. Here he argues against metaphysical vagueness on composition, claiming that there is a rigid cutoff for composition which he takes to be the instantiation of non-redundant causal powers (p. 186). In chapter 7, Inman shows further benefits of Substantial Priority. He defends the terminus argument and the tracking argument. The terminus argument claims that "only a fundamental mereology equipped with at least one fundamental intermediate can allow for a terminus of grounding chains in possible worlds with no bottom or top mereological levels" (p. 203). The tracking argument accepts the common claim that it is necessary for the fundamental causal properties of entities to track the fundamental bearers of properties. From this it claims that at least some intermediate composites are bearers of properties. Therefore, at least some intermediate composites can act as fundamental bearers of properties (p. 207). He also thinks if one rejects Substantial Priority common beliefs in free will and the existence of non-redundant phenomenal mental properties are undermined (p. 214). Finally in Chapters 8 and 9 he examines

the least and most worrisome objections to Substantial Priority and provides several ways to rebut them.

Having summarized Inman's book, it is important to note both the positive contributions it makes but also the negative aspects to offer the most helpful review. Beginning with the negatives, there are numerous abbreviations throughout the book, particularly in the opening chapters. While it is common to analytic philosophy to utilize abbreviations, when they are excessively used they sacrifice clarity. Maybe an appendix or glossary of abbreviations would help mitigate this problem. Even so, the book would have been far better served if they were removed.

Second, his introduction to serious essentialism departs from all prominent serious essentialists with an original contribution that appears suspect (p. 17). He eliminates modal essentialism in its entirety. This move is not only highly controversial but also unnecessary. There is no reason to depart from modal essentialism in its entirety in order to advance his thesis. It would be better to leave it intact as a useful tool that is simply insufficient. The purpose of modal essentialism is not to carve nature at its joints, as Inman desires, but to place minimal constraints on the data that any metaphysical explanation needs to account for. Its goal is to perspicuously describe rather than discover essential and non-essential properties. The fact that modal logic remains neutral on which metaphysical explanation is used for the truths it states, neither assuming nor requiring any particular theory (whether essentialist or non-essentialist, etc.), means that it serves metaphysics (including Inman's serious essentialism) by leaving it plenty of work to do without eliminating potential solutions. Since this is its purpose, it is not necessary to dispense with it completely as Inman argues. While it may be insufficient it can remain as a useful supplement.

Third, the price of Inman's work is out of the range of the ordinary reader. While it is likely priced so high to market specifically to libraries, this is a negative if others without access hope to study the work at length. While the *Routledge Studies in Metaphysics* is an excellent series, Inman's work would be far more visible and accessible had it been published at a lower cost.

Having discussed several negatives, what does Inman's book do positively? Most importantly, he charitably and honestly engages objections and counter proposals to his own thesis. Throughout the book he is even-handed and fair to all sides, bringing forth their best arguments and stating their claims clearly. At no point does he attempt to hide the faults of his own thesis, either. Neither does his writing dip into emotional pleas or silence on the best objections to his own view. It is clear at all points. Even with such a dense subject matter he manages to write in a way that is readable and enjoyable. He never writes for the sake of writing. Every sentence has purpose. Every paragraph is put to work. Nothing is wasted. Such clear and fair writing is rare in contemporary literature. Therefore, Inman provides an excellent model for all aspiring philosophers, theologians, and seasoned academics alike.

Second, his arguments against Part-Priority are excellent. For example, the structure of Hydrogen Chloride together as a composite substance obtains its acidic behavior and distinctive boiling point only in virtue of its substantial nature. The composite chemical as a whole is necessary to possess its distinctive causal powers and capacities. The elements apart from the whole lack the causal powers that are present with the whole (p. 144). If molecules such as these are to be reducible to their parts as Part-Priority maintains, they should evidence no new causal powers beyond what exists as parts. But this is not the case (p. 145). Therefore, Part-Priority cannot be correct as a complete thesis since novel properties are scientifically proven to emerge from composite substances.

Third, Inman fills a vacuum with his book. As he noted, there has been no contemporary defense of the fundamentality of substance for medium-sized composite objects. His thesis about Substantial Priority fills this void and does so admirably. So, not only is his book a superb work in metaphysics and mereology, it also packs an argumentative punch. It is crisp, clear, and useful. Anyone interested in the study of mereology will be required to reference, read, and engage the arguments Inman puts forth. It is not a bystander in its niche realm. It is a metaphysical heavy-weight that cannot be ignored. His thesis is more than just an alternative possible option but one of legitimate strength that deserves a place alongside the premier options in mereology.

In assessing this books overall contribution to theological studies, its audience must be kept in mind. This is not a beginner's textbook, nor is it designed for undergraduates. It is designed as a novel and technical contribution to the field of mereology. Therefore, anyone attempting to glean from it should be aware that prior knowledge of metaphysics is required. For anyone lacking the requisite training and knowledge it is recommended to study several beginning textbooks on metaphysics to have a basic grasp of the overall context of the discussion. However, Inman writes in such a way that those with a beginner's grasp of metaphysical issues will be rewarded for their hard work and diligence. It may require a second reading for such students, but it will be well worth their time.

So, how should the biblical-theological student interact with this book? First, they should recognize its audience as noted above. It is not for the faint of heart. Though it is clear in its presentation, the concepts are dense. Second, biblical-theological students *should* interact with the book. Just because it is more difficult does not mean it is unnecessary or unimportant. Often times the greatest theological payoffs can come from the most difficult subject matters. Inman's tour of mereology is no different. It provides a major contribution to the field of mereology by providing a middle way for material objects. For example, the current landscape is dominated by Part-Priority views that significantly limit positions in the Philosophy of Mind which is an every growing field for those interested in theology. If one is to be competent in this area, they must know the alternative positions that allow for them

to hold their preferred anthropological position. Further, as Inman suggests, if one is interested in defending either free will or non-redundant mental properties, a proper mereology must undergird it (p. 214). Both of these topics are central to many theological areas. Therefore, while mereology may be unfamiliar territory for many biblical and theological students, it is necessary for the serious student. And Inman's work is an excellent standard by which to test and advance ones knowledge.

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Irving, Justin A. and Strauss, Mark L. *Leadership in Christian Perspective: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Practices for Servant Leadership.* **Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019, pp.218, $22.99, pb.**

Leadership books set themselves to a series of common tasks—they promise to encourage, inspire, equip, and motivate leaders and organizations to greater effectiveness and increased success. Typically, the warrant for such a book is the success and effectiveness of its author, a highly qualified exemplar whose personal use of the methods testifies to its implicit worth. Irving and Strauss, in their 2019 volume Leadership in Christian Perspective: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Practices for Servant Leaders, are not those kinds of figures. Instead, what they have done is bring together biblical commentary (from Strauss), together with a broad summary of insights from research into leadership models (from Irving), in a topic by topic survey of what they consider to be the key qualities of 'servant leadership.' The result is a competent if forgettable book on 'Christian' leadership.

The governing idea for Irving and Straus's book is that "the most effective approaches to leadership move leaders from a focus on follower control to a focus on follower empowerment" (p. 12). Toward this goal they divide their research into three sections with three chapters per section. The first section focuses on the leader's authenticity and purpose, with emphases on modeling, self-evaluation, and presenting a vision for collaboration. The second section focuses on the leader's relationship to followers, with emphases on appreciation, individuation, and effective use of relational skills. The final section focuses on leaders and followers together, with emphases on communication, accountability, and resourcing. Each chapter follows a common pattern. A brief introduction to the topic utilizes a popular example, Strauss offers a few pages of biblical reflection on the subject, and then Irving, for the remainder of the chapter, highlights insights from a broad range of content within leadership research.

A summary of a single chapter will give an accurate feel for the whole. One of the best chapters in the book was the seventh, "Communicating with Clarity." The chapter opens by highlighting the example of former US Secretary of State Colin

Powell, who "learned that leaders must not only regularly communicate to followers, but they must also nurture regular communication from followers" (p. 141). With his example in view, the chapter will seek to show how it is that "clear and effective communication is central to the work of leadership" (p. 142). In the biblical section, Strauss looks to Paul's clear account of his own preaching in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, noting that "It was a simple message, so simple that it was sometimes dismissed as foolishness" (p. 143). To the simplicity of the message, Irving adds that the message must also attend to one's audience (highlighting Jesus's agrarian parables), depends on good listening (quoting James 1:19-20), and should seek to benefit the listener (quoting Ephesians 4:29). With this foundation laid, Irving takes up the question of communication "in contemporary perspective," which focuses on the importance of leaders possessing "the capacity to communicate [their organizational] priorities to teams, organizations, and relevant stakeholders effectively and clearly" (p. 147). Irving draws from Stephen Littlejohn's Theories of Human Communication, then notes the roles of filters and feedback in communication. He appeals to Mark McCloskey's Tell It Often—Tell It Well to reinforce the role of "other-centered communication" in their model (p. 150), then to David Horsager's The Trust Edge to emphasize the importance of clarity (pp. 151-2). Irving then rapidly lists fifteen practices for effective communication, and after this, the reader is exhorted to utilize "compelling channels" of communication, whether face to face, letters, phone calls, or otherwise. To close, the chapter highlights the example of Martin Luther King Jr. as an effective communicator, especially in his use of anaphora, and then offers some recommendations for practicing communication, including "finding your voice" (which encompassing asking yourself a series of questions), working for "two-way communication" (to which they appeal to USC's model of "artful listening" [p. 158]), and making communication about your followers (to which they appeal to Max De Pree's advice of referring to his "people" as "the people I serve" [p. 159]). A series of "next steps" offer bullet point summaries of some of the chapter contents.

As can be seen from the above summary, what may be the best feature of Leadership in Christian Perspective is its premise: a commitment to a model of servant leadership. As a model for organizations, rethinking the power dynamics (and purposes) of persons in authority is certainly a helpful corrective. In accord with this, Irving and Strauss in their book offer a compendium of useful resources for further reading. Overall, Leadership in Christian Perspective competently informs the reader about what its authors believe servant leadership is, but fails to educate readers on how one might performatively act on it.

To this concern is added two significant others. First, Irving and Strauss state explicitly at the beginning of the volume that "Leadership in Christian Perspective is intentionally an integrative project" (p. 3). They attempt a combination of biblical accounts and contemporary leadership perspectives, and yet no real integration ever happens. Each chapter is neatly divided into two (unequal) biblical and leadership

sections, with little or no cross pollination between them (4-5 pages of Bible, 12-15 pages of leadership content). While they rightly acknowledge that the Bible is not a manual for leadership (4), gluing Bible studies to leadership material does not qualify as 'integration.'

Second, there is a question of audience. The expectation from the title and marketing of the book suggests that this is a book for the church. However, of its many examples and illustrations, only a handful came from ecclesiological sources; most were from the secular business world, and few (to none) of the applications took account of the unique challenges of church leadership. Additionally, when the authors highlight the example of Jesus as a leader, they make the interesting comment that "his whole life was lived for the benefit of others—to bring them back into a right relationship with God" (p. 6). This is true, in a sense, but it is more true to say that Jesus's whole life was lived in obedience to the Father. It is a difficult sell to co-opt the ministry of Jesus to a follower-oriented model; he was an obedience orientated leader. The key was that his obedience was to Someone else. (A reader might note with interest that the only reference to obedience in Irving and Strauss's book was pejorative [p. 61].) In Christianity, the concepts of leadership and obedience are inseparable. This concern tethers out to a raft of unasked and unanswered questions regarding the relationship between church leadership to the Mission Dei, the concept of calling, the role of spiritual formation, the place of anointing or spiritual gifts, and the definition of success for Christian organizations. To these questions, Irving and Strauss are silent.

It would appear, instead, that the primary audience for the book is American Christian Businessmen. Secular business, not ecclesial organizations, is the focus. Secular businesses run by Christians who care about the Bible narrows the focus further. And Americanism runs throughout the book as well. As an example of the tacit cultural perspective, consider the opening example for their first chapter. There the authors recount the story—as an example of a leader who models his own beliefs—of Lt. Col. Hal Moore, American soldier in Vietnam who promised to "Almighty God" to be first on the ground and last to leave the battle of Ia Drang (p. 17). It is worth asking, how would I respond to this if I were either (a) Vietnamese (b) not American (c) a pacifist or (d) concerned about the association between American military and religious belief? This, and many other explicit examples from America, limit the scope of its readership.

If you are an American Christian Businessman, looking for a resource to help you think through some of the questions around operating as a servant leader, then doubtless Irving and Strauss's volume will provide you with some competent insights. If you are anyone else, chances are this book isn't for you.

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Hansen, Collin and Robinson, Jeff. *15 Things Seminary Couldn't Teach Me.* **Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018, pp. 155 , $17.99, Paperback.**

15 Things Seminary Couldn't Teach Me is a multi-author work. Each of the authors, however, demonstrate that at least a portion of their vocational ministry consists of time serving pastorally over a local congregation of believers. This equips each of the authors to be able to speak extensively and practically to the arena about which they wrote, giving the reader both confidence in their ability to assess and explain the situations involved but also the practical guidance for how to maneuver difficult situations that arise within the context of local church ministry.

In this work the various authors seek to establish, encourage, and root the reader in the practical realities that accompany life in the local church. Each individual seeks to address a different topic someone might encounter in vocational ministry that was potentially not covered during a stint of studying at a seminary. The first chapter argues that simply because an individual has education it does not make them competent for ministry, giving practical guidance in what to focus on and how to love people more than the knowledge one receives. The second chapter focuses on loving people more than the frustrations that they can cause in the midst of ministry. The third chapter emphasizes the need for the pastor to shepherd his wife effectively. Fourth, the author writes about how to engage with people who do not necessarily share the same theological, cultural or demographic background as the vocational pastor. In the fifth chapter the challenge is how to submit to and resolve conflict with a head pastor that the reader may have certain disagreements with.

The sixth chapter provides guidance on how an individual can strengthen the leadership of his church, including who to make leaders and how to equip them. Seventh, the author focuses on shepherding the hearts of the children of a pastor, how to encourage them to be involved in ministry and to grow to love the church. The eighth chapter focuses on the practice of walking through suffering with a congregation, how to shepherd towards peace in the midst of turmoil as well as preparing them to potentially face suffering in the future. The ninth chapter focuses on God's calling to leave or remain in the present ministry role that one holds; the author provides multiple practical tips for when to decide to leave a ministry position. Tenth, the advice involves dealing with conflict ranging from among the members to among the leaders.

In the eleventh chapter the author challenges the reader with the need for the pastor to fight for and maintain his own walk with the Lord, without which the pastor will eventually burn out. The twelfth chapter gives practical steps to engage in the long process of developing trust among the members of a congregation. Thirteen, warns against the common temptation for a pastor to focus on their individual success rather than on the mission and purpose of God for them and their congregation. For the fourteenth chapter the author encourages sticking with a church for the long haul,

the joy and sadness that can be experienced, but also the fruitful ministry. Finally, the author in the last chapter gives encouragement for the pastor and seminary student to rely on the timing of the Lord to direct and place an individual where He desires and when He desires, even though the process of not being hired is quite discouraging.

The main goal of the book is to educate church leaders on some of the realities that they will face in their context of the local church. As one of the authors states at the conclusion of the book, "...seminary is valuable but not sufficient. We do not intend to denigrate the valuable work of seminaries. Rather, we want to help young pastors, seminary students, and other aspiring ministers learn from our experience how God fits a man to be a faithful and effective minister." (p.145) He is correct in saying this, for seminary is not sufficient for all things. However, it does not leave room for that fact that no written work is sufficient to give the practical side of ministry because every ministry experience will be unique. Therefore, whereas Seminary is not sufficient there is much that seminary can and does teach the individual pursuing pastoral ministry that prepares him to handle the stresses of the ministry and begins to lay the foundation of the pastor that experience will develop and strengthen over time. This book is, therefore, a resource that ultimately builds on the instruction and foundation laid throughout seminary.

Each topic discussed seeks to provide perspective on the life of pastoral ministry and even provide a helpful resource for some of the more prominent issues that a pastor will face. As far as being in the category of books that seeks to provide a quick guide to some of the more serious or severe situations an individual will face in pastoral ministry, this book is excellent. There are precious nuggets of wisdom that are sprinkled throughout the pages of the book. Therefore to have the book is to possess a resource that gives wisdom and advice to the various situations and pressures of pastoral ministry. It is also helpful for people who are just graduating seminary but also those who have been in the pastorate for a long time if they are facing new and unfamiliar territory in their current ministry.

Some of the more notable chapters of the book that provide some of the best direction for someone coming right out of seminary would be the emphasis on the dependence on God that must be characteristic of the pastor throughout his ministry. Also, the practical advice on when to stay or leave a ministry is invaluable and will be used by many who find themselves seeking the will of God in their current role outside of seminary. The chapters that emphasized the cultural differences between a pastor and his congregation as well as the one on leading leaders are invaluable for the individual entering their first pastorate.

As far as a book that gives multiple perspectives on various topics the pastor will face, this book is unique. It provides a large variety of topics in a central location and for that reason it stands out. It is a useful tool for the seminary student to engage with immediately following graduation.

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Shaddix, Jim. *Decisional Preaching*. Spring Hill, TN: Rainer Publishing, 2019, pp.147, $11.47, paperback.

Dr. Jim Shaddix is Professor of Preaching, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (Wake Forest, NC), holding the W. A. Criswell Chair of Expository Preaching, also serving as Director for the Center for Preaching and Pastoral Leadership. He has made homiletic contributions to numerous multi-authored works and along with Jerry Vines has co-authored *Power in the Pulpit* (Moody, 1997/2017) and *Progress in the Pulpit* (Moody, 2017). He has authored *The Passion-Driven Sermon* (B&H, 2003).

Decisional Preaching is a much-needed book for every practitioner of Christian preaching seeking to discern the difference between pulpit manipulation and biblical persuasion. Seasoned homiletician Jim Shaddix takes the reader from stem to stern on the necessity, purpose, and practice of the persuasive elements of preaching. The book unfolds in six chapters: "Confessions of a Spurgeonist" (argumentation for decisional preaching); "Preparing to Call for Decisions" (preparation of the preacher through Word and Spirit); "Decisional Qualities of Sermon Foundation (utilizing persuasion in the sermon's *formal elements*); "Decisional Qualities of Sermon Function (using persuasion in the sermon's *functional elements*); "Decisional Qualities of Sermon Force (understanding the sermon style issue of *force* and its expression); and finally "Public Expressions of Spiritual Decisions" (where the main focus centers upon a multidimensional persuasive public appeal).

Persuasion may be that one distinctive that separates teaching from preaching. To teach is *to inform*, to preach is also to inform, but also *to move*; preaching informs the mind and persuades the heart. Shaddix states, "We believe the sermon does more than make the Gospel known. It makes the *demands* of the Gospel known and calls for a response" (p. 13). Preaching by nature is always confrontational, pressing for a decision; it draws the 'line in the sand', calling for a verdict. Shaddix discusses the tension between divine sovereignty (no one can choose Christ on their own) and human responsibility (whosoever will may come); as an example he employs Spurgeon who "applied his conviction about this irreconcilable tension to his preaching for decisions" (p. 23) and "believed the preacher should apply pressure and emotion to compel people to respond to the Gospel" (p. 33). Much modern preaching lacks bold, urgent, and passionate appeals and Shaddix provides several culprits, among them a *forgetfulness of the nature of preaching* (preachers have biblically and historically called for decisions).

Proper sermon preparation includes both sermon and preacher. He must immerse himself in Scripture, studying it, obeying it, and preaching it. "Preaching for right decisions about Christ begins on our knees before an open Bible" (p. 43). He must also experience the Spirit's presence in prayer asking Him to 1) *illuminate* his mind in preparation and preaching, together with the hearers', 2) *convict* hearts, 3) *apply* truth, and 4) *empower* him. "As preachers, we have a responsibility to assume

that no authentic decision-making is going to take place in our preaching if we come to the pulpit in the flesh – not having been in the counsel of God and not having pursued the help of His Spirit" (p. 58).

Shaddix rightly posits that sermon focus and form should be persuasive. "The focus of every sermon should be the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (p. 60). Therefore, 1) text must drive the sermon for "you will influence decision-making by building your messages on the biblical text … such a text-based, Spirit-empowered approach is true *biblical* preaching, the only kind of legitimate preaching" (pp. 61-62). 2) Expose the Spirit's intended meaning of your text, 3) let text determine your sermon subject, and 4) highlight the Gospel in your text. Where there is no Christ – there is no true Christian preaching for, "Gospel-centered preaching calls individuals to decide on a relationship with a person not just a change of action" (p. 66). Since sermon structure is conducive to listener attentiveness, the preacher should be persuasive in sermon form (*introduction*, *exposition*, and *conclusion*). "You preach for changed lives, so your calling for a verdict. The conclusion is your last opportunity to specifically and formally call for that verdict, but you should be doing that in your introduction and exposition as well" (p. 75).

The sermon's functional elements should have a decisional tone. The preacher *explains* to transform knowing "we explain it so they can understand it because that's what changes them! He *argues* to convince, anticipating objections listeners may make. He *applies* to demonstrate; exhorting to both do and believe, lifting high the cross which is relevant to believers and unbelievers. In the rush to apply "we're often led to believe that application is what brings about life change. Application doesn't change people; it just helps them demonstrate the change that's already taken place inside them" (pp. 78-79). Finally, he *illustrates* purposively to shed light.

Shaddix provides handles for a proper understanding and expression of "force." Others may use terms like anointing, filling, unction, *pathos* or passion; he says "force – or energy – is the impact created by a combination of other elements of sermon style. It's the quality of propelling your thought into the hearts and minds of your listeners" (p. 101). Force should be 1) *convictional*. "We need to be passionate about what we preach, but our passion must be driven by our convictions about what is true" (p. 104). 2) *Passionate*, 3) *Authoritative*, characterized by "certainty about two things – his message and his role as the messenger" (p. 110). 4) *Free*, as notes can impede force, it is not about "the degree of notes we use, but how we navigate our notes, and how that navigation affects our engagement with the audience" (p. 130).

Proclamation of the Word requires both public and immediate response, yet Shaddix advises "while I don't believe such expressions are required for authentic spiritual decision-making, I do think they can help with the process in healthy, spiritual ways" (p. 119). He rightly encourages us to take this risk, noting other practices that we deem as appropriate public displays of faith, such as weddings and offerings. He suggests variety: vocal expression, physical gestures (raise hand,

kneel), written record, physical relocation (altar call), or post meeting ministry. He suggests a multi-faceted approach noting that the preacher must exercise each of these with integrity for the Gospel, the preaching text, and the listener.

Decisional Preaching's niche? The calling for integration of persuasion into the sermon's entirety. "Preachers are responsible for offering everyone an opportunity to decide rightly for the truth we preach, and for persuading them to do so" (p. 11). Persuasion is not optional, since preachers have a heavenly mandate, "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, *we persuade men*" (2 Cor 5:11). Consequently, preachers had better know why they are doing it, do it and do it well. Whether greenhorn or old hand, Shaddix places his work on the shelf where every preacher can reach it. There are preaching books out there that are nothing more than self-help narratives that Paul would have condemned at Corinth, others shortsightedly limit persuasion to evangelistic preaching – *Decisional Preaching* is neither, as it seeks to turn the sermon's totality into a decision focus. This book would serve admirably alongside Josh Smith's *Preaching for a Verdict* (B&H Academic, 2019) and Jerry Vines and Adam Dooley's *Passion in the Pulpit* (Moody, 2018). *Decisional Preaching* is a welcome edition to every preacher's shelf.

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Butner, Jr., Glenn D. *The Son who Learned Obedience: A Theological Case Against the Eternal Submission of the Son*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018, pp. 224, $28, softcover.

Glenn D. Butner is Assistant Professor of Theology and Christian Ministry at Sterling College, KS. Prior to *The Son who Learned Obedience* (subsequently, *SLO*), he authored articles on the Trinity including, "For and Against de Régnon: Trinitarianism East and West," (*International Journal of Systematic Theology* 17.4) 2015, and "Eternal Functional Subordination and the Problem of the Divine Will" (*Journal for the Evangelical Theological Society* 58.1) 2015, 131-49. His article, "Against Eternal Submission: Changing the Doctrine of the Trinity Endangers Salvation and Women," (*Priscilla Papers* 31.3) 2017, 15-21, was published in the academic journal of Christians for Biblical Equality, an organization devoted to equipping people for egalitarian ministry. *SLO* only touches on socio-cultural issues briefly. It contends that eternal relational authority and submission (hereafter, ERAS), a perspective on Trinitarian relations, undermines the Trinity and salvation.

Butner begins by describing his method and key argument. He understands theology to be second-order, so he primarily addresses indirect doctrinal principles, ending with direct exegetical data (pp. 5-9). The question of ERAS is not one of exegetical facts but of the "best way to make sense of" and to provide "conceptual clarity" to Scripture (p. 9). This contrasts with ERAS proponents' appeals to

exegetical necessity (p. 162). As a concession, Butner denies that ERAS's Person-only submission entails Arianism (pp. 21-25). However, since ERAS requires three wills, ERAS contradicts the pro-Nicene tradition by rending Gods' external working into three (pp. 25-48).

SLO also makes an argument from Christology and substitutionary atonement. Traditionally, Christ's two natures operate differently within his Person, neither conflating nor mixing (pp. 67-72, 76-85). ERAS's Person-only submission conflates these operations (pp. 72-76, 85-94). Also, if the Son came in obedience to the Father, then the Son died for himself, not for the world (pp. 95-112). The Son had to have come freely if his atonement counted for others (pp. 113-121).

Lastly, Butner makes a case from theology proper and exegesis. God's attributes strip ERAS of significance. Even if the Son "submits," this looks nothing like human submission (pp. 122-149). The oppression which submission language can instigate justifies abandoning it (pp. 158-159). Exegetically, 1 Corinthians 15:28 refers to the Father's subjecting the Son *as the new Adam* (pp. 162-172). In 1 Corinthians 11:3, God's headship over Christ either represents Christ's messianic role—if headship means authority—or the Son's eternal generation—if headship means source (pp. 185-189). Butner affirms an economic order while denying that order implies submission (pp. 173-185).

In response I will offer four positive affirmations and five critiques. First, *SLO* offers a significant concession in defending ERAS against claims of Arianism. Other opponents of ERAS have not recognized ERAS's procession/submission analogy: as the Son can be eternally generated—his Person, not the Essence—so the Son can be eternally submissive (pp. 21-25). *SLO*'s strengthening ERAS on a fundamental point highlights its fair-minded presentation.

Along the same lines, Butner throughout charitably acknowledges possible ERAS responses. He even suggests that ERAS, understood as distinct modes in God, "is admittedly able to evade some objections raised throughout the course of this book" (pp. 44-45). This admission again strengthens ERAS, allowing Butner to respond compellingly.

SLO also affirms the connection between Trinitarian processions and mission. It argues that their mission simply is their processions but with "a created term" (pp. 54-55). This counters theologians who might argue that ERAS wrongly identifies a necessary basis for the Person's economy in the processions.

Lastly, Butner examines the issue from a thought-provoking discussion of Christ's person and work. Chapter two provides an informative and high-level analysis of Maximus the Confessor's view of natures and wills, relating Maximus to the ecumenical councils. This chapter joins with chapter three on Anselm and atonement to provide a helpful plunge into the historical debates regarding Christ's two wills and the Trinity's saving work.

Here are five critiques: First, *SLO*'s method seems problematic in reducing systematic theology to second-order clarifying judgments which "move beyond what the historical authors would have intended" (p. 8). Compare this to Aquinas' pre-Modern method: "We ought not to say about God anything which is not found in Holy Scripture either explicitly or implicitly" (*ST* 1 Q.36 Art.3 ad.1; compare *Westminster Confession* 1.6). *SLO*'s method seems to mix second-order questions of *language* (e.g., whether words like "Trinity" adequately communicate *implicit* biblical concepts) with first-order questions of *logic* (e.g. whether "sending another on mission," according to Scripture, logically *implies* an authority-concept [as ERAS holds] or whether authority *implies* divisive willing [as *SLO* holds]).

Second, certain conclusions do not follow. Compare Butner's claim that ERAS mixes Christ's natures (pp. 72-76, 85-94) with Butner's concession regarding ERAS and Arianism. ERAS only mixes Christ's natures if Person-only relations—submission *and* generation—characterize his divinity, which Butner's concession denies. Also, Butner's representation of ERAS seems off at times. He presents Ovey as denying that Christ submitted in his humanity (pp. 87-93). However, ERAS proponents argue that Christ submitted *both* in his humanity *and* by his eternally subsisting relation *but not* by his divine nature. The *real* Son—alone—truly took on flesh.

Third, *SLO* requires a false choice: either the Father commanded the Son's incarnation or the Son offered himself freely. However, both Athanasius (*Against the Heathen,* 3.46.5-6; *Discourses against the Arians*, 2.18.31) and Augustine (*On the Trinity,* 2.5.9) referred to the Father's giving libertarian-free commands to the Son. Yet the eternal Son *is* identical to these commands (as their exemplar). The Father's libertarian freedom *is* the Son's libertarian freedom. But the Son is not libertarian-free in his generating from or *working from* the Father.

Fourth, Butner's claims are off-base regarding pro-Nicene "will" language. Butner holds up Lewis Ayres as a standard authority on pro-Nicene doctrine (pp. 28-32). However, Ayres has justified using three-will and one-will language: "The Son's love for the Father is one of endless conformity in will . . . what we may also describe as the endless exercise of his *own* will" ("'As We are One': Thinking into the Mystery," *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*. The Los Angeles Theology Conference, ed. Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders, [Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2014], 94-113; 108-109, emphasis original). The pro-Nicene position coheres with Person-only relative wills *and* one natural will. Ayres critically dampens Butner's key claim that three-will language contradicts pro-Nicene Trinitarianism.

Fifth, *SLO*'s exegetical claims regarding the Father's sending the Son are weak. *SLO* argues that the Father's sending does not imply authority. *SLO* reasons that the Son might be more like a written letter, which cannot be described as obeying (p. 180). But the question is not of univocal *obedience* but of analogical *authority*.

Intentionally or not, *SLO* here seems to reflect the post-Modern milieu: authors lack authority over their message and meaning.

SLO examines ERAS with a multi-faceted theological approach. It recognizes that Trinitarianism must fit with all theology, especially Christology and soteriology. Butner has written the book as a polemical appeal to ERAS theologians. Students should come to the book with an intermediate to advanced understanding of Trinitarian doctrine. Students who read *SLO* will especially learn the complex history of doctrinal subtleties regarding Christ's natures and wills. Students should take note of the different charitable renderings and concessions Butner makes to ERAS as well as how he responds. Students should also internalize Butner's case that the Trinitarian mission is identical to the Person's processions but with a created term.

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Bird, Michael F., and Scott Harrower. *Trinity without Hierarchy: Reclaiming Nicene Orthodoxy in Evangelical Theology.* **Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2019, pp. 344 $25.99, paperback.**

The sixteen essays of *Trinity without Hierarchy* (subsequently, *TwH*) together argue that conceptualizing the Trinity in terms of eternal relations of authority and submission (hereafter, ERAS) conflicts with the "the apostolic and evangelical faith" (p. 21). *TwH's* editors Michael F. Bird and Scott Harrower lecture at Ridley College in Melbourne. Bird has defended ERAS previously, but he now argues that this approach (popularized by Wayne Grudem and Bruce Ware) is "analogical to a semi-Arian subordinationism" (pp. 9-12, 10). Harrower published *Trinitarian Self and Salvation* in 2012 and *God of All Comfort* (2019)*,* both exploring Trinitarian theology. *TwH* largely responds to the 2015 monograph edited by Ware and John Starke, *One God in Three Persons*. *TwH* presents ERAS as implicitly subordinating the Son's glory in teaching that he eternally submits and that this grounds creational hierarchies (pp. 10-11). *TwH* provides biblical, historical, and systematic analysis to counter ERAS's hermeneutics and theological conclusions.

According to *TwH*, ERAS errantly interprets Scripture's Trinitarian economy. Amy Peeler (pp. 57-83) exemplifies the book's hermeneutical case with her biblically focused argument: "Hebrews does not demand [the ERAS] interpretation" (p. 68). Both John Owen, according to T. Robert Baylor's historical argument (pp. 165-93), and the entire Reformed tradition, in Jeff Fisher's historical analysis (195-215), understood Trinitarian subordination to be history-dependent. Harrower provides analysis from systematics in "Bruce Ware's Trinitarian Theology" (pp. 307-30), presenting Ware as selectively choosing when to connect the economic and immanent Trinity.

TwH makes the case that an immanent-based submission structure conflicts with God's self-existence (p. 283). From a historical perspective, Amy Brown Hughes (pp. 123-39) appeals to Gregory of Nyssa in describing God's otherness as the barrier between subordination and self-existence. Jules A. Martinez-Olivieri (pp. 217-39) makes a case from systematics that if Christ's obedience is relationally proper, then creation becomes "a necessary reality for God and the life of the Son" (p. 231). Self-existence dooms Trinity-society analogies (p. 235).

TwH also argues that ERAS contradicts divine simplicity. Peter J. Leithart's historical analysis of Athanasius (pp. 109-22) agrees with Madison N. Pierce's 1 Corinthians-based statement (pp. 39-55): the persons' interdependent unity "disallows subordination within the Godhead" (p. 53). Tyler R. Wittman (pp. 141-64; 151-53) demonstrates historically that, though Aquinas called the Father the Son's authority, Aquinas denied intra-Trinitarian commanding. In Stephen R. Holmes's systematic-based argument (pp. 259-73), he explains, "Authority and submission require a diversity of volitional faculties" (pp. 270-71). According to James R. Gordon (pp. 289-306), non-procession distinctions undermine the Son's essence.

In critique, here are three positives and three correctives. (1) Positively, *TwH's* organizing principle commends itself: first Bible, then history, then systematics. This principle rightly begins with Scripture. Historical theology then precedes systematics with the goal of accounting for the Spirit's historical working. This theological method is worthy of imitation.

(2) Also, *TwH* keeps the dialogical movement toward consensus alive in Trinitarian dogmatics. *TwH* provides ERAS scholars opportunity either to be persuaded or to respond with greater precision. Assuming both sides are sincere—which charity requires—maximal specification should serve to draw towards the truth.

(3) *TwH* clarifies doctrinal overlap between the two sides. In Peeler's article, she states, "Thus far . . . I believe I have articulated theological positions with which few would disagree. God the Father and God the Son share glory and power and will because both are God, yet the author [of Hebrews] also can describe them as distinct persons who perform distinct actions in the economy of salvation" (p. 66). Both sides seek Scripture's authoritative backing. Both understand the Trinitarian mission to reveal eternal Trinitarian reality. Both seek to affirm the pro-Nicene tradition: God self-exists as simple essence and subsists in three real, distinct, indwelling persons. Both affirm an eternal Trinitarian order—from Father through Son to Spirit. *TwH's* acknowledgement of this consensus is helpful.

TwH runs into difficulties. First, it does not sufficiently support its case that ERAS makes unbiblical economic-immanent conclusions. *TwH's* arguments against ERAS's hermeneutics do not address ERAS arguments adequately. For example, when Harrower represents Ware's hermeneutics as arbitrarily selective (pp. 322-24), he overlooks at least one principle-based explanation. ERAS scholars—like authors of *TwH*—move analogically from Trinitarian mission to eternal relations. The

difference lies in how both sides distinguish economic necessities and contingencies based on scholars' conflicting presuppositions.

Second, the arguments against ERAS from self-existence and simplicity assume their conclusions. Authors in *TwH* repeatedly state as obvious that ERAS necessitates creation and divides the Trinity. Maybe no version of ERAS is compatible with self-existence and simplicity; however, this needs to be shown. On a pro-Nicene account, the Son immanently subsists, eternally begotten in the Father's communication of essence (pp. 203-5). The Son's will is the Father's but also *from the Father*. Athanasius (*Against the Heathens,* 46.6; *Discourses against the Arians*, 2.31) and Augustine (*On the Trinity,* 2.1.3; 2.5.9) understood this immanent relational structure to be a creation-independent *archetypal* basis for the economic sending-structure. It is less than obvious that this relational structure means God needs creation.

TwH authors also assume their conclusions in denying distinctions in a simple will. According to a pro-Nicene theology of simplicity, indwelling persons can distinctly subsist as asymmetric relations in a simple essence. Leithart suggests distinctions within attributes: "Perhaps the attributes are 'inflected' personally, such that the Father's power and wisdom is paternal power and wisdom, the Son's filial, the Spirit's spiritual. . . . It seems like something like this is necessary if we want to avoid slippage into modalism" (p. 115, n. 12). ERAS proponents have consistently defended ERAS in a similar way. Since ERAS identifies proper notions entailed by the personal, relational distinctions—internal to the essence and will—arguments that ERAS divides the essence also fall flat.

Third, *TwH* is weighed down by unhelpful "boogey-man" associations. Bird begins by stating that ERAS is "*quasi-homoian*" (p. 10; i.e. comparable to a type of semi-Arianism). Adesola Akala (pp. 23-37) and Ian Paul (pp. 85-107) excellently rebut Arian interpretations of John's Gospel and Revelation, respectively (without acknowledging that ERAS also rejects Arian conclusions). Leithart argues against a kind of monarchical, polytheistic social trinitarianism (pp. 110, 115, 121). Martinez-Olivieri groups ERAS in with liberal theology since both have grounded social ethics on Trinitarian relations (pp. 234-35). Holmes argues that ERAS proponents are as different from classical Trinitarians as Unitarians and Jehovah's Witnesses (p. 271). Most chapters do not make such associations, but Cole alone states that ERAS "falls within the bounds of Christian faithfulness" (p. 281). While nuanced comparisons with erroneous positions can illuminate, these "bad guy" groupings, at their best, muddy the water and, at their worst, uncharitably slander.

TwH clarifies its similarities with and differences from ERAS. The book gives nuanced Trinitarian doctrine proper focus. The book will primarily serve scholars and PhD students but may also serve master's-level classes in which terms can be clarified and contrasting books/arguments can be discussed. However, students will require ample awareness of classical Trinitarian categories such as

essence-persons, attributes-properties, economic-immanent relations, mission-processions, and indivisible-divisible/external-internal operations. *TwH* will help the student recognize that ERAS holds to a stronger economic-immanence connection while *TwH* understands the persons to "disappear" into the essence (p. 297). The student should look for the authors' grounds for maintaining that the Son's incarnation is not based in the Son's identity as Son. The student should also search for why the authors accept an eternal Trinitarian ordering but deny that it necessitates a proper authority-submission economy.

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Frederick, John and Eric Lewellen, eds. *The HTML of Cruciform Love: Toward a Theology of the Internet*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019, pp. 208, $26, paperback.

This edited volume saw the beginning of its formation at the second "Ecclesia and Ethics" conference in 2014 on the topic of gospel community and virtual existence. The conference was a webinar style conference that was sponsored by Corban University and the University of St. Andrews. Six further articles were also written to supplement the papers chosen from the original conference leading to the present volume published by Pickwick. Co-editor John Fredrick is a lecturer in New Testament at Trinity College Queensland. His other works focus on the way of the cross and cruciform love including *Worship in the Way of the Cross* and *The Ethics of the Enactment and Reception of Cruciform Love*. The second co-editor, Eric Lewellen, is an account manager at Vercross LLC, an online education systems technology company. Both editors participated in the second Ecclesia and Ethics conference and collaborated to edit this volume.

The articles contained in this volume focus on a theology of the internet from a variety of perspectives. Some take a primarily biblical approach such as T. C. Moore's article, "The Bible is Not a Database," which focuses on the issue of hermeneutics and how we read the Bible in the age of Google (pp. 52-61). Moore contends that, rather than bringing our personalized questions to the text looking for answers, one should read the whole narrative for what it is, learning to ask the questions it asks and thinking the way it thinks through finding ourselves in the story. Walter Kim's article, "The Solomonic Temple: Technology and Theology," uses Solomon's temple as a metaphor and lens through which to discuss how technology, digital or not, interacts with theology within our world, creating meaning, utilizing and influencing culture, and creating visual representations of our shared values (pp. 101-116). Other articles take a more theological approach such as Scott B. Rae's, "A Theology of Work for the Virtual Age" (pp. 75-85). He develops a theology of work

as both an order of creation and also a work of redemption. He also develops the idea of God as a worker to draw implications for the value of even virtualized work.

A number of articles also take an ethical, or perhaps moralistic, approach to the topic of the internet by mining the internet's implications for our character and how we interact with one another in community. Frederick's own chapter, "Cyber-Genesis of the Digital Self," for instance, develops a demonology of the digital self and how our digital self is a real entity that can harm ourselves and others, even after we are deceased (pp. 39-51). Chad Bogosian in "See Me, Hear Me, Praise Me: An Internet for More than Vainglory," focuses on how the internet is used for self-promotion and even for presenting an idealized view of oneself (pp. 62-74). Within these ethical articles are also calls for holiness through various suggestions drawing on scripture, early catechetical literature and contemporary theologians. Frederick's own assessment in his introduction that the two main themes developed in this volume are this idea of character and also the idea of how the internet affects community, is a helpful lens through which to see the compiled work (p. xiii).

The HTML of Cruciform Love is a good introduction to the topic of the internet and theology. Unfortunately, it remains just that introductory. As a whole, and in many of its various articles, it fails to mine the depths of theological possibilities both in terms of how it treats the internet and in terms of the breadth with which it dives into the theological. One glaring example is the moralistic tone of most of the articles. Many of them still seem to be asking the questions of whether or not the internet is good, bad or neutral and how it is so. Missing are articles that move beyond these questions of morals and begin to treat the internet like the reality it is in our world and begin to mine the resources it has to offer for worship, community, healing and as a metaphor for the theological task we do every day. As Fredrick alludes to in his article on the digital self, there can be demonic in the internet, but there can be demonic in any structure or institution. Discernment also tells us that there can be redemption and resurrection in every structure or institution if we are willing to look for them. Certainly, the internet is not just a passive shell through which we interact. Like all mediums it has inherent negatives and positives that must be dealt with, but this volume focuses much more on the negatives. Even in its title, one only finds the "HTML" portion and little talk of the "cross" or of "love," two topics that would have benefited the book greatly.

While the overall scope of the book fails to move the study of theology and the internet forward, there are some articles that present helpful perspectives and nuggets for reflection or further research in their own right. For instance, I have already used Moore's critique of the database approach many use toward the Bible today in my own ministry context. While the internet is a helpful metaphor to get into the topic, I am not sure our proclivity to bring our own questions to the text is an internet issue as much as a modern issue, however. Kutter Callaway's article, "Interface is Reality," perhaps goes the furthest in presenting a theology of the

internet by recognizing how haptic technology and the internet have changed the very way we think about reality. He wrestles with the idea of embodiment and, using emergent theory and a rich reading of the body of Christ, determines that, while there may be limitations, the church is the actual body of Christ, not just a metaphorical reality, whether it meets online or in person (p. 36).

As mentioned earlier, *The HTML of Cruciform Love* functions well as an introductory level book to the topic of theology and the internet, though a better introduction may be Antonio Spadaro's *Cybertheology*. It is probably best suited for undergraduate students and ministry students who are looking for practical applications of how to navigate the issue of the internet in a ministry setting from a theological point of view. Keeping in mind Frederick's own categories he feels underly the majority of the book, community and character, will be helpful in choosing whether or not to engage this book or in actually engaging with it.

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Fairbairn, Donald and Ryan M. Reeves. *The Story of Creeds and Confessions: Tracing the Development of the Christian Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019. xi+396pp. Pb $34.99.

The creeds and confessions of the Christian Church remain fundamental benchmarks of the faith that have survived the test of time and will continue to guide theological developments in the future. As this book reminds us, there is a lot of history behind the formation of these key texts, and not all of it has been pleasant. Controversies have flared up and sometimes led to unfortunate consequences that still defy resolution. However, the ecumenical spirit of our age has allowed us to re-examine this past more objectively than was once the case and to recognize that differences that once led to division may have been due to misunderstandings and/or extraneous factors that are no longer relevant.

In weaving their way through these complexities, the authors of this book have done a magnificent job of condensing their material in a way that makes it digestible for the beginning student without cutting corners or being unfair to positions with which they might disagree. Every Christian, of whatever background, will be able to use this book with profit, even though the guiding emphasis is broadly Protestant.

One of the advantages of dividing the material into "creeds" and "confessions" is that there is a fairly clear timeline into which each of these can be fitted. Creeds were produced in the early Church and confessions appeared at the time of the Reformation (and later). This makes it easy for the authors to share out their responsibilities—Dr. Fairbairn takes the creeds and Dr. Reeves the confessions. It also makes for an evenly balanced book, with each of these basic divisions taking up roughly half of the total. The disadvantage is that there is a thousand-year gap

in the middle, when the Church produced neither creeds nor confessions, though theology was far from dead for much of that time and what happened then was deeply influential in determining what shape the various Reformation confessions would take. This period is therefore not ignored, and there is even an attempt to turn the decisions of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 into a "creed," although the authors admit that "confession" would be a more appropriate designation. In fact, of course, the canons of Lateran IV were neither, but they cannot be left out, and the authors are right to include them, even if it is hard to know how they should be described.

The book is extremely well written and there are some very helpful footnotes which clarify (and nuance) a number of important points. They also reveal the extent to which the authors have relied on the classic works of other scholars, notably J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, P. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, N. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, and so on. It is a pity that these have not been grouped together in a bibliography which would have taken up an extra ten pages or so, but would have been extremely useful. As it is, the reader has to flip through the footnotes to find the sources, which can be time-consuming.

As far as the authors' interpretation of their material goes, readers will come to different conclusions. It is a little strange to find the Apostles' Creed described as "regional," even if strictly speaking it was, though the book makes it abundantly clear that its origin was both completely different, and considerably more ancient, than that of the "ecumenical" Nicene Creed. There is also a helpful chapter on the so-called Athanasian Creed which points out that although it is anomalous in many ways, it has an important place in the history of Christian theology and ought not to be neglected.

At times, the authors' desire to be as comprehensive and irenic as possible leads them to make some doubtful assertions. For example, we are told that the *Filioque* clause in the Latin version of the Nicene Creed would never have divided the Church, and that it was mixed up with all kinds of personal and political problems that were much more important at the time. There is truth in this, but it is not the whole story, and the book says little about the controversies of the later Middle Ages, which culminated in the Council of Florence in 1439. There is a brief reference to the latter on p. 190 but no mention of the mystical, ascetic (hesychast) spirituality that had come to dominate Eastern Christianity and that could not reconcile itself to a double procession of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, not much is said about the Eastern Orthodox reaction to the Protestant Reformation. There are a few pages devoted to Patriarch Jeremias II's reaction to the Augsburg Confession (pp. 319-22), but nothing on Cyril Lucaris or on later Orthodox confessions, like that of Dositheus. This is particularly surprising, given that Schaff reproduced much of this material in his *Creeds of Christendom* and so it has been known in the Protestant West for a long time.

The book weaves its way through the Reformation controversies with considerable skill, though there is the standard difficulty of defining "Anglicanism."

The authors recognize that this word is anachronistic when dealing with the Reformation era, but they use it nevertheless, thereby perpetuating the misleading notion that there was a conflict between "Anglicans" and "Puritans" in the pre-1640 English Church. Given that most serious scholarship on this subject in the past generation had been concerned to debunk that particular myth, this is unfortunate. The authors rightly state that the Church of England sought a "middle way" between Lutheran and Reformed expressions of Protestantism, but fail to point out that when push came to shove, it came down on the Reformed side. That can be seen very clearly in the Irish Articles of 1615, which are not mentioned at all, despite their importance for revealing the mind of the Church at that point in time. They also use the word "Arminian" to describe men like Archbishop William Laud, which was common in the past but which current scholarship generally avoids doing because it raises too many questions about what Laud believed. However we must be grateful that there is no mention of Richard Hooker, whom many American Anglicans mistakenly regard as the chief architect of their theological tradition!

Other readers will hesitate to endorse the authors' interpretations here and there, but few would dissent from the book's overall approach. This is a good guide to the subject of historical theology and a great starting point for further study and reflection. The authors deserve our thanks for their hard work and excellent presentation of their material and it must be hoped that this book will be widely read and used by those embarking on a study of its subject.

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Gordon, Joseph K. *Divine Scripture in Human Understanding: A Systematic Theology of the Christian Bible*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019, 458, $65.00, hardcover.

Joseph Gordon is associate professor of theology at Johnson University in Kissimmee, Florida. *Divine Scripture in Human Understanding* is a revised version of his doctoral dissertation at Marquette University under Robert Doran who specializes in the theology of Bernard Lonergan.

Gordon's work proceeds in six chapters. He begins by introducing the overall framework and thesis. His goal is to provide "a constructive systematic account of the nature and purpose of Christian Scripture that articulates the intelligibility of Scripture and locates it within the work of the Triune God in history and within human cultural history" (p. 8).

Chapter 2 works from the premise that the varied perspectives of the scriptural books and their "pervasive interpretive plurality" requires Scripture alone

to be an insufficient tool for comprehensively understanding the Christian faith (p. 34). In other words, it is not that Scripture itself is lacking but that humans require multiple "horizons" of interpretive action to obtain the meaning of the text. They cannot glean all that the Bible means by reading the Bible in isolation. Recognizing this means considering which "horizons" are necessary to read in a distinctively Christian way (p. 39). Therefore, Gordon marshals Irenaeus, Origen, and Augustine to ground this way of reading—particularly through the "rule of faith" which is the encapsulated economic work of the Triune God.

Chapter 3 extrapolates what the work of the Triune God captured in the rule of faith is. Having shown the rule's usage in church history, what is its content for a *contemporary* audience? He does this to provide the theological context needed for locating Scripture in the work of God in history (p. 99). This is crucial because it is impossible to understand Scripture apart from the divine drama of creation and redemption.

Chapter 4 focuses on how the nature of human persons shapes understanding. He provides this contemporary theological anthropology by recovering the fact that humans have their "supernatural telos in the beatific vision" and that humans have "distinct, identifiable characteristics, capacities, and activities that are the means of our transformation" (pp. 122-23). He then presents the thesis that humans are "fundamentally self-transcending animals" (p. 130). It is the capacity for wonder and questioning that is most deeply human (p. 137).

Chapter 5 details the "realia" or nature of Christian Scripture. In light of the work of God in history and the nature of humanity, what *is* Christian Scripture? In order to know what it is, we must know what it *has* been (p. 171). According to Gordon, the biblical textual tradition is fluid based on evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls, Samaritan Pentateuch, and ancient Greek translations (p. 190). Because of this, he contends "that the fact that the Triune God has not preserved the text—whether wholesale or merely in a single historical tradition—is theological instructive" (p. 194). Therefore, anyone seriously considering the nature of Scripture must account for these variances and historical progressions.

Chapter 6 explains the intelligibility of Scripture—its ultimate purpose. He begins by locating Scripture in relation to the work of the Spirit and the work of the Son before analyzing its purpose. He argues that the purpose of Scripture is not to create a worldview but to transform readers through the Spirit so that they have the mind of Christ and know the love of God (p. 251). If the reader stops short of transformation, he or she has stopped short of its purpose (p. 255).

Having roughly summarized Gordon's book, I begin by noting several misgivings. Beyond a difficult writing style, the three greatest problems are its overall vagueness in argumentation, several faulty entailments in argumentation, and *occasionally* its dubious argumentation. For example, consider when Gordon calls the Spirit a "transcendent cause" so that the authors of Scripture remain free

despite God's pervasive causation (p. 241). Similarly, we are told that "consciousness has its own emergent intelligibilities that depend upon but cannot be reduced to such biochemical and neurological manifolds" (p. 135). Maybe these are both true, but nowhere does he explain how this works or what a "transcendent cause" or "emergent property" is. It is merely assumed that these vague notions resolve any issues. Regarding the faulty entailments, he claims that attempts at harmonizing Scripture refuses mystery and is rationalistic at its core (p. 243). But nowhere is this argument proven. There is no necessary entailment from a desire to harmonize to a denial of mystery or an acceptance of rationalism. Maybe it is true, but he fails to show why. He also uses the fact that Luther did not have the same level of canonical confidence in Hebrews and James as he did other books to support the claim that Christians have not considered closures of the canon absolute (p. 197). But nowhere is the reasoning behind Luther's skepticism addressed. This is a major factor in his rationale and does not correlate properly to the conclusion he makes. Finally, as an example of a dubious argument, see his statement that his position is "not justifiable under any secular criteria of rationality" (p. 247). Maybe he has an elaborate explanation for a sacred version of rationality, but it is not clear that this is so, nor is it clear how such rationality would differ.

Having discussed several negatives, what does Gordon's book do well? First, he provides an extensive introduction to Bernard Lonergan, citing over seventy unique sources throughout. He also offers extensive engagement with Henri De Lubac, citing nearly thirty unique sources. Anyone interested in encountering contemporary applications of them will be pleased and anyone unfamiliar will become well acquainted. Second, he provides a superb brief explanation and defense of systematic theology. For example, he defines it as "the pursuit of an understanding of the mysteries of Christian faith at the level of the theologian's own time" (pp. 22-23). This, along with many other explanations, provides a helpful summary of what systematic theology is and should be. Third, his esteem for church history is commendable. He says that "Christian Scripture, as Christian Scripture, is unintelligible outside of Christian tradition" (p. 109). And he does not merely state this but practices it throughout his book. Any reader will be drawn to the deep well of historical resources through their reading.

Whilst this book and its author will likely play a role in future explanation of the nature of Scripture, the more pastorally inclined will likely find this work unhelpful as it does not provide the meaty systematic explanations required for pastoral practice (despite its subtitle and thesis' insistence on a systematic exposition). Since its key ideas are primarily found in recounting historical data and rehashing modern debates on the nature of meaning, it advances very little new information. Based upon this, while students may find it as a helpful study resource, I would not recommend it as required reading. Every book has its values—even books that are not to be recommended—but considering the limited time and money that each

person has, I do not think this is the book to invest in unless one is searching for a contemporary appropriation of Bernard Lonergan or Henri De Lubac. Even so, I fail to find it clear or structured in a way that is beneficial to students or scholars alike.

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Strachan, Owen. *Reenchanting Humanity: A Theology of Mankind.* Ross-shire: Mentor Publishers, 2019. 432 pages. $39.99.

There is significant interest in the questions concerning humankind. The uptick in philosophical, scientific, and theological literature both of a popular sort and an academic sort is evidence of this fact. Owen Strachan in his *Reenchanting Humanity* contributes to the body of literature on theological anthropology. In it, Owen Strachan raises questions, both historical and contemporary, on the anthropos and offers some answers to them. While it appears to be an academic textbook, it is more of a trade book. *Reenchanting Humanity* is a lot like a commercial boat with some features of a ship. However, this would fail to take into account the less obvious ships, like a submarine that can move underwater, or a ship that can fly in the air above water. In many ways, Owen Strachan's *Reenchanting Humanity* is like one ship, but it falters in accounting for the different kinds of ships.

Reenchanting Humanity takes its inspiration from Charles Taylor's 'enchantment' in his *The Secular Age*. While Strachan does not offer a definition of Taylor's term, the reader might work this out if they already have a basic understanding of Taylor's work. Instead, Strachan advances the term reenchantment as a way to capture what needs to be done when we think about the human being. Certainly this is clever turn of phrase on Taylor's term. Strachan believes that we need to reenchant humanity by furnishing the context of the biblical story in which to understand humanity.

In summary, Strachan argues for a traditional theological understanding of humanity. He begins his study articulating a conception of the *imago Dei*. As human beings, we are created in God's image, according to Genesis 1:26-28, and this becomes an essential and foundational theme as to how Strachan initiates the reader to develop a conception of humanity that has a kind of creational integrity to it. Now, the purpose of, or center of, humanity is in Christ (hence, as he calls it a 'Christic' notion shapes the whole). Thus, Strachan fittingly ends by developing his anthropology in light of the Divine-human being; the whole of humanity is ultimately made sense by the person and work of Jesus Christ. The main problem for humanity, i.e., that which causes the disenchantment, is depravity for which Christ as the perfect incarnation of God become human lives and dies so as to save humanity by his work on the cross assuming the just demands of God to sinners standing in their place. This in a nutshell, is the story of the Bible, and the way to orient our thinking about the

human, according to Strachan. With that said, Strachan also covers other important topics relevant to contemporary discussions about humanity from work, sexuality, race, technology, justice, and contingency—some exciting topics for sure. However, bringing it back around to the ship's test, Strachan gives us only one kind of ship.

Often referring to his theology as "Biblical Christianity", Strachan seems to suppose that there is one kind of Christianity, but how he defines the notion of "Biblical Christianity" is not entirely clear. The reader can surmise based on his sources and those whom he cites as authorities, but beyond that it is not clear what precisely is intended by "Biblical Christianity". This leads to expectation about *Reenchanting Humanity* that remains unmet.

While Strachan's book is promoted as a piece of systematic theology, he has little engagement with the systematic theological literature on humanity. In fact, most of the citations are references to biblical commentaries or to biblical theologians. Further, his citations to these biblical scholars fit within one particular community of Christian scholars instead of engaging or pointing the reader to a much bigger world of Christian scholars. This will leave an impression on the reader that there is but one community that simply makes up "Biblical Christianity" or Christian scholars in general. Further, one would expect to see some interaction with a diversity of literature and disciplines that impact the process of systematic theology (e.g., posthumanism).

As a result one is left with the impression that *Reenchanting Humanity* is more like a boat that is not contrasted with other ships.

I do not want to end on a critical note. I enjoyed reading *Reenchanting Humanity*. In many ways, Strachan writes with the tone of pastor who has practical aims and objectives. This is surely worth our reflection as we engage with contemporary topics that deserve our attention and re-dressing. Further, *Reenchanting Humanity* is clean and in many ways well-written, approachable, and widely accessible. It is even across the chapters and synthetic, giving the reader one fairly limited perspective on the subjects. That said, while the title, description, and length give the impression of an academic introduction, at best it frames the issues according to biblical parameters and gives the reader basic footing in some of the biblical prompts for developing a theology of humanity. But again, even these biblical prompts might be re-envisioned in the hands of other biblical and theological interpreters of Scripture. *Reenchanting Humanity* would serve as an interesting starter from the biblical material for a general audience of pastors, and it might serve as one primer for an undergraduate course on theological anthropology in addition to one or two other textbooks that cover more specific issues in the systematic theological literature.

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Stump, Eleonore. *Atonement.* **Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 560, $80.00, hardback.**

Eleonore Stump is the Robert J. Henle Professor of Philosophy at Saint Louis University and an Honorary Professor at the Logos Institute for Analytic and Exegetical Theology. Stump has authored or edited a number of works on Medieval philosophy and theology. Her Gifford Lectures, titled, "Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering" was published by Oxford University Press.

In *Atonement*, Stump sets out to put forth a new account of the doctrine of atonement. To get to her account of atonement, Stump wanders through the darkness (or light?) of a number of theories of atonement, psychological literature on shame and guilt, medieval accounts of the will, and contemporary neuroscience. Eventually she dubs her account, "the Marian interpretation" of atonement, after any of the number of Marys in the Bible (p. 378). What exactly is this "Marian account" of atonement?

First, I should mention that her understanding of "atonement" avoids "narrow" understandings of atonement that equate atonement with removing guilt by means of Christ's crucifixion and death. Instead, Stump opts for a broader understanding of atonement, one that takes seriously the etymology of the word—"at-one-ment"—and uses the term to refer to the life, passion, and death of Christ which brings about the at-one-ment of God and humans. On Stump's interpretation of atonement, Christ's work solves three problems: 1) the human disposition to wrongdoing, 2) guilt's impairments on the psyche of the wrongdoer and out in the world, and 3) shame (p. 19). These three problems, constitute a barrier to union with God. A person who does not have a disposition to love God, who feels shame before God, and feels guilt will not be able to be in a relationship of union with another person. Christ, whose human nature allows him to open up his psyche to other humans, opens himself up to receive the psyches of all human beings; when he does so, he bears human sin on the cross (p. 342). This action, which is undertaken by Christ, fulfills two aspects necessary for at-one-ment: the removal of shame and guilt. Yet, the removal of guilt and shame is not enough for at-one-ment; if union with God is to be complete, a person must also willingly open themselves up to God. According to Stump, God cannot unilaterally bring it about for a person to desire union with God. Stump's solution to this problem is to claim that Christ's death on the cross has such a rattling effect upon the human psyche that any fear of God's love that would prevent a desire to be united to God simply falls away upon seeing the powerlessness and vulnerability of Christ suffering upon the cross. With shame and guilt removed and a new disposition for desiring union with God, human persons can experience the union with God that God always has desired for them.

Stump ought to be commended for her contribution to the literature on atonement. Her emphasis on shame as an integral malady with which the atonement deals is pastorally significant. As any person involved in ministerial work knows that

people do not deal only with guilt; rather, they suffer also from shame brought about by their sin. While I am not under the impression that the doctrine of atonement must deal with all of our problems, it seems fitting that Christ's shameful death on the cross would deal with the problem of shame. How does Christ's shameful death on the cross deal with the problem of personal shame? Knowing that "the most powerful and most good being possible" desires union with you and is willing to go to such extreme lengths to become united with you has the power to trump any sense of personal shame. As Stump states: "All shame is defeated and falls away" (p. 362).

Despite this strength, the book does suffer from some weaknesses. Some of these weaknesses, for example her claim that "justification" is the term for "moral and spiritual regeneration," can be charitably ignored by Protestant readers provided one understands that she writes from a Roman Catholic perspective (p. 203). More significant, however, is her argument against Anselmian logic of satisfaction in theories of atonement. She categorizes "Anselmian" kinds of interpretations of atonement as those which "suppose that God is somehow required by his honor or justice or some other element of his goodness to receive reparation, penance, satisfaction, or penalty to make up for human wrongdoing as a condition for forgiving sinful human beings and accepting reconciliation with them" (p. 71). Stump sees Anselmian interpretations—including penal substitution—as highly problematic. She claims Anselmian interpretations offer no solution to our present dispositions towards wrongdoing and that it leaves the problem of shame untouched. What is unclear, however, is why one must think that atonement solves the problem of our present dispositions? On a narrow understanding of atonement, atonement deals with a very specific problem; it is not meant to deal with all problems regarding the human condition. Advocates of a narrow view might respond to her objection by appealing to the Holy Spirit's role in changing one's dispositions. Furthermore, it is not clear why Christ's willingness to make satisfaction for sinful humans would not have the effect of trumping personal shame in a way similar to her understanding of how God's desire for union with us trumps one's personal shame.

Stump's most significant objection to Anselmian interpretations of atonement, however, is that "the Anselmian kind of interpretation is in fact incompatible with God's love" (p. 80). According to Stump, part of what it means for God to love every person is to desire union with that person, whether or not the person makes amends for her wrongdoing (p. 84). Apparently, Anselmian interpretations make it the case that God cannot desire union with everyone; God only desires union with those whom have made amends for their wrongdoing. It is not readily apparent why one should take this latter claim to be true. On Anselmian interpretations, God provides satisfaction (or takes on the penalty) for sinners precisely because his ultimate end is union. Thus, the demands of justice do not, in fact, hinder God's desire for union with human beings.

Despite what the simple and straightforward title might imply, *Atonement* is a technical monograph, it is not an introduction to the doctrine of atonement. Prior to engaging with *Atonement*, I would advise students to develop their understanding of historic doctrines of atonement. This will allow students to weigh the strength of Stump's interpretations of Anslem, Aquinas, and penal substitution. Students ought to pay attention to how Stump characterizes the Anselmian interpretation, the theological method she employs, and the way she incorporates psychological literature into her theology. Psychology engaged theology is trending upward; Stump provides a model that students might want to emulate if they desire to engage in this trend. Although I am neither convinced by her objections to Anselmian interpretations nor her "Marian interpretation," *Atonement* is the most constructive account of atonement in recent years so I recommend it to those versed in discussions regarding the doctrine of atonement.

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