



SOUTHEASTERN THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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SOUTHEASTERN THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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Introduction

Walter R. Strickland II

Guest Editor

Christ is Lord over all, and his reign is manifest among the redeemed. Testimonies to Christ's universal saving work are borne around the world as Jesus salvifically encounters image bearers in the particulars of their life. Jesus is the only way to salvation (John 14:6), and sinners are drawn to him in various ways—largely based upon their unique emotional and spiritual needs. The result is that believers are captivated by the saving Lord for reasons pertinent to their story and are subsequently disciplined into the fullness of Christ.

The consensus among American missiologists affirms the need for methodological, and often theological, contextualization when the gospel is carried to distant lands. However, the same contextual sensibility is often not applied to gospel proclamation in North America. The essays and interviews in this issue of the *Southeastern Theological Review* demonstrate how specific aspects of Christ's person and work are significant for various North American cultural traditions. Readers will grasp the benefit of exploring the riches of Christ cross-culturally and learn to communicate Christ more effectively to those from different cultural backgrounds.

Although definitions of theology abound, they often truncate the theological task to producing timeless statements about God. Theologizing certainly includes engagement with the divine, but the theological process is commonly detached from its human production on the one hand, and its implications for daily living on the other. I offer yet another addition to the chorus of theological definitions to demonstrate how the forthcoming Christological inquiry situates into the scope of constructive theological engagement.

*Christian theology is the dramatic convergence of humanity's meditation on God's authoritative self-revelation with daily life for the purpose of living wisely via fostering cruciform transformation, demonstration, and proclamation.*¹ This process traverses the common Western chasms between orthodoxy (right

thought), orthopraxy (right action), and orthopathy (right affection) because theology is a holistic endeavor that requires more than an intellectual ascent to knowledge.

The proposed definition problematizes theology reduced to systematized doctrinal formulation under loci that are abstracted from daily living. Theology that is reduced to a purely intellectual exercise causes the illusion of understanding without its substance, adhering to “the weightier matters of the law” (Matt 23:23). Nevertheless, what is commonly called systematic theology is useful, insofar as it is a training ground to deploying a more coherent theological framework into daily life. Consequently, a robust theological methodology transcends the curricular demarcations of the Western academy by drawing upon philosophical, biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theological insights.

One way to conceptualize the theological process is by theorizing three “planes” of inquiry that are continuous and coterminous. The planes of theological inquiry include (1) seeking God, (2) understanding ourselves, and (3) engaging the world. Beginning with *seeking God*, theology is a human task that encompasses seeking knowledge of the divine. Humanity bears witness to God's self-revelation in creation, but most clearly through biblical investigation (exegesis) of God's inspired and authoritative word. Ultimately, Scripture dramatically describes God's world, his design for it, and his redemptive action within it.

An underexplored plain of theological inquiry is *understanding ourselves*. While the first plane (seeking God) provides the authoritative content for theological engagement, self-exploration is intended to discern the values and assumptions that humans project into the theological process that obscures the divine person and work. Said differently, particularities that shape human finitude can both illuminate and obscure biblical teaching. Human knowing is mediated (via presuppositions) through unique philosophical assumptions, emotional disposition, family of origin, religious past, etc. These factors can cause theologians to mis-exegete Scripture and eisegete personal desires that misshape the faith into our own image.

The final plane, *engaging the world*, calls for the resources of the historian, sociologist, and religionist to understand culture. Most importantly, the skills of a missiologist are paramount to discern acute manifestations of sin and skillfully demonstrate and proclaim the gospel amid that particular brokenness. The concurrent planes of theological inquiry necessarily engender transformation (sanctification and missiological adeptness) that cultivates the mind of Christ in believers to produce wise action in any given situation—the definitive mark of theological understanding.

Kevin Vanhoozer insists upon the theological imperative of describing

¹ This definition accords with Calvin's sentiment who appropriately framed the theological task by theorizing that “*Nearly all wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves*” (John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, 1. 1. 1).

the universal truths of God and making them manifest in particular contexts. He queries, “What are we, as followers of Jesus, to believe, say, and do in order to embody God’s redemptive plan in new cultural and intellectual environments?”² This issue of the *Southeastern Theological Review* features Christological assessments from a variety of cultural perspectives for the purpose of driving deeper contemplation—in each theological plane noted above—to engage cultures with an adept understanding and presentation of Christ.

Seeking God is enhanced in a kingdom community (comprised of the peoples of the Kingdom) because despite the biblical text’s veracity, human limitation requires an ensemble of skilled exegetes and theologians to investigate the biblical witness more effectively. While a mono-cultural investigation of Christ can result in knowing God, believers know Christ more “fully” when considered in a community that reflects God’s kingdom people. Christological exploration is enriched by compounding lines of inquiry (produced by a myriad of questions) forged in a variety of cultural contexts.

The following essays and written interviews present an opportunity to *understand ourselves* by interacting with the ideas of skilled thinkers from various cultural backgrounds who genuinely seek to understand Christ and the implications of his lordship among a given people. Engaging Christological exploration as a “cultural outsider” offers a window into a theological conversation with distinct contours and simultaneously fosters renewed objectivity in the theologian’s home culture because the process reveals latent cultural assumptions (be they biblical or unbiblical).

Finally, these essays help the reader to *engage the world*. Hearing brothers and sisters of various cultural backgrounds apply the eternal Son to the issues where they are called to faithfulness offers a vista for understanding the transformative power of the gospel in new environments. This theological engagement also allows non-native believers to be more astute missionaries in various contexts.

The first entry by Malcolm Yarnell explores the contextual reality of the Council of Chalcedon. In his exploration of the Council’s development, notice the unique issues that gave rise to the Council and how those issues—taken to God’s inspired word—drove the shape of the creed’s final form. Despite the creed’s contextual situatedness, Christians through the centuries have benefited from this faithful Christological summary. Likewise, the following essays of contextual Christological assessments are beneficial to a universal audience.

Naomi Reece offers a Japanese assessment of Christology. She provides an extended explanation of the Christology of novelist Endo Shusaku to demonstrate the ways in which those with Japanese sensibilities approach Christ. Following her summary of Endo’s Christological formulation, she offers biblical critique and missiological implications for readers to bear witness to Christ in Japanese environments.

Miguel Echevarria explores the work of Rene Padilla and Samuel Escobar offering a Latino assessment of Christ’s eschatological work. He compares their contribution of Christ’s holistic mission to evangelical theological thought with Western theologians J. Richard Middleton and N. T. Wright. Drawing upon their similarities, Echevarria argues for a broader reception to these Latino evangelical theologians based upon their biblical interpretation of Christ’s Kingdom.

The interview with Daniel Hill offers general instruction for faithfully embodying the way of Christ in any cultural context. Using the African American tradition as an example, Hill provides helpful reflections for believers to engage Christ contextually in worship and practice without holding Christ captive to any context. Hill’s contextual Christological assessment illuminates the richness that exists as each culture seeks to glorify God from their unique perspective.

In an interview, Lisa Spencer shares personal reflection and ministry insights for African American Christological engagement. Spencer draws from her experience in seminary to offer what about Christ speaks most profoundly to people in her context. Noting Christianity’s complicated history within the African American tradition, Spencer provides clear and Christocentric thoughts of a Savior who transcends the injurious past and offers a redeemed future. Spencer’s insights help readers engage Christ within the African American tradition for whom Christ has long been a faithful deliverer and redeemer.

The final interview is with Lisa Hoff who shares valuable insights from thirty years of experience with East Asian cultural engagement as an educator and missionary. She reflects on how East Asian Christological engagement has shaped her personal faith and ministry approach both in America and China. Hoff shares how East Asian hermeneutical insights enrich evangelistic efforts in a collectivist community and exalts Christ who is present in the midst of suffering. Hoff then provides the reader helpful practices for East Asian cross-cultural engagement useful for discipleship and church ministry.

² Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville: WJK, 2005), 331.

Christology in Chalcedon: Creed and Contextualization

Malcolm B. Yarnell III

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

In this essay, the author rehearses the contextual theology of the Council of Chalcedon in order to derive lessons for contemporary Christianity. After defining theology and history as inextricable, the troubled search for dogmatic unity regarding the identity of Jesus Christ among the pro-Nicene fathers is traced through the two councils of Ephesus (431 and 449) and through Chalcedon (451). A theological analysis of the Formula of Chalcedon compares favorably with its varied reception by diverse Christian churches. Next, the longstanding divisions in piety and theology that arose with Roman imperial coercion are evaluated. The author derives seven lessons from a comparison between the Constantinian traditions and the canonical teachings of Jesus Christ.

Key Words: Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinian, Contextualization, Council of Chalcedon, Council of Ephesus, Duophysitism, Jesus Christ, Miaphysitism, Tolerance

As part of this conference on “Christology in America,” with its concern to address orthodox Christology while considering marginalized voices, I have been asked to focus upon contextualized Christology in Chalcedon. The Council of Chalcedon is perhaps the best ecumenical council to reference when addressing contextualization and Christological creed in our own context. As we shall see, Chalcedon’s theology was deeply integrated with its historical context, shaping cultures and being shaped by them. We must first examine the theology and the context of the Council of Chalcedon in some detail before attempting to draw any lessons that may be helpful for the contemporary context.

Theology and context are inseparable. Theology (no matter how deemed and perfect it wishes it were) and context (the history in which theology is performed by embodied souls located in a fallen world) are inseparable. On the one hand, *theologically*, Chalcedon represents the conciliar pinnacle of the dogmatic conversation which began with Arius’s challenge to Christ within the Godhead.¹ The Trinitarian questions raised

by Arianism found an immediate credal solution in the first ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325), which creed required further clarification, also with regard to the Holy Spirit, at the second ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381). The third ecumenical Council of Ephesus (431) did not revise the creed per se but deposed Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, for denying the application of the term *Theotokos* to Mary. Questions regarding the humanity of Christ, the deity of Christ, and the unity of Christ were now at the forefront. The fourth ecumenical council at Chalcedon was convened in 451 by the new emperor to restore the religious unity lost during the violent second Council of Ephesus in 449. Alas, although “Marcian wished to impose his own version of a Christian ‘world order,’” he “in fact, created a hotbed for ideological and religious frictions for centuries to come.”² Subsequent ecumenical councils focused upon the Christological questions prompted by Chalcedon.

On the other hand, *contextually*, Chalcedon served as a historical crisis point for the development of numerous church cultures, cultures variously included within or excluded from the Roman Empire over the next several centuries. The context of empire is analogous to the American experience in that the Roman Empire, which was increasingly centered on Byzantium, exercised influence both within and beyond its borders. Like America, it contained diverse ethnicities, languages, and regions. Among the most prominent languages was the official one of Latin, but Greek, Coptic, and Syriac were common in the east. Ethnically, the larger cultures included Rome, Greece, Egypt, Armenia, Persia, and Arabia. We must also account for major cities like Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Edessa. Rome and Constantinople were important due to their imperial position, while Alexandria and Antioch were dynamic commercial centers which sustained the two greatest theological schools in ancient Christianity. Jerusalem and Edessa played significant parts in the controversies, too.

After tracing the history and theology that created the Chalcedonian crisis, we discuss the long historical cleavages that came out of the council. Finally, we draw lessons from the Chalcedonian experience which may apply to the American context today.

the dogmatic “foundation was laid by Nicaea.” Tibor Horvath, *Jesus Christ as Ultimate Reality and Meaning: A Contribution to the Hermeneutics of Conciliar Theology* (Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 27–28.

² Hagit Amirav, *Authority and Performance: Sociological Perspectives on the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 210.

¹ “In terms of theological precision Chalcedon supersedes Nicaea.” However,

History and Theology

According to Henry Chadwick, the primary problem for pro-Nicene Christians arose not from anything which Athanasius taught but from what he did not. The Patriarch of Alexandria had ably defended the full participation of Christ in the Godhead. "By contrast, the writings of Athanasius in effect ascribe no significant role to the human soul of Christ; he does not deny that Christ had a soul, but for him this is not really salvific."³ Athanasius was so widely revered that this lacuna allowed two different answers regarding the integration of Christ's humanity to arise.

Under the influence of a strong pro-Nicene theologian, Apollinaris of Laodicea, many in Alexandria came to believe the best solution was to worship Christ according to the formula of "one nature [*mia physis*] of the incarnate divine Logos."⁴ The context of worship was significant, for religious faith is shaped in the cultural encounter of souls with God. This does not mean Alexandria was embracing a gross form of *Monophysitism* (one-nature theology) such that Christ's humanity was lost. Didymus the Blind of Alexandria argued that we must worship only one Christ, but we may distinguish the divine and the human from one another in our thought. In the union of the divine and the human, "the divine remains divine and the human human."⁵

While Alexandria moved toward a *Miaphysite* form of worship,⁶ Apollinaris was censured by Rome in 377 for compromising the humanity of Christ. Recognizing the problem, Theodore of Mopsuestia, whose influence was formative for the rival school of Antioch, preserved Christ's full humanity by positing that Christ possessed two natures. Theodore placed his theology in the eucharistic liturgy, thus ensuring his theology would become part of its developing religious culture. While he later said his writings were corrupted, Theodore apparently believed the two natures of Christ "remain distinguishable even in the union so that they may be described as two hypostases forming a single prosopon."⁷ In the Latin West, under the influence of Tertullian and Augustine, it was taught that "Christ is one person both God and man." "The same is both God and

³ Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 517.

⁴ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 519.

⁵ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 520.

⁶ Modern scholars distinguish gross Monophysitism over against the more nuanced Miaphysitism, which held that Christ's one nature was yet composed of deity and humanity. Phillip Jenkins, *Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), xvii.

⁷ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 522.

man, without confusion of natures but unity of person."⁸

The language used in worship and theology was hereby moving in two directions among those self-identified with pro-Nicene theology. The first tendency, which held sway in the rich and populous Egyptian city of Alexandria and ultimately much of Syria, emphasized the unity of Christ. The second tendency, which was influential in the West but was also propagated in the rich and populous city of Antioch, emphasized that Christ had both a human nature and a divine nature, two natures which remain distinct after the union brought about in the Incarnation.

Nestorius and Cyril

These tendencies in thought, reinforced by diverse pieties, turned into a full-blown crisis when the leading bishop of the second great city of the empire, also a student of Theodore, began suppressing theological errors. Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, believed it was his role to restore unity through hunting down heresy. So, immediately upon accession, he dismantled an Arian chapel, sparking not only riots but a fire that raged through a quarter of the capital. He also moved against Quartodecimans in Asia Minor, who celebrated Easter at the time of the synagogue Passover, as well as against Macedonian Christians in the Hellespont.⁹ While these moves upset many, Nestorius created an ongoing furor when he began criticizing those who used the term *Theotokos*, "mother of God," to describe Mary. Miaphysites worshiped Jesus through the title, reminding themselves thereby that the divine Logos became a human being. But Nestorius was concerned the human Mary might be inappropriately worshiped by former pagans. In response, some Miaphysites whispered that Nestorius believed Christ was merely a man.¹⁰

Ranged against Nestorius was an even more powerful personality, Cyril of Alexandria. Like Nestorius, Cyril despised heresy. He encouraged the Christians of the southern city to move against both Jews and pagans. In the ensuing riots, Hypatia, one of the last great Neoplatonic philosophers, was captured, taken to a church, stripped, then beaten to death with bricks.¹¹ Learning of Nestorius's moves, Cyril wrote letters to the northern Patriarch, challenging his theology. In the first letter, Cyril argued that Christ must be worshiped as one person and that the hypostatic union, versus a mere union of will, means we can say Mary was "God-

⁸ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 523.

⁹ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 528.

¹⁰ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 528–29.

¹¹ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 525–26.

bearer.” Nestorius responded that one must distinguish the natures without dividing them, so it is best to refer to Mary merely as “mother of the man.” In his second letter, Cyril commented on the Nicene Creed’s phrase, “became flesh, became man,” arguing that if the hypostatic union is set aside, then two Sons may be asserted. “On the contrary, we say that in an unspeakable way, the Word united to himself, in his person, flesh enlivened by a rational soul, and in this way became a human being and has been designated ‘Son of man.’”¹²

To settle the increasing division between the two greatest cities in the East, Alexandria and Constantinople, the emperor summoned a council to meet at Ephesus in 431. Sensing his peril, Nestorius wrote the Bishop of Rome, conceding the use of the title *Theotokos* in worship. But Cyril preemptively excommunicated Nestorius. In his famous third letter to Nestorius, Cyril attached a set of twelve anathemas, demanding the other bishop’s subscription. Among them were a denunciation of Theodore’s concept of two *hypostases* plus an affirmation that “the Word of God suffered in the flesh.”¹³ A witness soon came forward at the Council of Ephesus, saying he heard Nestorius argue that a baby cannot be called God. Cyril’s letters were approved, and Nestorius, along with a few bishops supporting him, was deposed.¹⁴

Immediately, a rival synod led by John of Antioch, who arrived late to the Ephesian council, approved a statement affirming the union from two natures of Christ and allowing the legitimacy of the *Theotokos*. They also asked for the withdrawal of Cyril’s twelve anathemas, then excommunicated Cyril.¹⁵ Desiring unity, the emperor, Theodosius II, soon forced John of Antioch and Cyril of Alexandria to agree to a *Formula of Reunion*. The formula affirmed Christ’s unity and the use of *Theotokos* in worship but also insisted Christ’s “two natures” be accepted. Cyril agreed to the reunion. However, his decision to affirm two natures did not sit well with the piety of Alexandria.¹⁶ Under pressure at home, Cyril argued, “after the union, the division into two is removed” so that the Lord has *mia physis*, “one nature.”¹⁷ The difficulty for John of Antioch was that he was forced to agree to the condemnation of Nestorius.

¹² William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 50–51.

¹³ Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 51–52.

¹⁴ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 534.

¹⁵ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 534.

¹⁶ Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 52.

¹⁷ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 540–41.

The Sisyphean Struggle for Unity

The struggle for unity among the Christians was complicated by the diversity in their piety. The road to ecumenism was described by Firmus of Cappadocian Caesarea as akin to the misery of Sisyphus in Hades. As soon as he pushed the boulder up the hill, Sisyphus lost control again.¹⁸ Such was the case in the Christian east. In Edessa, the struggle between pro-Cyrrillines and pro-Nestorians reached a crisis between Rabulla, who supported Cyril fanatically, and Ibas, who later replaced him as bishop. Edessa was a key city, because it had schools for Christians who spoke Syriac, Armenian, and Persian. Its bishops were fluent in both Greek and Syriac. Ibas’s description of the two natures of Christ in his letter to Mari of Persia was subsequently approved at Chalcedon. However, the popular school where he taught was forced to move to Nisibis, in the territory of the Persian Empire, in 449, when Ibas was deposed. The school of Nisibis exercised such influence upon Christians in the area that the so-called “Nestorian” church, the Church of the East, expanded into Persia and beyond.¹⁹

Within the Roman Empire, the crisis over Christology flared up again as a result of the teaching of Eutyches, an old confidant of Cyril. Eutyches felt comfortable enough in his relation to the imperial court to argue against Theodosius’s *Formula of Reunion* in the presence of Eusebius of Dorylaeum, when the latter visited Constantinople in 448. Eutyches’s Monophysitism went so far as to deny the Lord was of one substance with humanity. The Bishop of Constantinople at the time, Flavian, called Eutyches to account. A court official warned Eutyches he must say, “Two natures after the union.” Eutyches cited the lack of any such claim in Athanasius, then explicitly denied the two natures. For Eutyches, there was only one nature after the union.²⁰ After Flavian deposed Eutyches as Archimandrite of his monastic community, the emperor, Theodosius II, asked Flavian for his own confession. Flavian affirmed Christ was “two natures” in “one hypostasis and one prosopon” but also allowed Miaphysite terminology.²¹

To settle the juridical dispute between Flavian and Eutyches, the emperor convened a second council to meet at Ephesus in 449. Theodosius sent an invitation to Pope Leo I, who promptly sent delegates to deliver

¹⁸ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 543.

¹⁹ David Wilmsheurst, *The Martyred Church: A History of the Church of the East* (London: East & Wester, 2011), 23–31.

²⁰ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 553–55.

²¹ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 555.

his own judgment on the matter in a subsequently famous letter. Leo disliked Eutyches's idea that there were two natures before the Incarnation but only one afterwards. Arguing from the Old Roman creed, which is similar to our Apostles' Creed, Leo claimed Christ remains both God and man. In a surprising move, Theodosius gave the new bishop of Alexandria authority to lead the new council. Dioscorus of Alexandria had all the vigor of Cyril, but little of his predecessor's wisdom, and even less Christian charity.

First, Dioscorus refused to have Leo's *Tome* read to the council, no doubt because its contents later caused even Nestorius to feel vindicated. Dioscorus led the council to depose Flavian because the Bishop of Constantinople had used the *Formula of Reunion* in a credal way, effectively altering the Nicene Creed. Dioscorus also used monks backed by soldiers with drawn swords to coerce a number of reluctant bishops into signing blank sheets of paper condemning Flavian. Dioscorus then made sure that the two natures theology of Ibas's letter to Mari was condemned. Theodoret of Cyrrhus, the leading theologian of the Antioch school, was deposed without a trial, too. Worst of all, Flavian was rushed into exile in such a brutal way that he was dead within four days from beatings propelling him along the road north of Sardis. Eutyches had been restored to his leading monastic position, but Dioscorus's horrific actions soon recoiled to his disfavor, for Flavian had become a martyr for truth.²²

Before their exiles, both Flavian and Theodoret sent letters seeking Pope Leo's intervention. And Eusebius of Dorylaeum, who originally accused Eutyches, fled to Rome personally. Upon hearing all that happened, Leo gave the second Council of Ephesus its rather infamous name, *Latrocinium*, "robbers' den."²³ However, it wasn't Rome that turned the day for the persecuted theologians of Antioch, who suffered their most serious defeats at the Robbers' Synod. Rather, the emperor, Theodosius II, was called to the heavenly court to account for his own rule.

Unity at Chalcedon

The new emperor, Marcian, was a mid-level soldier plucked by the sister of Theodosius to enter a marriage with her. Pulcheria lauded Marcian for his virtues, choosing him with the caveat she would remain a virgin.²⁴ The new emperor, called the "New Constantine," believed it was his divine responsibility to unify the empire against both internal and external threats. He brought to his task a linguistic fluency in both Latin and

Greek and the air of a pastoral Christian emperor. While previous emperors convened and monitored ecclesiastical councils, Marcian ensured the imperial government actually chaired Chalcedon and controlled its theological debates. Perhaps Marcian felt this was necessary because of how poorly the clergy wielded plenipotentiary authority. The Council of Chalcedon thus became, even in comparison with other ecumenical councils, a "government tool."²⁵

In the late Roman Empire, the "profound, spiritually, if not mystically grounded notion" was that the welfare of the whole empire depended upon the proper worship of God. Marcian thus believed peace could be achieved if the empire began by crushing heretics and reaching unity in dogma.²⁶ Unity in faith and worship would bring both peace within and victory over the Huns threatening from the north and the Persians threatening from the east. As Nestorius told the previous emperor, "Give me the earth undefiled by heretics, and in return I will give you heaven. Help me destroy the heretics, and I will help you destroy the Persians."²⁷ "Orthodoxy" takes on a whole new meaning in modern Western eyes when the radical interdependence of religion, economy, politics, and warfare is perceived: "Right worship" guarantees imperial peace, making Rome great again.

The huge church of St. Euphemia at Chalcedon was chosen as the venue for the gathering of the council, which, it was hoped, would restore unity within the church and bring peace to the empire. Chalcedon was a prosperous suburb of Constantinople across the Bosphorus. The council sat through sixteen sessions, most chaired by a leading imperial official, but Marcian himself also appeared in his splendor to receive the assembly's doctrinal formula. The council was conducted in every way to foster a divinely arranged "mystique of consensus."²⁸ Marcian wanted a formula that would compromise enough with all parties to bring his fracturing empire back together. It should encompass both Miaphysites and Duophysites, reaching as many as possible on the Eutychian and Nestorian sides of the spectrum. Even the marriage of Marcian and Pulcheria was intended to demonstrate unity, for he favored Duophysite theology while she embraced Miaphysitism.

The council was composed of members representing the universality of Empire and Church. The extraordinary vigor of the large Alexandrian

²² Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 561–65.

²³ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 566.

²⁴ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 52–53.

²⁵ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 34.

²⁶ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 97.

²⁷ Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, VII.29.5, cited in Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 36.

²⁸ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 75.

church was diminished by the sheer numbers brought from all over the Roman Empire. Where the Council of Nicaea recorded just over 300 members, and the Council of Constantinople listed less than half that, the Council of Chalcedon included nearly 600 bishops from throughout the empire, alongside numerous lower clergy, court officials, and delegates from beyond the empire. The imperial senate proposed that the bishops appoint a diverse committee to create a universally acceptable doctrinal formula. Some objected that a new formula could not be created after Nicaea.²⁹ The modified creed of Constantinople was probably brought forward as a way to silence that objection.

After the reading of conciliar documents elicited positive acclamations during the second session, a decisive moment was reached. Atticus of Nicopolis rose to move that the emperor's representative "order it to be granted to us that within a few days what is pleasing to God and to the holy fathers may be formulated with calm reflection and unruffled thought."³⁰ A broadly representative committee was chosen to compose a formula. Geographically, six members were from Oriens, and three each were from Asiana, Pontus, Illyricum, and Thrace, along with the papal legates and Anatolius of Constantinople. These numbers suggest a representative universality.³¹

Theologically, the committee was comprised mostly of bishops who had supported the canons of the council held under Dioscorus. Moreover, no major Duophysites were represented. The committee sought unity as best they could. Indeed, during the subsequent reading of the draft before the council, the *Theotokos* had to be added to the confession. In addition, Rome had to demand that Leo's *Tome* be incorporated, so Cyril's language of "from two natures" was changed by a single Greek letter into "in two natures."³² According to the modern translators of the council's momentous fifth session, the new definition, "while Cyrillian in its expression, was so worded as to be acceptable to Rome"³³—a Solomonic composition.

Alongside the universal character of the council's participants and the representative nature of the drafting committee came the unifying setting of the meeting itself. The bishops gathered physically on both sides of the

²⁹ Michael Gaddis and Richard Price, eds., *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 3 vols., Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 2:11.

³⁰ Gaddis and Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 2:26.

³¹ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 578.

³² In the Greek, *ek* was changed to *en*. Gaddis and Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 2:187–89.

³³ Gaddis and Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 2:191.

Gospels, which were set in the middle to represent the Christological center of their common faith. The bishops were arranged so as to indicate the unity enjoyed by "Old Rome" and "New Rome," Constantinople. Both sat on the same side and close to the emperor at the head. The division in the seating was not where it might be expected in a political setting, between East and West. Rather, the division occurred between Egypt and Palestine, which was overwhelmingly Miaphysite, on the one hand, and Rome, Constantinople, and Antioch, along with their lesser sees, on the other hand.³⁴

Division at Chalcedon

While the empire crafted everything at Chalcedon to emphasize universality and unity, its ideal of justice first required a division, especially in light of recent history. Heretics in thought and morality must be banished in order to attain peace. The leading culprit was Dioscorus of Alexandria, who was called to sit before Anatolius, the imperial delegate, to face judgment from church and court. His accuser, who joined him in the center, was none other than Eusebius of Dorylaeum, recently returned from fugitive life in Rome. Eusebius accused the Alexandrian Patriarch of promoting the heresy of Eutyches with violence and bribery as well as through Flavian's murder.³⁵

During the proceedings, dramatic movements indicating formalized divisions were made when Juvenal of Jerusalem led a Palestinian delegation to cross the central space and enter the seating area of the Antioch party. The same visible disuniting with Alexandria and reuniting with Antioch and Rome occurred when Peter of Corinth and numerous Greek bishops "crossed over to the other side." The Antiochenes welcomed the converts with shouts of, "God has led you well, orthodox one. You are welcome." Alexandria questioned their sincerity, calling upon the converts to give an account. Some responded that they had just learned Flavian actually agreed with Cyril. Others said they were bullied into signing blank confessions.³⁶

As the documents from the Robbers' Synod were read aloud and various witnesses were brought forward, Anatolius maintained tight discipline. However, at points the proceedings were interrupted by shouts. When Theodoret of Cyrrhus entered, the Alexandrians cried out, "Have mercy, the faith is being destroyed. The canons [of Ephesus II] exclude him. Drive him out. Drive out the teacher of Nestorius." The Oriental

³⁴ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 107–9.

³⁵ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 114–15.

³⁶ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 98–101.

bishops likewise moaned about their mistreatment under Dioscorus at Ephesus II: "We suffered blows and we signed. Drive out the Manichees. Drive out the enemies of Flavian. Drive out the enemies of the faith." Raising the temperature to its highest, they called for judgment, "Drive out Dioscorus the murderer."³⁷ Dioscorus fought legally for his dignity, but he was deposed, along with several others.

It is striking that both sides, even as they divided over the leadership of Dioscorus, proclaimed their devotion to the one Christ. They all also refuted heretics considered outside the center of the faith. Dioscorus, distancing himself from Eutyches, who at points was too Monophysite even for him, said, "For my concern is for the catholic and apostolic faith and not for any human being. My mind is fixed on the Godhead, and I do not look to any person nor care about anything except my soul and the true pure faith."³⁸ Basil of Seleucia, a Duophysite, distinguishing himself from Nestorius, said, "I worship our one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, God the Word, acknowledged in two natures after taking flesh and becoming man."³⁹ They centered on the One Christ, even as they blasted various perceived errors regarding his unity.

Every Christian creed comes in a cultural context, and Chalcedon may have been the most difficult context for achieving theological unity ever. In spite of the unitive desire of the emperor holding the sword of judgment, divisions for the sake of justice and final unity were required first. In spite of the pious desires of even its most combative members to center on Christ, divisions were plainly visible to every eye. In spite of its brilliant dogmatic language with its sensitivity for balance, the Council of Chalcedon became the context for growing historical rupture. In spite of its imperial and episcopal framers' hopes for unity, the history of nations and the pieties of persons worked against formal unity. Before summarizing the historic divisions, let us examine the formula itself.

The Formula of Chalcedon

In addition to the universalizing and unifying aura created by the setting and the participants, the specialized theological vocabulary was constructed so as to try to create social cohesion across numerous human languages while encompassing various Christian religious pieties.⁴⁰ Theodoret, the leading theologian of Antioch, began setting out the principles of orthodoxy by turning against the worst expressions of his own school: "Anathema to whoever says two Sons; for we worship one Son, our Lord

³⁷ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 117.

³⁸ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 137.

³⁹ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 137.

⁴⁰ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 83–84.

Jesus Christ, the only-begotten."⁴¹ But the floor was not only yielded to Antioch. The works of Cyril of Alexandria were also brought forward and read by an Alexandrian bishop. The struggle for unity may be Sisyphean, but the Empire was going to make the bishops try to reach theological unity together, and their linguistic efforts to achieve dogmatic balance were brilliant.

The Formula of Chalcedon first appealed to Leo, allowing his previously neglected *Tome* to set the tone for the confession. Leo affirmed two natures by appealing to the universal baptismal confession of the churches.⁴² After the *Tome* came the Definition of the Faith. Citing the peace that Jesus promised, the Definition stated that "no one should disagree with his neighbor regarding religious doctrines but that the proclamation of the truth be uniformly presented." It then recited the council's adherence to the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople as well as the documents from Ephesus, the council led in part by Cyril "of most holy memory."⁴³

The Definition took an evenhanded approach to the previous debates. Alongside positive appeals to both Leo's *Tome* to Flavian, on the one hand, and to Cyril's various letters at Ephesus, on the other hand, it offered negative condemnations. It denounced, on the one hand, Nestorius's reluctance to apply *Theotokos* to the Virgin and, on the other hand, Eutyches's proclamation of "a single nature of the flesh and the divinity." For Eutyches had confused the divine nature so much with the human that the eternal Son became "passible."⁴⁴

When it comes to the heart of Chalcedon's Definition, "the confession," the language moved carefully back and forth between the unity of the person and the duality of the natures, providing nuanced statements respecting the continuing yet unmixed relationship of Christ's natures. The confession included "God-bearer" against Nestorianism and "in two natures" against Eutychianism. The confession is reproduced below, with bold italics to indicate the unity and italics the duality. I also underline the creed's affirmation of the twofold generation of Christ, eternally from the Father and temporally from Mary. Chalcedon's dual generation reinforces this paper's analogy that theology participates in both eternal truth and contextual history.

So, following the saintly fathers, we all with one voice teach the

⁴¹ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 144.

⁴² Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols. (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 1:77–82.

⁴³ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:83–84.

⁴⁴ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:85–86.

confession of ***one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ***, the same *perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity*, the same *truly God and truly man*, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the virgin God-bearer as regards his humanity; ***one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten***, acknowledged *in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation*; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather *the property of both natures is preserved* and comes together into ***a single person and a single subsistent being***; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is ***one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ***, just as the prophets taught from the beginning about him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ himself instructed us, and as the creed of the fathers handed it down to us.⁴⁵

Historic Dissonance

Marcian—pastor, theologian, and emperor—called the assembled clergy to pray, “hoping that because of your prayers to the Almighty a peace that is both swift and universal will be granted to us by God.” Providentially, however, the peace he sought was neither “swift” nor “universal.” Why did peace not come? Only God knows the answer as to why he ordained (or allowed, if you wish) historic dissonance rather than historic harmony. But, if asked to guess why the ancient church fractured, I would say it was their misconstruction of “peace” and the means to it. The accepted truism, shared by Cyril and Nestorius as well as Leo and Dioscorus, was echoed in Marcian’s prayer and desire to enforce “the ending of discord due to many being in error over the faith.”⁴⁶ A godly desire for concord in Christological definition among Christians is one thing; the use of means antithetical to the character and command of Christ to bring about that concord is quite another.

The Failure of Imposed Orthodoxy

The council’s own natural revulsion against Dioscorus’s abuse of Flavian should have demonstrated to all those present that wielding coercive social measures to create theological harmony fosters further discord.

⁴⁵ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:86–87.

⁴⁶ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 97.

Putting your theological opponents on trial in an imperial context, separating them from their own churches through extra-local juridical means, driving their supporters into exile, all while hurling religious anathemas against their religious pieties—these are abhorrent. Idolatry, irreligious worship, evil liturgies—yes, these are abhorrent. But self-justifying measures, whipped up indignation, evil means to good ends—these are also vile.

Jesus commissioned his church to “make disciples” of all nations (Matt 28:18–20). But the Lord gave us the proclamation of his Word (Rom 10:6–13) and the presence of his Spirit (John 20:21–23) as his chosen means to do so. Contrary to imperial and ecclesiastical usurpations of conveying “peace”—on display long before, during, and after Chalcedon—it is Christ alone who conveys “peace” (John 20:21). What of “peace?” The Constantinian confusion of Christ’s eternal kingdom with a temporal kingdom bequeathed both Western and Eastern Christianity a troubling legacy. It is not by raising hateful shouts and unbared swords that we witness to Jesus and offer his “peace” to the world. Rather, “by this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). For all their knowledge of Scripture, the powerful leaders of the late Roman empire abused both “peace” and the means of attaining it.

In spite of the brilliant Christology available in Chalcedon, the council served to divide ancient Christians rather than unite them. According to Averil Cameron, “the struggle to define orthodoxy was the technologizing of the issue.”⁴⁷ The traditional view was that orthodoxy was fixed and therefore need only be discovered and defended. Somebody like John of Damascus believed theological knowledge could be had through establishing philosophical principles, creating a catalog of heresies to avoid, then constructing theology according to the fathers and the councils.⁴⁸ The struggle to define orthodoxy, therefore, became marked by a continually narrowing set of definitions. Those theological conclusions, which were tested by manipulation and defended by polemic and invective, brought about the loss of open discussion. “Orthodoxy” and “intolerance,” enforced through violence and the state legislation of religion, have thus become synonymous.⁴⁹

Historically, orthodoxy has been more elusive for the church to per-

⁴⁷ Averil Cameron, “The Cost of Orthodoxy,” *Church History and Religious Culture* 93 (2013): 349.

⁴⁸ Cameron, “The Cost of Orthodoxy,” 347.

⁴⁹ Cameron, “The Cost of Orthodoxy,” 352.

ceive and receive. Indeed, harsh measures, from book burnings to mutilation, only inhibited the communal perception and reception of theological orthodoxy. Moreover, the cost to individuals, whether abusers or abused, ranged from hypocrisy to seared consciences.⁵⁰ According to Cameron, the effort to create a “culture of Orthodoxy” must be deemed “unsuccessful,” for “We do not have a single agreed Christian definition, and we still struggle with the legacy of those early battles.”⁵¹

“We Are Not Monophysites”

If we begin our review of the fractured body of Christianity with the religion that characterized Alexandria after Chalcedon, we see how orthodoxy may not be imposed from without. In Egypt, orthodoxy grew from within and established deep roots over against a nearly continual history of pagan, Christian, and Islamic oppression. According to Ghada Botros, the Coptic Orthodox Church developed a “religious identity” that incorporated contradictions to the history of Chalcedon. The Copts measured their history in three eras, beginning with a glorious age that stretched from its foundation in the first century to its formative role in the definition of Nicene Christianity under Athanasius. The second era began with Chalcedon’s excommunication and exile of Dioscorus, which was followed by a “bloody protracted struggle” between his followers and their imperial rulers. The third era began with the fall of Alexandria to the Muslim invaders in the seventh century. The long Arab era is deemed a “miracle of survival” marked by adaptation and resilience in the face of non-Christian oppression.⁵²

Currently, the Coptic Church is the largest church in the Middle East or North Africa. In spite of its history of oppression by imperial Christians, the Copts deny embracing any heresy, even heresy understood according to Chalcedon. The Coptic Pope, Shenouda, declared to an audience at the University of Michigan in 1977, “The Coptic Church was misunderstood in the 5th century at the Council of Chalcedon. We are not monophysites. . . . The Coptic Church never believed in monophysitism.”⁵³ For the Copts, the issue was more about Egyptian humiliation than about religious definition. The story passed down through the generations is that, due to Dioscorus’s challenge to imperial power, “the Empress ordered that Dioscorus be slapped on the face and that some of her

⁵⁰ Cameron, “The Cost of Orthodoxy,” 354–59.

⁵¹ Cameron, “The Cost of Orthodoxy,” 360.

⁵² Ghada Botros, “Religious Identity as an Historical Narrative: Coptic Orthodox Immigrant Churches and the Representation of History,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 19.2 (2006): 174–79.

⁵³ Cited in Botros, “Religious Identity,” 186.

imperial guards plucked his beard hair to humiliate him. Described as an old man, two of Dioscorus’ teeth were dislodged when he was slapped. He is said to have collected the plucked hair and the fallen teeth and to have sent them to his people in Alexandria with a note that this was the price he paid to keep the faith.”⁵⁴ The Copts see themselves as a “virtuous victim” that was able to build on its existing pristine theological legacy.⁵⁵ Such an identity, borne of humiliation and sorrow, yet faithfulness to the Lord, is the very shape of Coptic piety.

Outside the Empire

While Coptic Christians deepened their religious culture through the imperial challenge of Chalcedon, other churches developed their worship and theology apart from the Roman imperial machinery. The churches of Armenia, Ethiopia, and Nubia each provide important case studies. Each remained outside the Roman empire, as each opted for a type of Miaphysitism. For instance, under the influence of the “Nine Saints,” who came from either Syria or Egypt, the Tāwahido Church of Ethiopia held to a strong form of the unity of Christ. *Tāwahido* itself means “being made one,” and the church employed the unique terminology of “Christ God” or “God Christ.”⁵⁶

We will focus upon Armenia, since it was the first national church in Christian history and always remained outside the Roman Empire, while interacting with it. Armenia had minor yet real participation in a number of Roman councils. Moreover, they freely received the doctrinal decisions of the first three ecumenical councils. The Armenians continue to celebrate these councils in their church calendar.⁵⁷ As for the Council of Chalcedon, the Armenian Church felt, at first, neither the need to accept nor to reject its doctrinal claims.⁵⁸

Because of their co-existence alongside the Nestorian church of the East within the Persian Empire, the Armenians were respectful but drew

⁵⁴ Botros, “Religious Identity,” 188.

⁵⁵ Botros, “Religious Identity,” 192.

⁵⁶ Vince L. Bantu, *A Multitude of All Peoples: Engaging Ancient Christianity’s Global Identity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 101–3.

⁵⁷ Mesrob Ashjian, “The Acceptance of the Ecumenical Councils by the Armenian Church: With Special Reference to the Council of Chalcedon,” *Ecumenical Review* 22 (1970): 348–54.

⁵⁸ There were synodal rejections of Chalcedon later. Vigen Guroian, “Identity and Continuity: The Armenian Tradition,” in *Christian Thought: A Brief History*, ed. Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason, and Hugh Pyper (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 56.

closer to Alexandrian Christology. Early Armenian theologians emphasized the unity of Christ, even using language such as “mixing” to describe the union. But later theologians such as Moses of Khoren placed the “form of God” alongside the “form of a Servant,” while maintaining the Union.⁵⁹ In the early sixth century, the Catholicos Pabgen noted that Nestorians in the East felt “strengthened” by Chalcedon. Recoiling in response, he denied “the false teaching of Nestorius and of others like him in Chalcedon.”⁶⁰ Harkening back to Nicaea, the Catholicos anathematized various Antiochene theologians, beginning with Nestorius. However, he also anathematized Eutyches.

In the following centuries, various Armenian theologians noted the difficulties on both sides of Chalcedon, maintaining a studied distance from the council. In the twelfth century, Nerses the Gracious wrote to the Byzantine Emperor that he would allow the language of either Miaphysitism or Duophysitism, but one must neither confuse the natures nor divide them. This sentiment, it should be noted, is in line with Chalcedon. Writing in the late twentieth century, Mesrob Ashjian argued rapprochement may be possible, “if the problem is approached as a *theological*, rather than a *historical* one.”⁶¹ Joint declarations on Christology were even signed between the Armenian Catholicos and Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox representatives.⁶² The historical fact that Armenia’s culture of religious devotion developed outside the Roman Empire, and partially inside the Persian and Ottoman Empires, long continued to shape its informal reception of, yet formal distance from, the Council of Chalcedon.

From Theological Dissent to Ethnic Identity

First, we noticed the Coptic Church separated from the Chalcedonian churches for historical rather than theological reasons. Second, the Armenian Church was always formally separated from the Chalcedonian churches for historical more than theological reasons. Now, third, the Syrian Orthodox Church created an historically divergent religious culture for primarily doctrinal reasons. Fergus Millar, a highly respected social historian, argues the Coptic, Armenian, and Ethiopian experiences were different from the Syrian experience. The Syrian Church was, at first, culturally indistinct from the Chalcedonian churches and notably bilingual. “There was thus no basis for an actual Syrian, or Syriac, ‘nationalism,’”

⁵⁹ Ashjian, “Acceptance of the Ecumenical Councils,” 357–58.

⁶⁰ Ashjian, “Acceptance of the Ecumenical Councils,” 360.

⁶¹ Ashjian, “Acceptance of the Ecumenical Councils,” 362.

⁶² Guroian, “Identity and Continuity,” 57.

whether linguistic or territorial.⁶³ Both Greek and Syriac were accepted as theological languages in the Syriac areas, with Greek predominant. And Syrian Christians perceived themselves as Roman.

However, as Chalcedon was increasingly forced upon the inhabitants of the Syrian provinces through imperial sanction, the Syriac language took on greater prominence. One must be careful when consulting the literature, for often opponents were characterized according to the most extreme labels. For instance, the so-called “Nestorian” Christians of the Church of the East were never followers of Nestorius per se, nor did their theological formulae differ significantly from Chalcedon, except for its condemnation of Nestorius. The various names applied to the Miaphysite Church in the East, the Syrian Orthodox Church, were also pejorative. Millar finds seven such names ascribed to those who simply referred to themselves as “orthodox.”⁶⁴ It was through such debates that the so-called “Jacobites” came to be a separate church, situated over against both the Eastern Orthodox Church, which sanctioned Chalcedonian theology, and the Church of the East, which held a strongly Duophysite theology.

Millar demonstrates that between 485 and 536, as the empire enforced Chalcedonian theology through persecution, both Eastern Miaphysites and Eastern “Nestorians” began to adopt Syriac as their primary theological language. One very prominent Patriarch of Antioch, Severus, began in a wholly Greek culture, but his Miaphysite views sparked a round of excommunications from both the Chalcedonians and the Nestorians.⁶⁵ Severus’s Greek works, along with many others, were translated into Syriac. Syriac subsequently became the liturgical and theological language of the Syrian “orthodox.” In the case of these Syrian Miaphysites, an ethnic identity developed out of a religious piety suffering imperial recriminations.⁶⁶

During a Synod at Constantinople in 536, we first hear of the ethnic identity of being “Syrian,” through it being used as a slur. The ethnic insult came from the lips of the bishop of Rome, Agapetus. The Roman Pope asked the Emperor, Justinian, why he allowed a prominent Miaphysite to reside in Constantinople, deriding this “Syrian deceiver.” Soon, Byzantine citizens cried out, “If the Syrian does not depart from the city, it is ruined!”⁶⁷ It takes little wonder to understand how the Syrians, through a

⁶³ Fergus Millar, “The Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Pre-Islamic Period: From Greek to Syriac?” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 21.1 (2013): 46.

⁶⁴ Millar, “Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church,” 51–55.

⁶⁵ Millar, “Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church,” 64–66.

⁶⁶ Millar, “Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church,” 58–71.

⁶⁷ Millar, “Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church,” 70.

literature of persecution, also developed a distinct religio-ethnic self-awareness with their own language and their own contra-Chalcedonian history.⁶⁸

“The Martyred Church”

Of course, this distinct Syriac Miaphysite culture found a parallel in the rise of a distinct Syriac Nestorian culture.⁶⁹ It will be remembered that the term “Nestorian” is often misapplied, not only to Nestorius himself, who subscribed to the use of *Theotokos* and whose followers were pleased with Chalcedon, but also with regard to the so-called “Nestorian Church.” Moreover, the Church of the East does not hold to what is known as Nestorianism, but simply refuses to join with the anathema against Nestorius at the third ecumenical council.⁷⁰ Theologically, we might compare the official creed of the Nestorian church, established at the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 497, with the language of Chalcedon. David Wilms-hurst argues the theological meanings are inconsequential in difference.

The question revolves around the ambiguity of the Syrian term *qnome*, which is normally translated with the equally ambiguous Greek term *hypostasis*. We know that Chalcedon held to the formula of two *physeis*, one *hypostasis*, and one *prosopon*.⁷¹ Seleucia-Ctesiphon held to the language of two *kyane*, two *qnome*, and one *parsopa*. The Syriac *qnome* translates the Greek *hypostasis*. While both Chalcedon and Seleucia-Ctesiphon regarded the person as one and the natures as two, the middle terms of *hypostasis* and *qnome* are subject to different interpretations.⁷² The formula of Seleucia-Ctesiphon is similar to the language of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who spoke of two *hypostaseis* and one *prosopon*, as noted above. An ecumenical scholar, Sebastian Brock, argues the Syriac term *qnoma* corresponds to the Greek *idiotes*, “particularity,” rather than to “person.”⁷³

We cannot go further into the history of the Church of the East, except to note their liturgy was translated not only into Syriac, but also Persian and Arabic, *inter alia*. Their missionaries established communities

⁶⁸ Millar, “Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church,” 76–78.

⁶⁹ Millar, “Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church,” 88.

⁷⁰ Muddying the waters even further, “there are three entirely different perceptions of Nestorius.” Sebastian Brock, “The Syriac Churches and Dialogue with the Catholic Church,” *Heythrop Journal* 45 (2004): 469.

⁷¹ The Greek formula is “... *ben duo physesin* ... *ben prosopon kai mian hypostasin syntrechousas*.” The Latin translation is “... *in duabus naturis* ... *in unam personam atque subsistentiam concurrente*.” Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:86.

⁷² Wilms-hurst, *The Martyred Church*, 31, 86. Wilms-hurst’s personal agnosticism and sense of moral superiority toward his subjects makes for difficult reading.

⁷³ Brock, “The Syriac Churches,” 470.

along the Silk Road through Central Asia and India into China. While prospering under the Persians and surviving under Islamic domination, large numbers of Nestorian Christians, among many other eastern Christians, were massacred during the Turkish invasions, but most horrifically by the Mongol convert to Islam, Timur. Timur Leng, or Tamerlane, stacked the skulls from entire cities in pyramids and boasted of “washing the sword of Islam in the blood of infidels.”⁷⁴ Many of the Christians who survived were forcibly converted or slowly suffocated by the *dhimmi* system.

In the twentieth century, their descendants in the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Church of the East entered ecumenical conversations and began to break down old barriers. A 1984 Common Declaration between Rome and the Syrian Orthodox leader admitted their churches’ disagreements “arose only because of differences in terminology and culture,” for “[T]here remains no real basis for the sad divisions and schisms.”⁷⁵ A 1994 Common Declaration between Rome and the Church of the East leader admitted common meanings between their liturgical references to Mary as “Mother of Christ” and “Mother of God.”⁷⁶ The Syriac churches have begun to lift their old anathemas, such as those against Cyril and Severus, and church history books are being rewritten so as to remove the harshness.⁷⁷ Brock believes that “underlying the verbal conflicts there lies a common understanding of the nature of the Incarnation and what it has effected.”⁷⁸

Lessons

What lessons may we learn for today from this long, turbulent, and tragic history? I believe theologian Jean Coman of the Romanian Orthodox Church traces a way forward. He writes, “It is not by its structure that an Ecumenical Council is infallibly declared to be such but by the power of the Church in its entirety, *ex consensu ecclesiae*, with the continued assistance of the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁹ He argues the authority of a council can only

⁷⁴ Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How It Died* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 114–19, 137–38.

⁷⁵ Brock, “The Syriac Churches,” 468.

⁷⁶ Brock, “The Syriac Churches,” 470.

⁷⁷ Brock, “The Syriac Churches,” 471.

⁷⁸ Brock, “The Syriac Churches,” 466.

⁷⁹ Jean Coman, “The Doctrinal Definition of the Council of Chalcedon and Its Reception in the Orthodox Church of the East,” *Ecumenical Review* 22 (1970): 363.

be known by its free reception into various churches as a matter of convincing consciences. It is as the Holy Spirit leads both those who speak *and* those who hear that we come to agreement regarding theological claims. While I will not apply “infallible” to any post-biblical council, Coman correctly receives the Definition of Chalcedon as “a masterpiece of intelligence and piety among all other dogmatic statements.”⁸⁰

He reminds us that even in the Chalcedonian churches, there were continual attempts to undermine the Definition of Chalcedon. These Roman challenges came from various emperors and were manifested in Monophysite and Monothelite synods held within the empire. Three subsequent ecumenical councils defended and clarified Chalcedon’s confession. Since then, the Chalcedonian confession has developed deep roots in both Eastern Orthodox and Western theology and piety.⁸¹ The confession of Chalcedon is increasingly being recognized by even non-Chalcedonian churches, because they are pressed in conscience to see it as their own faith but confessed in a different way. The former difficulty was that alien terminology was pressed upon subject peoples by the Romans. But now, that empire is gone, and the churches are speaking to one another again.⁸²

With this history and this theology, please allow me to make seven applications from the contextualization of Chalcedonian Christology to our contemporary historical context:

1. *Grace*: “Orthodoxy,” defined as “right glory,” must be understood as a divine grace not yet fully seen. As a grace, orthodoxy is never something humans may possess; we may only receive grace. As a grace, it is not something we create; nor can we control it. As glory, orthodoxy is something we experience only in part now. Orthodoxy is something we should pray for, teach toward, and receive with thanksgiving, knowing entire dogmatic perfection comes by grace from the future.
2. *Analogy*: Christianity, as both an eternal and a temporal phenomenon, participates by grace in eternal truth but always within the limits of human embodiment in history. If we use Chalcedon’s Christological teachings in an analogous way, we can say that the human aspect of our theology grounds us in history while the divine revelation for our theology provides us

⁸⁰ Coman, “Doctrinal Definition,” 366.

⁸¹ Coman, “Doctrinal Definition,” 371–74.

⁸² Coman, “Doctrinal Definition,” 382.

hope for perfection. Of course, as an analogy, we must remember our own abstractions may be lacking.

3. *Diversity*: The human, historical, contextualized aspect of our Chalcedonian analogy requires us to remember that ethnicity, geography, and language will always render distinct pieties that may sound odd or inappropriate to Christians who live outside particular churches. These oddities must form part of our ongoing discussions, for it is while respectfully listening in an orderly manner to one another as prophets, following the *lex sedentium* of 1 Cor 14, that the churches may be led by the Spirit to discern more clearly the light of God’s Word.
4. *Unity*: The eternal, divine aspect of Chalcedonian Christology requires us to recognize that, among those truly born again by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (if I may import Reformation-era soteriological concerns), there resides a common participation in the very life of the Triune God. Our unity is guaranteed only by the presence in each of us of the Spirit of Holiness. Our unity is substantiated only in the Word of God intended for each of us. Our unity is guided only to the glory of God alone.
5. *Imperfection*: The human, historical, contextualized aspect of our Chalcedonian analogy requires us to remember we have not yet arrived in the state of seeing the glory of God. We must wisely recognize that within us there remains a battle against the principalities and the powers, the demonic ideologies which invade both world and church. We must perceive evil not only in our communities, but also in our own hearts, and we must refuse to act toward or be compelled by others to act toward that evil in ungodly ways. Theological evil may be manifested in either unorthodox goals or in abusive means to reach orthodoxy.
6. *One King*: God may providentially allow apparent Christian triumph in imperial contexts, or any other context of power, to be tested by imperial dissolution. No human empire—whether based in Rome, Constantinople, Seleucid-Ctesiphon, Baghdad, Aachen, Frankfurt, Addis Ababa, London, or Washington DC—ought to be confused with the Kingdom of God. And no magistrate or cleric ought to confuse himself with the King of the Kingdom of God, or with any of that King’s sole prerogatives. Christ Jesus will rule alone, without and against our petty

personal quarrels, lofty theological abstractions, and political machinations. The universal church and the churches local have a *monarch*, “one ruler,” and He is not standing or sitting here in the flesh, yet.

7. *Cruciform*: The Lord Jesus Christ called his disciples to turn the world upside down by overturning the paradigms of tyranny which characterize the cultures of the nations. “You know that those regarded as rulers of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and their superiors exercise authority over them. But it shall not be this way among you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant” (Mark 10:42–43). He also said, “whoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34). The way of Christ’s people before his Second Coming is the way of the cross and humility, not the way of glory and domination. The Lord will triumph in the end—have faith. The question before us now is this: “Will we make the hard choices to align our personal lives and our ecclesiastical cultures with his cross-bearing way? Or will we repeat the horrific errors of the Council of Chalcedon even as we honor their impressive dogmatic formula?”

The Christ of the Mudswamp: Christology in Japanese Perspective

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In this article, I examine Christology in Japanese perspective through the lens of Japanese novelist Shusaku Endo 遠藤周作 and illustrate how Endo's Christ, who is weak and humble, is fitting to Japanese sensibility. To this end, I first present a brief summary of Endo's life and the history of Japan, and then discuss his Christology, along with his metaphor of the mudswamp, which Endo uses to explore the relation between faith and culture in Japan. The essay concludes with a brief criticism of Endo's Christology and some points of application for sharing Christ with Japanese. In the end, I argue that despite the shortcomings of Endo's Christology, Endo succeeds in conceptualizing Christ as one who can fathom the contortions and suffering of the mudswamp's inhabitants—Japanese. Christ in this context is therefore not the triumphant Christ of the West, but rather the meek and sorrowful Christ, the eternal companion of the weak and the wretched, the Christ who inhabits Japanese sensibility.

Key Words: Endo Shusaku 遠藤周作, eternal suffering companion, evangelism of Japanese, *fumie* 踏み絵, ill-fitting clothes, ineffectualness, Japanese Christology, *Kakure Kirishitan* 隠れ切支丹 (hidden Christians), maternal Christ, mudswamp

“Trample! Trample! I more than anyone know of the pain in your foot. Trample! It was to be trampled on by men that I was born into this world. It was to *share* men's *pain* that I carried my cross.”¹ These were the words of Jesus through a *fumie* 踏み絵²—a small bronze plaque bearing the image of Christ—spoken to Sebastian Rodrigues, as he was forced to step on the *fumie* by his captor, Nagasaki magistrate Inoue Masashige 井上政重.³

¹ Shusaku Endo, *Silence*, trans. William Johnston (New York: Taplinger, 1980), 171 (emphasis added).

² During the Tokugawa period 徳川時代 (1603–1868)—a period of severe persecution—*fumie* were used to identify Christians; those who could not step on the *fumie* were identified as Christians and were arrested and tortured until they apostatized or died for their faith. I'll have more to say about this in the following section, “A Brief History of Japan.”

³ In Japan, family names are listed first, followed by a person's given name.

This is the climactic scene from the Japanese novel *Silence* 沈黙.⁴ *Silence* tells the story of a young Portuguese Jesuit priest, Sebastian Rodrigues, who struggles to find the meaning of faith and the presence of God in the midst of severe persecution in seventeenth-century Japan. His face worn down due to constant trampling by recanting Christians, the image of Jesus that appears on the *fumie* speaks softly to an anguished Rodrigues.

Since its publication in 1966, *Silence* has captured the hearts and minds of Japanese people—both Christians and non-Christians. The author, Endo Shusaku 遠藤周作 (1923–1996), who was a Roman Catholic, depicts Christ as meek and humble—a companion of the weak and oppressed—and adumbrates a *Christus dolor* theology, a theology of the sorrows of Christ, through his novels, which span a forty-five-year writing career (1947–1993). Yet, Endo was not alone in this sentiment. Many of his predecessors and contemporaries shared this view of Christ as a sufferer rather than a victor. Uchimura Kanzo 内村鑑三 (1861–1930), an influential Japanese writer and Christian thinker, once said of the focus of Western Christology on Christ as a victor, “Christianity in the West has become an anomaly.”⁵

As a Japanese seminary student, a former Buddhist who converted to Christianity in the US, I took many theology classes. I never related what I was learning to my own cultural context until my preaching professor, the late Calvin Miller, asked me whether I had read any of Endo's works. He learned that I had never read Endo, so he recommended that I read *Silence*. As I read through *Silence*, I felt as if the book reached out and grabbed my heart—the Jesus who appeared in those pages was strangely *familiar* and *fitting* to my soul. The Jesus whom I encountered was a man of sorrow who had “nothing in his appearance that we should desire him”

⁴ *Silence* was published by Shinchosha 新潮社 in 1966 and has been translated into thirteen languages. Recently, film director Martin Scorsese made a movie based on *Silence*, which had been in the works for more than twenty years. Author Kato Muneya 加藤宗哉, Endo Shusaku's long-time friend and mentee, recalls Endo meeting with Scorsese over twenty-six years ago in New York City and says that Endo was excited about Scorsese's proposal. Unfortunately, Endo died five years later and did not live to see the film, which was finally released in 2016 (see Tomoshi Kimura, “Silence: Endo Shusaku's Mentee of Thirty Years Speaks” 遠藤周作に30年寄り添った弟子に聞く『沈黙』, https://business.nikkei.com/atcl/interview/15/238739/01270022_9/?P=1).

⁵ Kanzo Uchimura, “Christianity and Buddhism,” in *The Japan Christian Intelligence*, vol. 4 of *The Complete Works of Kanzo Uchimura* (Tokyo: Kyobunkwan [sic], 1972), 59, quoted in Richard J. Mouw and Douglas A. Sweeney, *The Suffering and Victorious Christ: Toward a More Compassionate Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 2.

(Isa 53:2). I felt that this Jesus searched the depths of my soul and captivated my mind and that I could not look away from his sorrowful eyes.

Endo Shusaku: A Theologian of the People

Reasons for Focusing on Endo

As my story of encountering the suffering Christ illustrates, one's cultural background has a significant impact on how one understands Christian theology—and in this context, the person and work of Christ. No single tradition or perspective can exhaust the infinite richness of Christ. As a result, we can learn from each other's perspectives to gain a more holistic view of Christ. While Endo was not a theologian,⁶ I contend that his work is helpful for understanding how Japanese Christians tend to view Jesus, and how this view can enrich our Christology. As Richard Bauckham observes, a “novelist cannot speak directly of divine reality but only of his human characters' encounters with it, experiences of it and views about it.”⁷ If our encounters (and thereby perspectives) with divine reality is the scope of this study, Endo is an ideal subject. Endo admitted

⁶ It should be noted that a number of Endo's beliefs were controversial. In fact, when *Silence* was first published, it ignited harsh criticisms and condemnations among Japanese Christians. In response, William Johnston, who translated *Silence* into English, recalls that Endo “often protested that he was writing literature, not theology.” Yet, he states, “on these occasions many of his remarks showed that he was not indifferent to the theological implications of what he wrote.” See William Johnston, translator's Preface to Shūsaku Endō, *Silence*, by Shusaku Endo, trans. William Johnston (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1980), xiv. After *Silence*, in a quest to inculturate Christianity in the Japanese context, Endo began to read New Testament scholars such as Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1974) in order to reinvestigate the New Testament. Consequently, he adopted a demythologizing approach to Jesus (see *A Life of Jesus* [1973] and *The Birth of Christ* [1978]). Further, toward the end of his life, he came to embrace religious pluralism. Emi Mase-Hasegawa recounts how Endo asked his father, Mase Hiromasa (1938–), professor emeritus of philosophy at Keio University, to teach him about the pluralism of John Hick. Mase studied under Hick in England from 1974 to 1975. See Emi Mase-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture: Theological Themes in Shusaku Endo's Literary Works* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 168. For criticism of Endo's pluralism, see How Chuang Chua, “Japanese Perspectives on the Death of Christ: A Study in Contextualized Christology” (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2007), 263–72.

⁷ Richard Bauckham, “The Cross and Human Suffering: Insights from East and West” (paper presented at Suffering and Hope in Jesus Christ: Christological Polarity and Religious Pluralism. Tokyo, Japan, 21 July 2010), 1.

that “to express what is holy is impossible for a novelist,”⁸ but a novelist such as Endo can express how human beings understand the character and purpose of God. Perhaps a fitting parallel example in the Western world is C. S. Lewis. As Alister McGrath states,

Lewis is trusted and respected by many American Christians, who treat him as their theological and spiritual mentor. Engaging both heart and mind, Lewis opened up the intellectual and imaginative depths of the Christian faith like nobody else. As Lewis himself pointed out in his broadcast talks during the Second World War, he was simply an educated layman, who spoke directly and accessibly to ordinary Christians over the heads of their clergy. Lewis proved ideally attuned to the pedagogical needs and abilities of laypeople, irrespective of their denomination, who wanted to explore their faith further.⁹

It may not be an overstatement to say that Endo is the “C. S. Lewis of Japan” in terms of opening up the imaginative depths of the Christian faith.

A Brief Summary of the Life of Endo Shusaku

Endo was born in Tokyo in 1923. He spent his early childhood in the city of Dalian in China, since his father's job took his family to Manchuria under the Japanese occupation. When Endo was ten years old his parents divorced, and he returned to Japan with his mother and his older brother. They lived with his mother's sister in Kobe. Feeling shame following her divorce, Endo's mother began to seek consolation in Catholicism, which was her sister's faith, and eventually became a Catholic. At the age of eleven Endo was baptized without fully understanding its significance. In college, Endo majored in French literature and after graduation studied in Lyon, France, from 1950 to 1953. He was one of the first students from Japan to study abroad after World War II. After his studies in France, he began his career as a novelist. He published over one hundred fifty books during his career, and his works have been translated into twenty-three different languages.¹⁰ Endo's award-winning works include *White Person*, *Yellow Person* 白い人黄色い人 (1955); *Silence* 沈黙 (1966); *The Samurai* 侍 (1980); and *Deep River* 深い河 (1994), gaining him the reputation of being

⁸ Endo, *A Life of Jesus*, trans. Richard A. Schuchert (New York: Paulist, 1978), 2.

⁹ Alister McGrath, *C. S. Lewis—A Life: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 369–70.

¹⁰ See Appendix in Mae-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, 216–22.

“one of the twentieth century’s finest writers.”¹¹

Despite his success as a novelist, his life was filled with trials and disappointments. He despised his father for divorcing his mother. He was a mediocre student and initially failed the entrance exam to enter university. Once he entered, his mother could not afford his tuition, so he had to move and live with his father in Tokyo, making him feel that he had betrayed his beloved mother—especially since his step-mother was the reason for his parents’ divorce. He encountered racial discrimination while studying in France. He fell in love with a French woman but could not marry her since he was arranged to marry a woman in Japan. He also experienced a series of illnesses during his lifetime. *Silence* was written after a three-year-long illness that he barely survived which required three separate surgeries. He died in 1996 after experiencing breathing difficulties from pneumonia.

Three Stages of Endo’s Literary Focus: The Quest for a Jesus of Japanese Sensibility

Throughout his life, Endo struggled to reconcile his Catholic faith with his identity as a Japanese—he saw them as being in a “dialectical juxtaposition”¹² in which no ultimate reconciliation seemed obtainable. Endo describes his Catholic faith as “ill-fitting clothes”¹³ that his mother made him wear. They were baggy and did not fit his Japanese body. Yet, he could not “discard this western suit.”¹⁴ Somehow, these ill-fitting clothes had become his strength through his growing-up years. Endo’s literary works dwell on this seemingly irresolvable conflict between his faith and his nationality, and it was a theme that Endo returned to throughout his life.¹⁵ In his explorations of a “religion that is both Christian and Japanese,”¹⁶ Endo employs human frailty as a recurring motif

¹¹ Jewel S. Brooker, “In memoriam: Shusaku Endo,” *Christianity and Literature* 48 (1999): 141, quoted in Chua “Japanese Perspectives,” 203.

¹² Van C. Gessel, *The Sting of Life: Four Contemporary Japanese Novelists* (New York: Columbia, 1989), quoted in John Netland, “From Resistance to *Kenosis*: Reconciling Cultural Difference in the Fiction of Endo Shusaku,” *Christianity and Literature* 48 (1999): 178.

¹³ Endo Shusaku, *Man and Spirit: I Lived Fairly Well* 遠藤周作エッセイ選集I, vol. 1 of *Selected Essays of Endo Shusaku* (Tokyo: Kobunsha, 2006), 189, quoted in Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 231.

¹⁴ Endo, *Man and Spirit*, 189, quoted in Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 231.

¹⁵ Chua states, “Perhaps more than anyone else—certainly more than academic theologians and philosophers—Endo has contributed to the exploration of a religious vision that seeks to be both Christian and Japanese, and this he has done so creatively through the field of literature” (“Japanese Perspectives,” 204).

¹⁶ Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 204.

(one can argue that this is his main theological focus—a God who is possible and embraces human frailty). In his fiction, protagonists often suffer illness, loneliness, and death, or live with a haunting memory of their dark past, or fall victim to moral apathy. Against the backdrop of human frailty, Endo explores how Christ the suffering servant (Isa 53) comes alongside us by embracing our suffering. Endo’s fiction drew heavily on these two themes throughout his career.

His development of these themes can be traced across three separate stages. The first stage (1947–1965) focuses on conflict between culture and faith, while the second stage (1966–1980) focuses on reconciliation between them. The final stage (1981–1993) focuses on integration and harmony for humanity.¹⁷ In this paper I will mainly focus on two novels, *Silence* and *Deep River*¹⁸—the former falls under the second stage, while the latter falls under the third stage.

A Brief History of Japan: Shintoism, Buddhism, and Christianity

Before we embark on a discussion of Endo’s theology, it is necessary to briefly survey the history of Japan in order to provide context for understanding Japanese Christianity. Christianity was introduced to Japan through the Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier (1506–1552) in 1549. When Xavier arrived in Japan, Japan was already a religious country—Shintoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism had already put down deep roots. Shintoism, which is Japan’s indigenous faith, existed prior to 300 BC, while Buddhism came to Japan from India through China and Korea around the middle of the sixth century AD. Before the arrival of Buddhism, Confucianism also came to Japan. These three religions were considered national “treasures” and they sought to coexist with one another. During the Nara (710–794), Heian (794–1192), and Kamakura (1192–1333) periods, Buddhism exercised significant influence over Japanese culture, religion, and politics, and gained prominence by synthesizing elements of

¹⁷ Mase-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, viii. cf. Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” xiii. Van C. Gessel sees “the trajectory of Endo’s career as a movement away from the stark antitheses so prevalent in his early fiction toward greater reconciliation of his Christian and Japanese identities.” In fact, Gessel sees *Silence* as a “transitional novel that moves beyond motifs of irresolvable conflict toward glimpses of reconciliation between his Christian and Japanese identities” (see Netland, “From Resistance to *Kenosis*,” 178).

¹⁸ Mase-Hasegawa says that Endo asked his wife to bury *Silence* and *Deep River* with him in his coffin. See Mase-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, 12 n. 40.

Shintoism. This trend continues to this day. “The dynamic process of hybridizing and synthesizing religious concepts and practices, lasting over 1300 years in Japan, is of great significance for contemporary Japanese spirituality,” as Emi Mase-Hasegawa argues.¹⁹ Endo was also influenced by this syncretizing tendency, as seen especially in one of his last novels, *Deep River*, in which the theme of religious pluralism is prominent.

After the arrival of Christianity in Japan there was a period in which it flourished. Many *daimyo* (大名) (samurai warlords) were converted to Christianity and it is estimated that there were 300,000 baptized Christians in the country.²⁰ Nagasaki, a city on the southern island of Kyushu, was even referred to as “the Rome of the Far East.”²¹ Despite the rapid growth of Christianity, Christian missionaries were expelled from Japan in 1614 by the Tokugawa Shogunate and Christians began to be persecuted. In 1639 a national edict was issued, and the Tokugawa Shogunate closed the country. It remained closed until the arrival of the American commodore Matthew Perry in 1853. It is estimated that five to six thousand European and Japanese Christians were persecuted for their faith during this period.²²

In 1873, the Meiji government finally lifted the ban on Christianity, and this led to a second wave of missionaries (Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox) coming to Japan. A third wave of missionaries came after the Second World War. Despite the efforts of missionaries and evangelists in Japan, Christians are still a small minority today—barely 1 percent of the population of 126.5 million people. A primary reason for such slow growth is the perception of Japanese that Christianity is a foreign religion.²³ How Chuang Chua says that this is not surprising given that Christianity came into the country uninvited.²⁴ As noted earlier, Japan already

¹⁹ Mase-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, 34.

²⁰ Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 46. Chua states that although the exact figures are difficult to determine, C. R. Boxer argues that by the turn of the seventeenth century there was “a Christian community of about 750,000 believers, with an annual increase of five or six thousand” (C. R. Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967; repr.], 197, quoted in Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 46).

²¹ Neil S. Fujita, *Japan’s Encounter with Christianity: The Catholic Mission in Pre-modern Japan*, 3rd ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 9, quoted in Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 46.

²² Paul H. Varley, *Japanese Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), 148, quoted in Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 49.

²³ Mark R. Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 9, quoted in Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 71.

²⁴ Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 71.

had religions—Shintoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, which were considered treasures of the people—and these had put down deep roots in the life, politics, and culture of the Japanese people. Christianity has thus been perceived as an intruder or outsider, just as Endo described it as “ill-fitting clothes” for the Japanese body.

The Pathetic Christ and Weak Christians: The Theology of Endo Shusaku

The Mudswamp of Japan

Every story has a setting, and the setting common to Endo’s stories is the “mudswamp of Japan.” Endo uses this metaphor to explore the relation between faith and culture in Japan and it frequently appears in his novels.²⁵ The meaning of the mudswamp evolved for him over time from cultural to ethical issues, and ultimately to a place for grace.²⁶ It is one of the key concepts for grasping Endo’s thinking about faith and culture.

Endo recalls an old pond behind his childhood house. He once saw a snake twisting across the dark surface of the water on a bright summer day. He writes, “When I think of human beings, I tend to crouch down in a vaguely dark and damp place, something which does not let light in, like a swamp.”²⁷ Endo thereby sees a swamp as a metaphorical “site of human consciousness” and “appropriates this swamp metaphor as a complex and evolving space where religion, ethics, and cultural difference meet.”²⁸

In *Silence*, Endo’s use of this metaphor is especially noteworthy; in the mudswamp of Japan nothing can take root and grow and whatever enters into it is absorbed into its stagnant environment. The apostate priest Ferreira says to Father Rodrigues, “This country [Japan] is a swamp ... a more terrible swamp than you can imagine. Whenever you plant a sapling in this swamp the roots begin to rot; the leaves grow yellow and wither.”²⁹ Japan is a country where “the tree of Hellenized Christianity cannot simply be pulled out of Europe and planted in the swamp of Japan that

²⁵ It appears first time in *Yellow Person* (1955), written over ten years before *Silence*. See Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 218.

²⁶ John T. Netland, “From Cultural Alterity to the Habitations of Grace: The Evolving Moral Topography of Endo’s Mudswamp Trope,” *Christianity and Literature* 59 (2009): 27.

²⁷ Takao Hagiwara, “Return to Japan: The Case of Endo Shusaku,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 37 (2000): 120, quoted in Netland, “From Cultural Alterity,” 27.

²⁸ Netland, “From Cultural Alterity,” 27.

²⁹ Endo, *Silence*, 147.

has a completely different cultural tradition.”³⁰

Along with this concept—the unresolvable differences in cultural traditions between the West and Japan—the metaphor of the mudswamp also symbolize a “moral ennui.”³¹ The magistrate Inoue tells the apostate Rodrigues, “*Father*, you were not defeated by me. . . . You were defeated by this swamp of Japan.”³² Inoue’s words can be taken as a confession to Rodrigues—Inoue represents the cultural and political ethos of Japan, while the swamp of Japan represents the moral apathy and human passivity of the Japanese. If taken this way, what Inoue meant to say was that the fundamental cause of the withering of the sapling of Christianity was the moral apathy and passivity of the Japanese people.³³

Returning to the imagery of the old pond behind Endo’s childhood house, there was a snake twisting across the dark surface of the water. It was a bright summer day. Yet, the water was dark, and no light penetrated through the water. Moreover, the snake moved boldly, as if he were a watchman of the old pond. This eerie imagery provides a glimpse into the Japanese consciousness. There is a darkness in the Japanese consciousness that, as Inoue says, “can’t be helped.”³⁴

However, it is in this swamp that Endo’s theology develops and where his image of Christ is conceived. Christ is the light trying to penetrate through the dark water. Yet, the dark water does not let the light in—and there is a watchman swimming across the water’s surface. Moreover, even

³⁰ Johnston, translator’s preface, xvi.

³¹ Netland, “From Cultural Alterity,” 28. Philosopher Tetsuro Watsuji (1889–1960) argued that human cultures can be classified into three predominant climate zones: the desert (North Africa, the Middle East and central Asia), a meadow (Europe and the Mediterranean basin), and a monsoon (Asia). While the desert and meadow climates can find similarities between each culture, the monsoon climate (Japan) is unable to associate with them due to the vast cultural differences. Watsuji also argues that the monsoon climate—being wet and humid—oppresses the inhabitants and, as a result, they become passive, reserved, and even fatigued. Netland sees Watsuji’s theory as connected to Endo’s swamp. The inhabitants of the swamp—the Japanese—are weary and passive. They accept whatever comes their way without questioning it, thus evincing a moral apathy and a dark consciousness (Netland, “From Cultural Alterity,” 30–32).

³² Endo, *Silence*, 187 (emphasis added).

³³ Inoue is not a fictional character, but a historical figure. He received baptism when Christianity first came to Japan. However, when the Tokugawa Shogunate began to persecute Christians, he abandoned his faith and sided with Tokugawa. He became known for devising effective ways to induce apostasy, including tortures that would result in a painful and slow death if the victim did not recant.

³⁴ Endo, *Silence*, 188.

if the light penetrates through the water, this swamp of Japan rots every living thing; nothing can take root and grow and whatever enters into it is absorbed into its stagnant habitat. The Christ who comes to this swamp must thereby be the Christ of Japanese sensibility. As Endo suggests, it is not Christ the victor who penetrates through the water, but the pathetic and weak Christ who penetrates the heart of the Japanese consciousness. And this Christ is a “bent nail”; he is absorbed into the swamp by becoming “one with the contortions of” the Japanese mind in order “to suffer along” with them.³⁵

The Person of Christ: Christ for the Weak and Downtrodden

Won’t you listen to me, father! I’ve kept deceiving you. Since you rebuked me I began to hate you and all the Christians. Yes, it is true that I trod on the holy image. Mokichi and Ichizo were strong. I can’t be strong like them. . . . But I have my cause to plead! On who has trod on the sacred image has his way too. Do you think I trampled on it *willingly*? My feet ached with the *pain*. God asks me to imitate the strong, even though he made me *weak*. Isn’t this unreasonable?³⁶

Endo’s image of Jesus is closely tied to the questions he raises regarding the lives of weak Christians. Endo asks, “When we think about the apostatized Christians, we come to this ultimate question. Where did these Christians seek redemption? How did they find solace for their disgrace and restore a sense of self-worth for their cowardness?”³⁷ The words above are those of Kichijiro, one of the *Kakure Kirishitan* 隠れ切支丹 (hidden Christians)³⁸—a character from Endo’s novel *Silence*—who

³⁵ Endo, *Deep River*, trans. Van Gessel (New York: A New Direction, 1994), 103.

³⁶ Endo, *Silence*, 113–14 (emphasis added).

³⁷ Shusaku Endo, *Birthplace of Christians*, キリシタンの里 (Tokyo: Chuokoron-Shinsha, 1974), 106. Translation mine.

³⁸ Kichijiro represents the *Kakure Kirishitan*s (hidden Christians). *Kakure Kirishitan*s are “the descendants of communities who maintained the Christian faith in Japan during the time of persecution (1614–1873)” (Mae-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, 50). As their name connotes, they maintained their faith not by enduring persecution, but rather by “doing whatever they could in order to escape suspicion” (Mae-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, 50). This included publicly forsaking their faith, declaring themselves to be Buddhists, and subsequently leading a double life of “being Shinto/Buddhist socially and Christians personally” (Mae-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, 50). Endo sees them as a

apostatized because of his weak faith and fear of persecution. Yet, he could not forsake his faith and subsequently leads a life of deception. He secretly comes to Rodrigues, the Jesuit priest, again and again for absolution. Rodrigues, with disgust, asks, “Could it be possible that Christ loved and searched after this dirtiest of men? In evil there remained that strength and beauty of evil; but this Kichijiro was not even worthy to be called evil. He was thin and dirty like the tattered rags he wore.”³⁹

Endo’s fascination with weak Christians began with his own journey of faith. He often confessed that he was a timid and unfaithful Christian who received baptism not out of his own will but because of his mother’s strong desire. He confessed that he compromised his faith in order to gain the acceptance of others. Endo therefore sees himself in these weak Christians—he himself is Kichijiro. His faith is the faith of the weak, not of the strong who were courageously martyred for their faith. Rodrigues’s question, “Could it be possible that Christ loved and searched after this dirtiest of men?” addresses Endo’s own question of Christ’s love for him—does Christ love those who are weak in faith and forgive them even when they betray him out of their weakness?

Endo’s quest to understand Christ as one who embraces weak Christians gained additional momentum when he encountered *fumie* during a trip to Nagasaki. Endo saw dark footprints on the *fumie*—marks left by constant trampling. He wanted to understand those who left their footprints and the pain they felt as they trampled.⁴⁰ Moreover, he wanted to know the Christ on the *fumie*. The image of Christ that appeared on the *fumie* was worn out—“he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him” (Isa 53:2).

This solidarity of Christ with the weak and the downtrodden is therefore the focal point of Endo’s Christology.⁴¹ Related to this, one of

key to understanding the religious mindset of the Japanese people. During their long period of persecution they had no contact with missionaries and as a result developed their own culturally-shaped, and in many ways unorthodox, version of Christian faith. Endo says, “Its depravity mirrors the peculiarity of the religious mindset of the Japanese people” (*Birthplace*, 103, translation mine).

³⁹ Endo, *Silence*, 115.

⁴⁰ Endo states that when he thinks about them, he feels their shame and regret—they know their own weakness and hate their own existence because of their weakness. As a novelist, he said, “I could not be indifferent to their sorrow and pain. . . . I did not want to silence them, but wanted to bring them out of the silence to hear their voice” (*Birthplace of Christians*, 30, translation mine).

⁴¹ Mase-Hasegawa states that Endo sees humanity in Christ in his last words,

Endo’s notable images of Christ is a maternal image, rather than the paternal image of God in the Old Testament and that of John the Baptist.⁴² Endo argues that paternal love that is stern does not fit Japanese religiosity, but rather maternal love that embraces all things and unconditionally loves her children.⁴³ In fact, the hidden Christians “had sought out maternal love rather than paternal love.”⁴⁴ They found comfort in statues of Maria Kannon マリア観音—statues of the Virgin Mary disguised as the Buddhist goddess of mercy. Japanese seek a “God of amae” 甘え—a God who embraces a childlike desire to cling to a mother for love and protection.⁴⁵

In *Silence*, the Christ that appears on the *fumie* is a maternal Christ. As Rodrigues struggles with his decision to step on the *fumie* (despite their recantation, the poor peasants continue to be tortured by the officials to compel his apostasy), the Christ on the *fumie* speaks to Rodrigues: “You may trample. You may trample. I more than anyone know of the pain in

“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me”; Matt 27:46; Ps 22:11). Endo interprets these words as an expression of Jesus’s weakness in his faith and therefore “the poor Jesus could understand people’s pain and suffering more than anyone” (*Christ in Japanese Culture*, 111).

⁴² Endo draws his image of God from the near-Marcionite contrast between the Old Testament and the portrayal of Jesus in the New Testament. Endo sees the God of the Old Testament and the God of John the Baptist as a “stern father-image of God” while “His [Jesus’s] heart was a maternal womb to engender an image of God which more closely resembles a gentle mother, the image of God which he would disclose to the people on a mountain by the Lake of Galilee at a later time” (Endo, *A Life of Jesus*, 24–25; cf. Bauckham, “The Cross and Human Suffering,” 3; Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 235).

⁴³ Kitamori Kazoh 北森嘉蔵 (1916–1998), a Japanese theologian and author of *The Theology of the Pain of God* (1946), questions Endo’s assertion that Japanese can only accept a Christ who exhibits maternal love. Kitamori argues that the image of the father that Endo employs is the image of Japanese fathers of the Meiji period (1868–1912) and is therefore outdated. See Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 237–38.

⁴⁴ Endo, *Birthplace of Christians*, 135. Translation mine. Endo argues that the reason Pure Land Buddhism 浄土真宗 became popular among Japanese is that it is not a religion of paternal love, but rather maternal love. In his view, Japanese have a deep desire to rely on someone in time of trouble, rather than overcome obstacles with their own power. And a mother is who we come to for rescue, rather than a father. This was also the mindset Endo saw among the hidden Christians. See also Mase-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, 130–31. Mase-Hasegawa traces the root of maternal love in Japanese religiosity to *koshinto* 古神道 (the alleged basis for modern Shintoism), rather than Pure Land Buddhism.

⁴⁵ See Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 237.

your foot. You may trample. It was to be trampled on by men that I was born into this world. It was to share men's pain that I carried my cross."⁴⁶ There was no rebuke or condemnation of Rodrigues's weak faith, but rather the voice of Christ speaking to his tormented soul—"you may trample. It was to be trampled on by men that I was born into this world."⁴⁷ Christ comes alongside Rodrigues and comforts him because his "soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Matt 26:38). Christ carries Rodrigues's cross by emptying himself, while he allows Rodrigues to choose an act "that is not sullied by self-interest but rather aimed at relieving the torments of others, even at the sacrifice of his own stature and calling."⁴⁸ It is this maternal image of Jesus that embraces all things and forgives all things. Just as a mother quiets her crying child, the maternal love of Jesus quiets our tormented souls.

The Work of Christ: Eternal Suffering Companion

In suffering, Jesus becomes a self-sacrificial and sympathetic companion of all who suffer. His mission is not a mission of miraculous deliverance, but rather a mission to "take upon himself the pain of all mankind in order to become the eternal companion of all"⁴⁹ and thus "demonstrate the reality of the God of love."⁵⁰ In addition, "The cross, where Jesus experienced the absolute silence of God, became an emblem of identification in all human suffering."⁵¹ As a self-sacrificial and sympathetic companion, Jesus absorbs our suffering.

The picture of Jesus who suffers along with us is a beautiful image that Endo employs throughout his career as a novelist. In addition to its appearance in *Silence*, it is also prominent in *Deep River*, another of Endo's

⁴⁶ Endo, *Silence*, 171. I am using Mase-Hasegawa's translation (see Mase-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, 98). After Endo's passing, a close friend realized that the published English translation had translated "trample" as an imperative ("Trample!"), rather than a statement of permission ("You may trample."). Van C. Gessel, who translated six of Endo's works and is an expert on Endo's theology, also argues that it should have been translated as a statement of permission, rather than an imperative (Gessel, "Hearing God in Silence: The Fiction of Endo Shusaku," *Christianity and Literature* 48 [1999]: 160). Endo's wife even asked at one point that the translation be revised. I believe Mase-Hasegawa and Gessel make a compelling case, which further reflects Christ's maternal character in this scene—offering permission rather than issuing a command. Scorsese, the director of the movie *Silence*, also interprets it as a statement of permission.

⁴⁷ Endo, *Silence*, 171.

⁴⁸ Gessel, "Hearing God in Silence," 161.

⁴⁹ Endo, *A Life of Jesus*, 86.

⁵⁰ Endo, *A Life of Jesus*, 125.

⁵¹ Chua, "Japanese Perspectives," 243.

most popular works. In *Deep River*, Endo brings back Gaston Bonaparte—a Christ-figure—from his earlier novel *Wonderful Fool* (1959). Gaston meets a Japanese man, Tsukada, a war hero whose memory of consuming human flesh for survival torments him. This occurred in the jungles of Burma, where he ate the flesh of a fallen Japanese soldier and also gave it to his comrade, Kiguchi, who was on the verge of death from exhaustion and starvation. Tsukada quietly confesses this act to Gaston, who in turn tells the dying Tsukada his secret—that he also ingested human flesh for survival in the Andes mountains following a plane crash. "He [Gaston] came to Tsukada's room every day after that and held the dying man's hands between his own palms, talked to him and encouraged him. Kiguchi could not tell whether such comfort eased Tsukada's pain. But the figure of Gaston keeling beside his bed looked like a *bent nail*, and the bent nail struggled to *become one with the contortions* of Tsukada's mind, and to *suffer along* with Tsukada."⁵²

For Endo, Jesus the eternal companion is not the Jesus of divinity, but rather the Jesus of humanity. He is meek and humble, like the myna bird in *Deep River*—arguably another Christ-figure of Endo's. The black myna bird never sings or talks, but chortles, "Ha! Ha ha!"—which is described as sounding like nervous laughter. When ailing Numada, the bird's owner, confesses his fear of death to the bird, the bird responds with its strange laughter, as if it is trying to hide its ineffectualness. The bird ultimately dies in place of Numada, but Numada recalls the bird's nervous laughter and realizes its compassion in saving him in the midst of Numada's fear and despair.⁵³

Jesus, the eternal companion, is meek and humble. In fact, in Endo's perspective, he does not conquer death by his resurrection but rather resurrects as Christ the eternal companion in the hearts of his people.⁵⁴ This work of Jesus is beautifully illustrated in the cases of Rodrigues and Kichijiro in *Silence*. Rodrigues, after his recantation, was forced to live as a Japanese by taking a Japanese wife. But, he did not forsake his Christian faith. Rodrigues says, "I fell. But, Lord, you alone know that I did not renounce my faith."⁵⁵ Jesus, the eternal companion, continues to live in the heart of Rodrigues by loving him and sharing his suffering. Rodrigues states, "Our Lord was not silent. Even if he had been silent, my life until this day would

⁵² Endo, *Deep River*, 102–3 (emphasis added). In conversation with one of my friends, she suggested that this scene may be based on 2 Cor 1:3–5.

⁵³ *Deep River* is Endo's most controversial book because of its apparent embrace of pluralism, animism, and pantheism, which do not conform to orthodox Christian faith. See my footnote 6 for more details.

⁵⁴ Chua, "Japanese Perspectives," 247.

⁵⁵ Endo, *Silence*, 175.

have spoken of him.”⁵⁶

In the same way, the resurrected Jesus who lives in the heart of Kichijiro compels him to return to his faith, regardless of how many times Kichijiro betrays him. For Endo, the resurrected Jesus is ineffectual to conquer death, but he is *effectual* in calling and drawing his people to him. Once we are called, he will never let us go, no matter what we do—even in the face of betrayal. Peter denied knowing Jesus three times. His fear overwhelmed his love for Jesus. But, on the day of Pentecost, Peter preached repentance and the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:14–40). The Eternal Companion is *effectual* because “his call ... [is] irrevocable” (Rom 11:29).

A Brief Criticism of Endo's Christology

As beautiful as Endo's image of Christ is, there are many theological points that Endo unfortunately missed.⁵⁷ First, Endo does not consider the divinity of Christ in his Christology. Hence, his Christ is Jesus of Nazareth, but not Jesus the Christ. In fact, Endo creatively concludes that Jesus rejected the title “Christ.”⁵⁸ Subsequently, Endo demythologizes Christ, following Rudolf Bultmann. Endo believed that “miracles symbolize power, and that compromises the reality of human suffering.”⁵⁹

Second, Endo's resurrected Christ does not overcome the suffering of the world, but rather becomes a companion of those who suffer. His love embraces those who suffer but cannot liberate them from suffering, unlike the Christ that delivers from opposition.⁶⁰ He is a powerless Christ who resolves to share suffering with those who suffer, rather than fighting to overcome it. Endo's Christ therefore accepts and adopts suffering as an inherent aspect of human frailty—suffering is inevitable as long as humanity exists, and humans are unable to overcome it.

Third, Endo sees suffering as the primary problem of human existence, and this experience forms the core of his theology. Thus, Christ is not the Messiah, the sin-bearer, but the eternal companion of those who suffer. Although it would be unfair to say that Endo does not see the sinfulness of humanity—this seems to contradict the portrayal of many of his characters who are sinful with no possibility of redemption—his

⁵⁶ Endo, *Silence*, 191. Kato, Endo's disciple of thirty years, says that this is a signature of Endo's literature. For Endo, God's existence is not as important as his action—God manifests his presence through people's lives, and most significantly in the suffering of his people. See Kimura, “Silence.”

⁵⁷ For more details, see Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 274–83.

⁵⁸ Endo, *A Life of Jesus*, 125, quoted in Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 241.

⁵⁹ Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 240.

⁶⁰ Bauckham, “The Cross and Human Suffering,” 4.

theological concept of redemption is not redemption from sin, but redemption from suffering. His understanding of Jesus's death is therefore not penal, but rather moral—Christ suffers for his people and calls them to come to him by imitating his suffering.⁶¹

Application

As we near the end of this paper, it is appropriate to discuss practical implications of this study in Japanese Christology for the proclamation of the gospel and ministry in Japan. In doing so, we are also considering the relationship between Christ and culture in Japan. Takeda Kiyoko (1917–2018), who studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York and was an acquaintance of Richard H. Niebuhr, formulated a typology that describes five ways Christianity has interacted with Japanese culture. She states that her “analysis is not directly comparable to the scheme of Niebuhr,”⁶² yet the similarities between her typology and Niebuhr's are apparent and one can assume that “she has largely applied his paradigmatic approach to Japanese culture.”⁶³ She identifies five categories of inculturation.

1. *Absorbed type*: Christianity is compromised by Japanese culture, and it loses its original function, identity, and uniqueness.
2. *Isolating type*: Christianity places too much emphasis on its uniqueness, and it becomes isolated from Japanese culture.
3. *Confronting type*: Christianity confronts Japanese culture and remains isolated.
4. *Grafting type*: Christianity is implanted in Japanese culture as a supplement.
5. *Apostatizing type*: Christianity is abandoned after some time.⁶⁴

In Endo's literature “the Confronting and Grafting types” are clearly

⁶¹ Chua, “Japanese Perspectives,” 243.

⁶² The five categories of Niebuhr's typology are Christ against culture, Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, and Christ the transformer of culture.

⁶³ Kiyoko Takeda, *Dochaku to Haikyō* 『土着と背教』 (Indigenization and Apostasy) (Tokyo: Shinkyō shuppan, 1967), 56–58, quoted in Mase-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, 4.

⁶⁴ Kiyoko Takeda, *Seito to Itan no Aida* 『正統と異端のあいだ』 (The Betweenness of Orthodoxy [Orthodoxy] and Heresy) (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku shuppan, 1976), 56, quoted in Mase-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, 4.

illustrated.⁶⁵ However, for the purpose of mission, the Grafting type, which corresponds to Niebuhr's fifth category—Christ the transformer of culture⁶⁶—seems to be the most relevant to our discussion. The category of Christ the transformer of culture perceives that history is not merely a series of human events. It is rather a “dynamic interaction between God and man.”⁶⁷ Niebuhr observes that on this view the triune God works together to create, forgive, and redeem the world in order to bring transformation.

Takeda's Grafting type should not be understood as robustly as Niebuhr's fifth category. As Endo illustrates in the lives of the hidden Christians and the apostate Rodrigues in *Silence*, Christianity that grows in the mudswamp of Japan is not the Christianity of the West. Although Christianity is accepted, it remains a foreign vine, grafted into the existing trunk of Japanese culture—“Christianity is implanted in Japanese culture as a supplement.”⁶⁸

Space precludes all but a brief discussion of how this might play out in practice, but I would like to suggest two approaches. James Davidson Hunter proposes a “theology of faithful presence” as a new approach that Christians should take in order to be the light and salt in the world. He states, “A theology of faithful presence begins with an acknowledgement of God's faithful presence to us and that his call upon us is that we be faithfully present to him in return. This is the foundation, the logic, the paradigm.”⁶⁹ Faithful presence calls us to be present to others who are inside or outside the community. This presence requires sacrificial love. Further, faithful presence calls for us to be faithful to our vocational tasks, in which we are to strive for excellence. Through these tasks, Christians honor God.

Hunter's approach seems to fit well with Japanese sensibility. In fact, it seems to overlap to some extent with the concept of Jesus as the eternal suffering companion. Jesus's eternal presence as a comforter and co-sufferer can also be taken as a kind of faithful presence that is the embodi-

⁶⁵ Mase-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, 6.

⁶⁶ Takeda states that the Grafting type corresponds to the fifth category of Niebuhr's typology (Takeda, *Seito*, 56, quoted in Mase-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, 4).

⁶⁷ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 2001), 194.

⁶⁸ Takeda, *Seito*, 56, quoted in Mase-Hasegawa, *Christ in Japanese Culture*, 4.

⁶⁹ James Davidson Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 243.

ment of God's faithfulness to Japanese. As we practice a theology of faithful presence, many Japanese will come to see Christ who is faithful to those who suffer.

Harold Netland, on the other hand, proposes focusing on the Golden Rule (Matt 7:12). Netland says that although the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20) has been a fruitful focal point of missiology, to fulfill the Great Commission, we also need Christians who live in accordance with the Golden Rule: “This, it seems to me, is a basic principle which not only should shape individual Christian behavior but which can serve as a guiding principle of a social ethic in religiously diverse societies.”⁷⁰

Netland's approach seems to fit well with Japan's religiously diverse society as well as Japanese sentiment—self-sacrifice for the purpose of social harmony 和 is one of the virtues that Japanese seek and admire. If Christianity is a grafted supplement, it is a wise missionary strategy to build on the sentiment that already exists among Japanese. In the mudswamp, a newly planted sapling will easily wither, but what already grows in the mudswamp will remain. “Pursuit of the common good in contexts of religious diversity can be a powerful witness to God's redemptive love in Christ Jesus.”⁷¹

It is my hope that through these Christian virtues (faithful presence and the Golden Rule) Japanese will begin to see the majesty and beauty of Christ who was crucified on the cross for the sins of the world.

Conclusion

Despite the shortcomings of Endo's Christology, there is much to celebrate in his portrayal of Christ. If Christ is the Christ of the mudswamp, Japanese must be able to recognize him as such. In this sense, Endo succeeds in conceptualizing Christ as one who can *fathom* the contortions and suffering of the mudswamp's inhabitants. The inhabitants of the swamp are weary and passive. They choose to accept their fate rather than attempt to overcome it. Endo's Christ cannot save them from their misery, yet he comforts those who cannot be comforted and loves those who are unlovable. The Christ who penetrates through the darkness of the water is therefore not the triumphant Christ of the West, but rather the meek and sorrowful Christ, the eternal companion of the weak and the wretched, the Christ that inhabits Japanese sensibility.

⁷⁰ Harold Netland, “Response to Professor Inagaki” (paper presented at Suffering and Hope in Jesus Christ: Christological Polarity and Religious Pluralism. Tokyo, Japan, 23 July 2010), 7.

⁷¹ Netland, “Response to,” 8.

Middleton and Wright Have We Loved, but Padilla and Escobar? North American Eschatologies and Neglected Latino Voices

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In the 1960s and 1970s, Latino Theologians C. René Padilla and Samuel Escobar reminded the global Christian community of Jesus's holistic mission: that he came to save people from the painful effects of sin, such as injustice and oppression, so that they might flourish under his earthly rule. Their message was dismissed by North American evangelicals who were more concerned about delivering souls into heaven. Since then, American evangelicals have come to appreciate holistic eschatology, which is analogous to holistic mission, in the works of J. Richard Middleton and N. T. Wright. Thus, there is no reason to continue to disregard the arguments of Padilla and Escobar.

Key Words: Escobar, good news, gospel, holistic eschatology, holistic mission, kingdom, Padilla

The 1960s and 1970s marked the rise of Latino evangelical voices. David C. Kirkpatrick notes that during this time the “emerging generation” of Latinos “developed, branded, and exported” their brand of Christianity “to a changing coalition of global evangelicalism.”¹ As a result, evangelicals were introduced to the likes of René Padilla, Samuel Escobar, Orlando Costas, and José Míguez Bonino.² Two of the most influential were Padilla and Escobar, whose ideas spread through their many publications, international speaking engagements, and teaching appointments at colleges and seminaries in the United States. Padilla, for instance, published

the notable *Misión integral: Ensayos sobre la iglesia y el reino*, which is available in English under the title *Mission between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom of God*.³ He also spoke frequently in his work for International Fellowship of Evangelical Students and the Latin American Theological Fellowship and held professorial appointments at institutions such as Wheaton College. Escobar published the popular *New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* and *En busca de Cristo en América Latina*, which was translated into English as *In Search of Christ in Latin America: From Colonial Image to Liberating Savior*.⁴ He also spoke regularly as General Director of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship of Canada and held professorates at Palmer School of Theology (formerly Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary) and Facultad Protestante de Teología in Madrid, Spain.

What likely propelled Padilla and Escobar onto the world's scene was the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, of which John Stott was the key architect.⁵ At Lausanne, they gave main plenary sessions and were granted a platform along with North American evangelical leadership—seizing the opportunity to promote their message of “holistic

³ C. René Padilla, *Misión integral: Ensayos sobre la iglesia y el reino* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); *Mission between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985). A sample of Padilla's other works are *Economía humana y economía del reino de Dios* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Kairós, 2003); “Misión integral y evangelización,” *Iglesia y misión* 71–72 (2000): 34–39; “Lo de Dios y lo de Cesar,” *Certeza* 41 (1970): 2–3; “Una nueva manera de hacer teología,” *Misión* 1.1 (1982): 20–23; “The Fullness of Mission,” *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 3.1 (1979): 6–11; “The Kingdom of God and the Church,” *Theological Fraternity Bulletin* 1–2 (1976): 1–23.

⁴ Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone*, ed. John Stott (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003); *En busca de Cristo en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Kairós, 2012). See also his “Biblical Content in Anglo-Saxon Trappings in Latin American Theology,” *Occasional Bulletin of the Latin American Theological Fraternity* 1.3 (1972): 1–11; “The Whole Gospel for the Whole World from Latin America,” *Transformation* 10.1 (1993): 30–32.

⁵ Grant Wacker notes also Billy Graham's influence on this “extra-ordinarily influential conference,” in which he sought to empower “both sexes” and “multiple nationalities” (*America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014], 229). At the conclusion, its organizers, including Graham, signed the Lausanne Covenant, which boldly stated: “We affirm . . . justice and reconciliation throughout human society for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God . . . nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty” (Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 244).

¹ David C. Kirkpatrick, *A Gospel for the Poor: Global Social Christianity and the Evangelical Left* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2019), 14.

² Such theologians stand on the shoulders of Latinos who came before them, such as Gonzalo Báez-Camargo (1899–1983), Alberto Rembao (1895–1962), Angel M. Mergal (1909–1971), and Domingo Marrero Navarro (1909–1960). Samuel Escobar calls these men the “founding generation,” who “in their effort to contextualize faith they rediscovered the humanity of Christ and the social dimension of the gospel, yet they maintained the basic framework of traditional evangelical Christology” (*In Search of Christ in Latin America: From Colonial Image to Liberating Savior* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019], 90).

mission.”⁶ Christians from around the globe therefore heard an important reminder: that Jesus came to save whole people, body and soul, from the painful effects of sin, so that they might experience fullness of life on earth.⁷ The framework through which they presented their message was the “already-not yet” view of the kingdom popularized by George Eldon Ladd.⁸ Through this grid, they argued that Jesus’s arrival signifies the kingdom is “already” present, initiating the process of redemption from sinful effects such as poverty, injustice, and oppression. Though the kingdom has “not yet” arrived in full, the course of salvation will continue until humanity experiences resurrection, at which time God will transform the earth, ushering in a permanent reign of justice, peace, and love. Though the “already-not yet” eschatological paradigm is now common among evangelicals, in Padilla’s and Escobar’s day theologians were still trying to reconcile the “present” and “future” ramifications of the kingdom.⁹

In the 1960s and 1970s, their emphasis on holistic mission flew in the face of (what many Latino theologians call) an “American gospel,” which stresses that Jesus came to deliver souls into heaven, with little mention of how salvation affects embodied lives in the present.¹⁰ In response, Padilla argues: “A comprehensive mission corresponds to a comprehensive view of salvation. Salvation is wholeness. Salvation is total humanization. Salvation is eternal life ... life that begins here and now ... and touches

⁶ The original Spanish term, which Padilla coined, is *misión integral*. Other than “holistic mission,” some also translate *misión integral* as “integral mission.”

⁷ I will not argue for dichotomist or trichotomist views of persons. I use “body” and “soul” in reference to the “material” and “spiritual” aspects of human beings.

⁸ A glance through their works reveals strong echoes of George Eldon Ladd’s *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); and *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990). Another important influence regarding the “inbreaking of the kingdom” is Oscar Cullman’s *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans. Shirley C. Guthrie and A. M. Hall (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963).

⁹ See an overview of this debate in Ladd, *Presence of the Future*, 3–42; Patrick Mitchell, “New Testament Eschatologies,” in *The State of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. Scot McKnight and Nijay K. Gupta (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 224–35.

¹⁰ For a thorough understanding of the social, political, and religious context out which holistic mission emerged, see Kirkpatrick, *A Gospel for the Poor*; Sharon E. Heaney, *Contextual Theology for Latin America: Liberation Themes in Evangelical Perspective*, Paternoster Theological Monographs (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2008).

all aspects of man’s being.”¹¹ This message is grounded in the person and work of Jesus, who fulfills the role of Isaiah’s suffering servant by taking the people’s sins upon himself, on the cross, making them righteous before the Father and the first fruits of a new creation (Isa 40–66; cf. Luke 4; Matt 5).¹² As a result, Jesus’s kingdom has come, satisfying centuries of biblical expectations.¹³ While each had their own theological nuances and agendas, woven throughout Padilla’s and Escobar’s work is a “holistic” message based on the “whole” counsel of God. Using contemporary models, their “already-not yet” holistic message, which relies on the progressive nature of Scripture, is in line with a redemptive historical approach to biblical theology.¹⁴

A closer look at Padilla’s and Escobar’s holistic mission reveals that it bears a striking resemblance to a recent theological movement called holistic eschatology. Prominent examples are J. Richard Middleton’s *A New Heavens and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology*¹⁵ and N. T. Wright’s *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* and *The Resurrection of the Son of God*.¹⁶ Both Middleton and Wright

¹¹ Kirkpatrick (*A Gospel for the Poor*, 11) quotes John Stott, “The Significance of Lausanne,” *International Review of Mission* 64.255 (July 1975): 289.

¹² Padilla notes that for Escobar the suffering servant motif was essential for holistic Christian mission (C. René Padilla, “Hacia una cristología evangélica contextual,” *Boletín Teológico* 30 [1988]: 98).

¹³ Padilla, *Mission*, 65.

¹⁴ See Edward W. Klink III and Darian Lockett’s discussion of the redemptive historical approach to biblical theology, which they call BT2 (*Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012]), 59–75).

¹⁵ J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014). Tim Keller’s *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008); and *A Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Penguin, 2010) are examples of popular works through which runs the theme of holistic eschatology.

¹⁶ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2008); *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003). See also Wright’s “New Heavens, New Earth,” in *Called to One Hope: Perspectives on Life to Come; Drew Lectures on Immortality Delivered at Spurgeon’s College*, ed. John Colwell (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 31–51; and *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2012). See also Oren Martin, *Bound for the Promise Land: The Land Promise in God’s Redemptive Plan*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015) and Miguel Echevarria, *The Future Inheritance of Land in the Pauline Epistles* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019).

hold that salvation should not be spiritualized as the soul's future departure to a bodyless existence in heaven. Rather, the arrival of God's kingdom "already" begins the redemption of all things, such as deliverance from injustice and oppression, which will be fully realized when believers are resurrected to a restored kingdom. Over the last thirty years, holistic eschatology has been growing in popularity among North American evangelicals, leaving little room to ignore authors such as Middleton and Wright.¹⁷

North American evangelicals have been less than enthusiastic about Padilla and Escobar. Their rejection dates back to the 1960s and 1970s, when, as Kirkpatrick notes, "evangelicals in the North would ignore the voices of their brothers and sisters in the South" despite that "the tides of change were sweeping over global evangelicalism, reshaping for many what it meant to be a faithful Christian in the contexts of injustice, oppression, and inequality."¹⁸ And they certainly have shifted, so much so that American evangelicals now engage authors like Middleton and Wright, who argue for the "present" social benefits of the kingdom. Nevertheless, despite that they were theologically conservative, in the 1960s and 1970s Padilla's and Escobar's political and social ideas were too progressive for many conservative evangelicals in the United States.¹⁹ The result was that they were dismissed or ignored, often under false accusations of being Marxists, social gospel advocates, or liberation theologians.

While they sought contextually informed readings, unlike Marxists and liberation theologians, Padilla and Escobar did not give interpretive priority to context (praxis) over Scripture.²⁰ Nor did they think the social

¹⁷ See discussion in Middleton, *A New Heaven and Earth*, 303–12.

¹⁸ Kirkpatrick, *A Gospel for the Poor*, 175. At Lausanne, for example, leaders from the United States were among those who opposed the holistic emphasis of the gospel (*Gospel for the Poor*, 28–29). Although Kirkpatrick's observation applies to Padilla and Escobar, it also describes well how Latino theologians have been treated by their northern counterparts. Justo González is an interesting case. American evangelicals freely use his two-volume *The Story of Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2014) but ignore his other works on theology, such as *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990) and *Santa Biblia: The Bible through Hispanic Eyes* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996).

¹⁹ Kirkpatrick, *A Gospel for the Poor*, 175.

²⁰ Padilla disagreed with the way Marxism took its interpretive starting point from "the revolutionary situation and interprets Scripture on the basis of presuppositions derived from leftist ideologies" (C. René Padilla, "Revolution and Revelation," in *Is Revolution Change?*, ed. Brian Griffiths [London: IVP, 1972], 77). In his critique of liberation theology, Escobar, along with Arana, Steuernagel, and

gospel movement, which held that people's actions would build the kingdom on earth, provided answers to their concerns; only Jesus would usher in a permanent state of righteousness. Though the accusations against them were false, in their day they were enough to persuade many North American evangelicals to dismiss their arguments.²¹

Not much has changed since then. One piece of evidence is Padilla's and Escobar's absence from modern scholarship on holistic eschatology, despite that their emphasis on holistic mission is noticeably similar to holistic eschatology and precedes this theological movement by at least twenty years.²² In *A New Heavens and a New Earth*, for example, Middleton supplies a brief history of the recovery of holistic eschatology. While he mentions the contributions of American evangelical authors such as Anthony Hoekema, Darrell Bock, Douglas Moo, and Tim Keller, he omits the earlier and (very) similar arguments of Padilla and Escobar.²³ Although Middleton's survey is admittedly short, the absence of these Latino theologians' positive contributions is all too common in North American scholarship. While I am not contending that authors have purposely dismissed Padilla and Escobar, it is conspicuous that, after their initial rejection in the 1960s and 1970s, their voices are still absent from literature attributed to similar theological movements such as holistic eschatology. One could also point to the absence of their books from contemporary discussions on biblical theology and "already-not yet" eschatology, with

Zapata, argue: "In good evangelical theology the church bows before the authority of the word. Human traditions and systems, the praxis of the Christian and non-Christian, every historical moment, all are to be illuminated by the word of God and judged by it. At every point in their pilgrimage on earth God's people have to subject their praxis to the light and judgement of God through his word" (Samuel Escobar, Pedro Arana, Valdir R. Steuernagel, and Rodrigo Zapata, "A Latin American Critique of Latin American Theology," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 7.1 [April 1983]: 58). Beyond their hermeneutical starting points, Padilla and Escobar took issue with the exclusive emphasis on "present" salvation in Marxist and liberationist ideologies.

²¹ David R. Swartz notes that "Escobar represents a significant evangelical stream in Latin America that has been obscured by preoccupation with liberation theology and right-wing Pentecostals" (*Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012], 114).

²² Missions is the one area that does interact with the arguments of Padilla and Escobar. See J. Andrew Kirk, *What Is Mission? Theological Explorations* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000); Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010).

²³ See Middleton, *A New Heavens and Earth*, 283–312. I say this with the utmost respect for Middleton's work, from which I have benefited greatly.

which their work overlaps. For the sake of this article, I will limit my comparison to the movement with which holistic mission has most in common, holistic eschatology, due to its comparable focus on the “present” and “future” social benefits of salvation.

If American evangelicals can appreciate works of holistic eschatology, and even assess contributions to the movement, then they can do the same with Padilla and Escobar. With this in mind, the remainder of the article will note the three main emphases of Padilla’s and Escobar’s message of holistic mission also found in holistic eschatology: (1) salvation of the “whole” person; (2) the “present” salvific effects of the kingdom; and (3) the “future” reception of the kingdom’s full benefits. Although this article is not a full evaluation of their work, my purpose is to show that their arguments are similar to those of holistic eschatology. As a result, Padilla’s and Escobar’s works on holistic mission deserve a fair reevaluation by North American evangelicals. While there are other authors from which to draw, for the sake of consistency I will note similarities with Middleton and Wright.²⁴ My hope is that this article will play a small role in encouraging American evangelicals to listen to the voices of Latino theologians, who have been encouraging their northern neighbors to follow the path that leads to a foretaste of the kingdom’s full benefits.

Salvation of the Whole Person

The first comparable emphasis is the salvation of the whole person. Padilla eschews “the concept of salvation as the future salvation of the soul, in which present life has meaning only in the ‘hereafter.’”²⁵ A soteriology focused exclusively on the soul has no place for the redemption of the body. Escobar argues: “Yes. Jesus saved souls, but he also cared about bodies and social structures.”²⁶ The Bible shows concern for the redemption of the entire person—with no false dualism that values the spiritual over the material.

In keeping with holistic salvation, Padilla and Escobar argue that people have a need to be in the presence of God while also having their physical needs met, such as food, clothing, a roof over their head, justice, and

²⁴ There are fruitful comparisons that can be made, for instance, with the work of Scot McKnight and Matthew Bates. See McKnight’s *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2014) and Bates’s *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017).

²⁵ Padilla, *Mission*, 22.

²⁶ Swartz, *Moral Minority*, 123.

basic human dignity (Matt 5:6–9; Jas 2:15–17).²⁷ Humanity will experience the full satisfaction of their spiritual and physical needs when they dwell with God in a “new creation” (Isa 65–66; Rev 21–22; cf. Col 1:20).²⁸ At that time, “our lowly body” will be resurrected in the likeness of Christ’s “glorified body” (Phil 3:21; cf. Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 15:35–50).²⁹ A view of salvation focused on the soul has more in common with Platonism and Gnosticism, which elevate the spiritual and denigrate the body, than with the biblical authors who look forward to the day when God will redeem people to experience the flourishing that was denied to them in the present age. Reflecting on Lausanne 1974, Escobar notes that holistic mission serves as a criticism “of dualistic spiritualization that had come to be prevalent in the practice of Evangelical missionaries.”³⁰

Similar to Padilla and Escobar, Middleton holds that Scripture looks forward to the whole redemption of people at the resurrection in texts such as Isa 25:6–8, when God “will swallow up death forever.” Paul alludes to this passage in his resurrection argument in 1 Cor 15:54; and John alludes to it in the similar context of Rev 21:4 when at last God “will wipe away all tears” (cf. Dan 12:2–3).³¹ Salvation of the whole person is also taught in resurrection contexts such as Rom 8:19–22. Such passages reveal the Bible’s hope of “eternal life” in a restored creation where “the original human dignity and status in Genesis 1:26–28 and Psalm 8:4–8” will be restored.³² This is akin to what Padilla calls “wholeness.”

Wright contends that the story of the Bible will not end with “souls being snatched up into heaven, away from the wicked earth and the mortal bodies which have dragged them down into sin.”³³ Instead, the New Testament writers look forward to a resurrection, which “is a new bodily life within God’s new world,” in passages such as Rev 21:3.³⁴ What Wright argues for is the redemption of the entire person at the parousia, the very point which Padilla and Escobar assert.

²⁷ Heaney, *Contextual Theology*, 239. Samuel Escobar, “La misión cristiana y el poder espiritual: Una perspectiva misiológica,” in *Poder y misión: Debate sobre la guerra espiritual en América Latina* (San José: Asociación Instituto Internacional de Evangelización, 1997), 123.

²⁸ Heaney, *Contextual Theology*, 239.

²⁹ See Padilla, *Mission*, 78.

³⁰ Samuel Escobar, “Evangelical Missiology: Peering into the Future,” in *Global Missiology for the 21st Century*, ed. William D. Taylor (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 105.

³¹ Middleton, *A New Heaven and Earth*, 26.

³² Middleton, *A New Heaven and Earth*, 26.

³³ Wright, *Simply Christian*, 185.

³⁴ Wright, *Simply Christian*, 186.

Padilla's and Escobar's emphasis on the salvation of the whole person is in keeping with Scripture's expectation that God will raise people to experience the full satisfaction of their spiritual and physical needs, including justice, peace, dignity (cf. Isa 40–66; Rev 20–22). Their perspective rebuts dualistic views of salvation that focus on the redemption of people's souls with no regard for their bodies (cf. Rom 8; Col 1:18–20; Rev 20–22). Despite the fact that Padilla's and Escobar's publications precede those attributed to Middleton and Wright by at least twenty years, one would be lucky to find even a whisper of their names in later works of holistic eschatology.

“Present” Salvific Benefits of the Kingdom

The second comparable emphasis is the focus on the “present” salvific benefits of the kingdom. For Padilla and Escobar, Jesus's advent signifies that the kingdom's blessings are available here and now, as witnessed through his miracles, exorcisms, and healings in the Gospels. Jesus is therefore the model for how Christians are to extend to others the redemptive benefits of the new age.³⁵ Escobar describes Jesus's powerful example:

Looking back from a twentieth-century perspective, we can grasp the impact of the presence of Jesus in the world. It is a transforming, healing, challenging, upsetting, prophetic presence that calls for radical change and delivers it. It is a presence registered by the witness in specific actions of approaching the poor, healing the sick, teaching the ignorant, and of kindness to children, openness to the outcast, forgiveness to the repentant, criticism of the powerful and corrupt.³⁶

Escobar's Jesus comes into the world to fundamentally transform it. He does not leave things the way they are. His reign initiates the restoration of people's full humanity and upsets the powerful who benefit from maintaining the lowly in their place. At its core, Jesus's redemptive mission is grounded in the Gospels and Isaiah's suffering servant (Isa 53) and is a product of battling injustice and powers and principalities (Col 2:15). Jesus's example is also exhibited in New Testament writers such as Paul

³⁵ Samuel Escobar, “The Return of Christ,” in *The New Face of Evangelicalism*, ed. C. René Padilla (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1976), 261; Padilla, *Mission*, 192–93. See also Heaney, *Contextual Theology*, 240.

³⁶ Samuel Escobar, *Changing Tides: Latin America and World Mission Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 45.

who, for instance, holds out Christ as the one who compels a commitment to relieve the poor (Rom 15:25; 2 Cor 5:14; 9:5).³⁷ For Escobar, the “Pauline mission ... allows itself to be driven by Christ's example and the presence of his Spirit.”³⁸

People, then, do not have to wait for the blessings of Jesus's salvific reign. As Padilla argues:

... the basic premise of Jesus' mission and the central theme of his preaching is not the hope of the Kingdom's coming at some predictable date in the future but the fact that in his own person and work the Kingdom is already present among men and women in great power. ... The Kingdom has to do with God's dynamic power through which “the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached” (Matt. 11:5). ... The hour announced by the prophets has arrived: the anointed one has come to preach good news to the poor, to announce freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18–19). In other words, Jesus's historical mission can be understood only in connection with the Kingdom of God. His mission here and now is a manifestation of the Kingdom as a reality present among men and women in his own person and action, in his preaching of the gospel and in his works of justice and mercy.³⁹

Since the kingdom is present, Padilla rightly contends that people can now experience a taste of deliverance from the oppressive effects of sin, such as disease, poverty, and systemic oppression. There is no reason to prolong this into some indefinite point in the future.

What is more, according to Padilla and Escobar, being under the Lordship of Jesus is the reason why Christians are called to follow his example.⁴⁰ That suggests that believers are to treat fellow human beings as more than targets for evangelism quotas or means for church growth. They are to care for people as the objects of God's loving deliverance

³⁷ Samuel Escobar, “A Pauline Paradigm of Mission: A Latin American Reading,” in *The Good News of the Kingdom: Mission for the Third Millennium*, ed. Charles Van Engen, Dean S. Gilliland, and Paul Pierson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 56–66.

³⁸ Samuel Escobar, “Pablo y la misión a los gentiles,” in *Bases bíblicas de la misión: Perspectivas latinoamericanas*, ed. C. René Padilla (Buenos Aires: Nueva creación, 1998), 350.

³⁹ Padilla, *Mission*, 188.

⁴⁰ Heaney, *Contextual Theology*, 238–39.

from sin and all its effects, such as poverty, injustice, and powerful systems (both religious and secular) that prefer the rich over the poor (Jas 2:1–7).⁴¹ Padilla contends that the “mission of the church is an extension of the mission of Jesus. It is a manifestation (though not yet complete) of the Kingdom of God, through proclamation as well as through social service and action.”⁴² The church is thus called to express the good works associated with Jesus’s reign (Eph 1:22–23, 2:10).⁴³ In so doing, it reveals “an integral part of the manifestation of the Kingdom.”⁴⁴ Escobar looks to the Gospels and Acts to show that following in the missional footsteps of Jesus is only possible by the power of the Spirit (e.g., Luke 4:12–21; Acts 2, 8, 10, 13, 16).⁴⁵

Like Padilla and Escobar, Middleton argues that the arrival of the kingdom has “present” ethical implications.⁴⁶ He points to verses such as Mark 1:15 (“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand”) and the broader witness of the Synoptic Gospels to show that Jesus’s arrival meant a change in social circumstances for those who had been anticipating God’s kingdom. Their change would not occur in a future heavenly realm. It would take place on the earth. Citing Walter Rauschenbusch, Middleton says that Jesus’s appeal to the multitudes was not that they would go to heaven when they died, for “that would be ... a fundamental misinterpretation, forcing the New Testament to conform to later, unbiblical eschatological ideas.”⁴⁷ These “unbiblical ideas” are in reference to views of salvation influenced by Platonism that would overwhelm the church. In hindsight, these were the very ideas against which Padilla and Escobar were arguing, which viewed salvation as the soul’s future departure to heaven and had no answers for Latin America’s struggles against poverty, injustice, and foreign exploitation. Padilla and Escobar were ahead of their time, like voices crying out in wilderness, calling people to see that the kingdom’s benefits were “already” present. It’s a

⁴¹ In the same vein, Escobar argues that Jesus’s missionary action is not “about a proselytizing impulse that sees human beings as possible followers and not people. Jesus always treated people as those created by God who have their own dignity. Jesus did not convert people into passive objects of his action but took them as conversation partners in the reconciling act of his Father, which leads them to fullness of life” (*In Search of Christ*, 323).

⁴² Padilla, *Mission*, 192.

⁴³ Padilla, *Mission*, 192–93.

⁴⁴ Padilla, *Mission*, 193.

⁴⁵ Samuel Escobar, *A Time for Mission: The Challenge for Global Christianity* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Langham Global Library, 2013), 94–98.

⁴⁶ See discussion in Middleton, *A New Heaven and Earth*, 241–82.

⁴⁷ Middleton, *A New Heaven and Earth*, 242–43. See Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), 48–49.

shame that many were like Pharisees who only grumbled at their message (cf. John 1:24–28).

Additionally, Middleton argues that the expectation of a transformative kingdom is grounded in the Psalms and Prophets, which expected that God would return “to vanquish evil and establish a reign of righteousness and justice.”⁴⁸ This is what Isaiah foresaw when he announced the coming of God’s kingdom: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’”⁴⁹ This is a text from which Jesus “may well have drawn on for his own ‘good news’ announcement of God’s coming kingdom.”⁵⁰ So when Jesus announces “good news,” he is insinuating that he is fulfilling the expectations of prophets such as Isaiah who expected a kingdom that would bring a reversal of circumstances for God’s people (Luke 4:16–30). And this means hope for “real flesh-and-blood poor people, or captives, or those oppressed by societal injustice” (Luke 4:18–19).⁵¹

While Christian interpreters have tended to spiritualize away terms such as “poor” (referring to poor in spirit), “captives” (captive to sin), and “oppressed” (oppressed by the devil or their own sin), in Jesus’s first-century context they referred to Israelites who had been oppressed for centuries under foreign rulers and were awaiting liberation.⁵² Thus, they were “real people” awaiting “real” deliverance from oppressive conditions. Jesus’s announcement of “good news” gave them hope that salvation had come. This was “good news” for the first century—and it remains so for today.⁵³

Middleton expounds on the transformative nature of the “good news”:

The good news is that the coming of God’s kingdom impacts the entirety of our lives—our bodies, our work, our families, all our societal relationships... The good news of the kingdom is nothing less than the healing (literally, the establishing) of the world ... in which we are all invited to participate.⁵⁴

What Middleton claims is, again, strikingly similar to what Padilla and Escobar were arguing in the 1960s and 1970s: that the kingdom is meant

⁴⁸ Middleton, *A New Heavens and Earth*, 243.

⁴⁹ Middleton, *A New Heavens and Earth*, 244.

⁵⁰ Middleton, *A New Heavens and Earth*, 244.

⁵¹ Middleton, *A New Heavens and Earth*, 251.

⁵² Middleton, *A New Heavens and Earth*, 251.

⁵³ Middleton, *A New Heavens and Earth*, 261.

⁵⁴ Middleton, *A New Heavens and Earth*, 262.

to transform the “present” lives of the world’s struggling masses. That the arrival of the kingdom really is “good news” for the poor and oppressed from places like the Global South. As a result, Christians should move from a gospel focused on the soul’s departure to heaven to one that is more in line with Jesus’s message: that the “good news” is for those who want to experience healing now, for those who want to start feeling the benefits of being made whole.

In a related sense, Wright argues that Jews of the first century expected that the Messiah’s kingdom would bring an end to their exile and would radically transform their circumstances.⁵⁵ They were expecting the fulfillment of Isa 11:4: that God would bring justice to the poor and side with the meek. So when Jesus told “kingdom-stories,” he made it clear that the poor and outcast were beneficiaries of the new age.⁵⁶ Appealing to passages such as Mark 1:15 and Matt 4:17, Wright says that Israel was called to “repent and believe” so as to usher in the end of exile and a radical change of status.

Padilla also mentions the importance of “repentance and faith” in order to experience the salvific benefits of kingdom membership. In so doing, he, too, appeals to texts such as Mark 1:15 and Matt 4:17 and others such as Acts 20:21 and 26:20.⁵⁷ Quoting Ladd, Padilla makes it clear that the call to repentance was not in lieu of something God would do in the future but “is conditioned on the fact that God is *now* acting.”⁵⁸ In Wright’s thought, just as in Padilla’s and Escobar’s, “God’s acting” is evidenced by the Spirit, who is in the process of renewing relationships and healing wounds.⁵⁹

Padilla and Escobar rightly emphasize the “present” salvific benefits of the kingdom promised in the Scriptures. Those who “repent and believe” receive the healing and restoration that the prophets anticipated and Jesus, in the Gospels, makes a “present” reality. What they were arguing in the 1960s and 1970s is now commonly found in works of holistic eschatology. And if North Americans can interact with such ideas in the works of Middleton and Wright, they can also do so in the works of Padilla and Escobar.

⁵⁵ See N. T. Wright’s discussion on eschatology in *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 202–20.

⁵⁶ Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 245, 255–56.

⁵⁷ Padilla, *Mission*, 79–82.

⁵⁸ Padilla, *Mission*, 80. See Ladd, *Presence of the Future*, 80.

⁵⁹ Wright, *Simply Christian*, 115.

“Future” Reception of the Kingdom’s Full Benefits

The third common emphasis is the future reception of the full benefits of the kingdom. Padilla and Escobar hold that Jesus will return to establish his earthly kingdom, delivering creation from bondage to sin and restoring all things. This final element coheres well with the others, demonstrating that the salvation of whole persons at the resurrection (Phil 3:21; cf. Rom 8:23 and 1 Cor 15:35–50), of which the Spirit’s arrival grants a foretaste (Joel 2; Acts 2; Eph 1:14), will take place when Jesus returns to establish his kingdom on a redeemed creation (Rom 8:18–25; Rev 21:1; cf. 2 Pet 3:13).⁶⁰ This is the fullness of salvation of which the Bible speaks, when all the benefits of the kingdom, such as justice, peace, and joy, are poured out on a world in need of liberation from the painful repercussions of sin.

Escobar reflects on the future hope of “full” salvation:

The Bible’s missional language is charged with a tone of hope, of looking to the future for liberation in the fullest sense of the word: the hope that “the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom and glory of the children of God.”⁶¹

Escobar promotes a view of salvation that is more wonderful than one that fixates on the redemption of immaterial souls. For him, salvation is a cosmic act by which God liberates people and the entire earth, i.e., all he has made, from the corruption of sin (Rev 20–22). When this occurs, Padilla argues, God will recover “the whole man” in accordance with his “original purpose for creation.”⁶²

Holistic eschatology places a similar emphasis on cosmic redemption. Middleton, for one, contends that humanity will attain its full salvation at the resurrection, when God renews the entire creation.⁶³ He argues for this point from passages such as Rom 8:19–23 and Col 1:19–20 (cf. Rev 21–22). Though creation is fallen, the biblical storyline looks forward to the time when God will dwell with humanity in a redeemed cosmos, at which time he will defeat death and wipe away all tears (Rev 5, 21–22; cf. Isa 25, 65–66; cf. Eccl 4:1).⁶⁴ The redeemed earth will be liberated from

⁶⁰ Padilla, *Mission*, 78–79.

⁶¹ Escobar, *In Search of Christ*, 333.

⁶² Padilla, *Mission*, 79.

⁶³ Middleton, *A New Heaven and Earth*, 155. Oscar Cullman, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament* (London: Epworth, 1958), 9, notes the importance of placing resurrection within the context of cosmic redemption.

⁶⁴ Middleton, *A New Heaven and Earth*, 155–75.

all remnants of sorrow, such as injustice and oppression, freeing God's people to live as in the days of Eden. Wright summarizes this perspective well:

... one day the veil will be lifted; earth and heaven will be one; Jesus will be personally present, and every knee shall bow at his name; creation will be renewed; the dead will be raised; and God's new world will at last be in place, full of new prospects and possibilities.⁶⁵

I will go a step further to argue that these "new prospects and possibilities" of the renewed cosmos will be especially beautiful for those who suffered under the inequalities of the present age.

Padilla's and Escobar's emphasis on the full salvation associated with the establishment of the kingdom is a thoroughly biblical hope. The Scriptures, after all, do not look forward to the day when souls will be in heaven, but to when Jesus returns to liberate the earth from the curse and renew all things. At that time, people will experience the hope and flourishing which some, if they were fortunate, received a foretaste. Once again, what Padilla and Escobar were arguing in the 1960s and 1970s is now common among proponents of holistic eschatology. Consequently, North Americans can no longer ignore their arguments. These men deserve that their works be sifted and evaluated, as we would with Middleton and Wright.

Conclusion

In the 1960s and 1970s, Padilla and Escobar really were like voices crying in the wilderness. In their many speaking engagements and publications, they called people to repent from a gospel focused on the salvation of souls to one that is more faithful to the Bible's message of holistic mission: that Jesus came to save whole people from the painful effects of sin, which includes liberation from poverty, injustice, and inequality, so that they might experience fullness of life on earth. The kingdom's arrival makes it so that God's people can enjoy a preview of what they will one day experience without measure.

Among similarities with other modern movements, I have pointed out that Escobar's and Padilla's message of holistic mission is undeniably analogous to holistic eschatology, particularly their emphasis on (1) the redemption of the whole person at the resurrection, (2) the "present" salvific benefits of the kingdom, and (3) the "future" reception of the kingdom's full benefits. Despite their similarities, Padilla and Escobar

⁶⁵ Wright, *Simply Christian*, 186. See also Wright's *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, Book 2, Parts 3 and 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1473–1519.

have yet to enjoy the acceptance among North American evangelicals, let alone the mere recognition of their ideas, that advocates of holistic eschatology have received in the last thirty years.

We can certainly pin blame on North American evangelicals in the 1960s and 1970s who turned their back on these Latino theologians as they cried that God has come for more than people's souls—he's come to give embodied lives hope in the present. But a new generation of American evangelicals does not have to repeat the mistakes of the past. If they can appreciate the arguments of Middleton and Wright, then they can also value the contributions Padilla and Escobar. In their day, these men were blazing theological trails that are now more common, like an "already-not yet" view of the kingdom, a redemptive historical approach to biblical theology, and holistic redemption. Reading their works will open up vistas into how the "good news" offers hope to the poor and powerless in our North American contexts, enabling us to envision a church that puts more emphasis on liberating people from the sinful systems of racism and oppression than one that prides itself on the number of souls saved. But reading Padilla and Escobar only scratches the surface. We should read other Latino theologians from their era, like Costas and Bonino,⁶⁶ and contemporary ones like Ruth Padilla DeBorst, Jules A. Martinez-Olivieri, and Robert Chao Romero.⁶⁷ And so many others who would open our eyes to the cosmic-sized hope that Jesus offers a creation longing for restoration. While there is much ground to cover, Padilla's and Escobar's books are a good entre into the conversation. These men will open our eyes to how much Latino theologians can teach us about the gospel: that King Jesus has begun the processes of delivering us from the painful effects of sin, such as injustice and oppression, so that we might experience eternal peace, joy, and equity on the earth.

⁶⁶ See Orlando Costas, *Liberating News! A Theology of Contextual Evangelization* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989); *Theology of the Crossroads in Contemporary Latin America* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1976); *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1974). See also José Míguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1975); *Faces of Jesus: Latin American Christologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985); *Faces of Latin American Protestantism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

⁶⁷ Ruth Padilla DeBorst, "An Integral Transformation Approach," *The Mission of the Church: Five Views in Conversation*, ed. Craig Ott (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 41–68; Jules A. Martinez-Olivieri, *A Visible Witness: Christology, Participation, and Liberation*, Emerging Scholars (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2016); Robert Chao Romero, *Brown Church: Five Centuries of Latina/o Social Justice, Theology, and Identity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020).

Interview with Daniel L. Hill of Dallas Theological Seminary

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How can believers embody the way of Christ in our contemporary context without making Jesus captive to their cultural norms?

One of the primary problems that runs Christian Christological reflection adrift is our tendency toward projection. Projection, according to Karen Kilby, is the three-step process whereby we first take a concept to explore an aspect of Christian mystery. Next, we fill out the contours of this concept using notions borrowed from our own experiences. Finally, we then present this concept to the wider world as a resource from Christian theology.¹ While Kilby's focus is primarily on Trinitarian doctrine and the concept of perichoresis, the same error emerges in our Christological reflection. In so doing, we fail to allow God to ground and determine our reflection of him, substituting idols that cohere with our preconceptions in the place where he once stood. In other words, our conceptions of Christ begin to reflect our local notions of humanity, manhood, liberation, politics, and the like. The danger here is that we risk turning Christ into a mere cipher for our own conceptions of deity and humanity. And this projection is particularly pressing as we end up evaluating the humanity of others in accordance with our preferences.²

Some might worry that this fear of idolatry might stagnate our Christological thinking in a quagmire of contextual relativity or lead us to seek out Kant's "view from nowhere," disregarding context altogether. However, these two concerns reflect an overreaction. Instead, we would do

well to recognize that insofar as God has come near to us in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and in our communion in the Spirit, he ensures that we can know him. We can therefore adopt a critical realism wherein we recognize that God has indeed made himself known to us, granting us a degree of theological confidence, while also recognizing that our conceptions of him remain limited. God accommodates his self-disclosure to the human creature in an act of supreme benevolence, even as he remains ever above and beyond these very categories.

Faithfully embodying the way of Christ demands at least three things. First, we must be aware of our tendency toward projection. This does not mean that we will hopelessly spiral into relativity, but we must recognize, as Calvin stated, that within each of us is a factory for idolatry.³ While knowledge of God is possible and Christian theological exploration is far from hapless, we still must recognize that in the present era "we see through a glass dimly" (cf. 1 Cor 13:12). Second, we must recognize that proper reflection on the person and work of Christ requires that we traverse the tension between continuity and discontinuity. While Jesus is like us in all respects, sin excepted, there are significant ways in which his phenomenological experience differs from that of our own, both in virtue of his particularity and in virtue of his unique mission. Third, we must insist that Christ himself grounds our understanding of both true deity and true humanity.⁴ As Cortez notes, "it remains true that the incarnation involves the Son becoming like us, but in doing so he is revealing the fact that humanity had been created in his image from the beginning."⁵ If Jesus is indeed the image of the invisible God (Col 1:16) and we have been fashioned in his image, he must remain epistemologically and ontologically primal in our Christological reflection and in our anthropological investigations.⁶ Our inquiry into what it means to be human must begin with and then consistently return to the person of Jesus Christ.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, if we are to allow Christology to shape our lives, we must think about Christ with "the communion of the saints." Since, as Vanhoozer has noted, theology itself attempts "to translate the way, truth, and life of Jesus Christ" in sundry contexts, there

¹ Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 81.956 (2000): 442.

² For a discussion of how this Christological projection took place in the nineteenth century, see Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 76–101. It is also worth noting that white Americans were not the only ones guilty of a projectionist Christology. Portrayals of Christ as a social liberator or political revolutionary seem to follow in similar footsteps, turning Jesus into a cipher for our own ideals.

³ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.11.8.

⁴ Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, trans. John Newton Thomas and Thomas Wieser (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 47.

⁵ Marc Cortez, "Nature, Grace, and the Christological Ground of Humanity," in *The Christian Doctrine of Humanity*, ed. Fred Sanders and Oliver D. Crisp, Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 34.

⁶ Marc Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2018), 69.

is both a universal and particular aspect of Christological reflection.⁷ On the one hand, it is the one living God who has made himself known in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ for us and for our salvation and who, together with the Son, sends forth the Spirit to gather a people of his own possession. Here, the saints are united around the same theological judgments regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ. Yet, at the same time, reflection on the Incarnate Son is necessarily particular as we gather together to marvel at this mystery. Treier avers, while the Christian canon fosters certain normative theological judgments, these judgments “may foster additional renderings and even additional judgments evoked by the questions of other times and places.”⁸ Our individual contexts may give rise to different questions and points of emphasis that must be brought into conversation with the rest of the Christian tradition. As Victor Ezigbo observes regarding African Christology, “Christology should demonstrate simultaneously its Christian identity and its relevance to the Christological questions of African Christians.”⁹ And as we reflect on the revelation of God in Christ together with all the saints, the possibility exists that our communal understanding of the person and work of Christ

⁷ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Christology in the West: Conversations in Europe and North America,” in *Jesus without Borders: Christology in the Majority World*, ed. Gene L. Green, Stephen Pardue, and K. K. Yeo, Majority World Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 12.

⁸ Daniel J. Treier, *Virtue and the Voice of God: Toward Theology as Wisdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 97. It may be helpful here to differentiate between concepts and judgments. As David Yeago notes, “We cannot concretely perform an act of judgement without employing some particular, contingent verbal and conceptual resources; judgement-making is an operation performed with words and concepts. At the same time, however, the same judgement can be rendered in a variety of conceptual terms, all of which may be informative about a particular judgement’s force and implications” (David S. Yeago, “The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis,” *Pro Ecclesia* 3:2 [1994]: 158; see also Kevin Hector, *Theology without Metaphysics: God, Language, and the Spirit of Recognition*, Current Issues in Theology [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], 48–50). Hector observes that the same theological judgments can be rendered in multiple conceptual frameworks, but these concepts still need to be traceable back to the incarnation of Christ (*Theology without Metaphysics*, 48). Additionally, Treier holds forth the possibility that traditional judgments can be extended and additional judgments may be developed as the Christian tradition engages new contexts (*Virtue and the Voice of God*, 97).

⁹ Victor I. Ezigbo, “Jesus as God’s Communicative and Hermeneutical Act: African Christians on the Person and Significance of Jesus Christ,” in *Jesus without Borders: Christology in the Majority World*, ed. Gene L. Green, Stephen Pardue, and K. K. Yeo, Majority World Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 37.

might be enhanced.

How is the Christian’s response to Christ in praise, at least in part, a reflection of their context?

It is perhaps surprising to no one that Christians direct their praise to the God who has loved them and saved them. The *Phos Hilaron* exclaims “you are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices, O Son of God, O Giver of life, and to be glorified through all the worlds.”¹⁰ But what shape does the praise of the giver of life take throughout “all the worlds”? If Christian praise is a response to the revelation of God in Christ, is it uniform or pluriform? And if it is the latter, what tethers Christian worship together? It is my estimation that while Christian praise is rooted in the singular act of divine self-disclosure in the person and work of Jesus Christ, insofar as Christians respond to this revelation at different times and in different spaces, it is also necessarily contextual.

On the one hand, we must recognize that there is a universal aspect to Christian praise, one that grounds and unites it around the person and work of Jesus Christ. Paul writes, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people” (Titus 2:11). It is this singular event of the appearance of God’s grace in the person of Jesus Christ that Christians acknowledge, indicate, confess, and adore.¹¹ There is, after all, one cornerstone upon which the worshipping community is constructed, one Spirit who inspires their praise, one Savior who makes such worship acceptable to God, and one God and Father “who is over all in all and through all” (Eph 4:6). As Chan notes, worship “is the people’s common response to [God’s word], their acceptance of the Word, church constitutes them as the covenant people.”¹² Christian praise and worship then is both communal and universal. It is the covenant community’s response to God, a response that is grounded in a divine act of self-disclosure and carried up by the Son and the Spirit to the Father.¹³

¹⁰ The *Phos Hilaron* is one of the oldest recorded Christian hymns, written in Koine Greek.

¹¹ John Webster, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 29.

¹² Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshipping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 41.

¹³ Nicholas Wolterstorff gives a helpful definition of what is intended by the term “worship.” He defines worship as “a particular mode of Godward acknowledgement of God’s unsurpassable greatness. Specifically, it is that mode of such acknowledgement whose attitudinal stance toward God is awed, reverential, and grateful adoration” (*The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology*

However, while there is a universal ground upon which Christian praise is centered, one that transcends space, time, and context, there is also a *particular* aspect to Christian worship. Not only does God bring salvation to all people, but he also actualizes this redemption *in spacetime*.¹⁴ Worship is particular in that it reflects on God's acts of deliverance as he demonstrates his lovingkindness to his people. Examples in Scripture abound. Whether it is in the song of Miriam as she exalts in God's triumph at the Red Sea or the apostles' praise after their release from prison, we respond to God from particular points in time and express gratitude for the ways in which he chooses to reveal his unending faithfulness. Christian worship, then, is in part a reflection on our context and how the God of the heavens has stooped low to meet with us. As Wainwright observes, this means that praise will vary in both content—including confession of sin, prayer for forgiveness, invocation for divine help, etc.—and form.¹⁵ Christians in the West may be less inclined to offer praise to God for his triumph over the demonic, while Christians in the Global South may be more inclined to rejoice in the fact that the powers of darkness have indeed been defeated at the cross of Christ. Similarly, African American spirituals reflect an acute awareness of the enslaved's need for the God of Daniel to deliver them as well. To be sure, God is worthy of worship and praise as the good God who is our creator and redeemer. However, it is good and fitting for the saints to also focus on the particular ways that God's goodness has been made known to them.

[Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015], 26). However, as James B. Torrance has noted, we must be careful to remember that all Christian worship is carried to the Father by the Son and Spirit. Christian worship is “the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father” (*Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996], 20). In other words, our understanding of Christian worship cannot be disassociated with the twofold mission of the Father and the Son.

¹⁴ As Webster notes, spacetime itself is significant because it is the “arena” in which God communicates and manifests his saving presence to his people. See John Webster, “The Immensity and Ubiquity of God,” in *Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II*, 2nd ed., T&T Clark Cornerstones (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 87–108.

¹⁵ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life: A Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 199.

Jesus calls his followers to love God and love our others (Matt 22:37–39). What is a historical example of Christ's words being neglected and how might the formative nature of Christology have been accomplished in that situation?

Unfortunately, the history of the Christian church is replete with instances in which Christians have failed to love, honor, and worship those fashioned after the image of God in Christ.¹⁶ As Laura Winner recounts, Christians have not only failed to exhibit godly love, they have often turned Christian practices such as prayer or the Lord's Supper into tools of abuse.¹⁷ If it is indeed the case that the humanity of Christ is archetypal for all human creatures, then violence against other image bearers is not merely an ethical failing. It is also a repudiation of the one in whose image we have been fashioned. To put the matter bluntly, in failing to love those created according to the image of God, we have in effect declared our abhorrence for the archetype after whom they are fashioned.

The examples are almost too numerous to count. Between 1882 and 1903, over 2,000 African Americans were lynched in the United States. James Cone recalls how lynching was a spectator sport for many Americans, both Christian and non-Christian, as they would gather to watch the murder of black men and women, purchasing pieces of the victims mutilated flesh or postcards to commemorate the event.¹⁸ Wendell Berry notes that slavery itself was an institution predicated upon violence: “If there was any kindness in slavery it was dependent on the docility of the slaves; any slave who was *unwilling* to be a slave broke through the myth of paternalism and benevolence, and brought down on himself the violence inherent in the system.”¹⁹ The raping of black flesh on plantations was so

¹⁶ The wording here is intentional. As Kilner notes, the Scriptures do not seem to indicate that human creatures “possess” the image or “are” the image of God, but rather are created “in” and “according to” God's image. See John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 88–105.

¹⁷ Lauren F. Winner, *The Dangers of Christian Practice: On Wayward Gifts, Characteristic Damage, and Sin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 19–94.

¹⁸ James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 9. For a larger discussion of the history of lynching and its contemporary affects, see Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: Random House, 2002).

¹⁹ Wendell Berry, *The Hidden Wound*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2010), 6.

prevalent, that it was used as an apologetic against the institution of slavery.²⁰ And again, it is worth noting that slavery, and by extension violent practices intrinsic to the institution of slavery, was an institution practiced and defended by Christian and non-Christian alike.²¹

The Christian church's participation in acts of racial and ethnic violence reflects a failure to live in accordance with the logics of Christology. So what would faithful performance have entailed in these situations? Thankfully, we do not have to look far to find out. As David Ruggles observes, Christians could have ceased abrogating the seventh commandment and recognized slavery as an environment that inculcated human vice.²² Some Christians participated in either apologetic critiques of slavery while others served as stops along the Underground Railroad, risking their lives and social standing in order to help liberate those in bondage. Recognizing that their allegiance is always to Christ and not to Caesar, another Christological claim, many Christians were unwilling to accept the institution of slavery and fought to bring it to an end.

²⁰ Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, The Steven and Janice Brose Lectures in the Civil War Era (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 66–67.

²¹ On the debate surrounding slavery in American Christianity, see Noll, *Civil War*. For discussions on Christian involvement in slavery, see Thomas S. Kidd and Barry Hankins, *Baptists in America: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 98–148; Paul Harvey, *Christianity and Race in the American South: A History*, reprint ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 51–92; Peter Y. Choi, *George Whitefield: Evangelist for God And Empire*, *The Historian*, Library of Religious Biography (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 127–68.

²² David Ruggles, *The Abrogation of the Seventh Commandment by the American Churches* (1835), in *Early Negro Writing, 1760–1837*, ed. Dorothy Porter (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 478–93.

Interview with Lisa L. Spencer Executive Director, Local Colors, Roanoke, VA

Lisa Spencer is the Executive Director of Local Colors, a nonprofit dedicated to celebrating ethnic diversity in the city of Roanoke, Virginia. She holds a ThM from Dallas Theological Seminary and actively blogs on her site Theothoughts (www.theothoughts.com). She is also a co-host for the podcast Family Discussion and a contributing author to Beyond the Roles: A Biblical Foundation for Women in Ministry and Heal Us Emmanuel 2.

In what way were you encouraged and left wanting in your Christological studies in your evangelical seminary?

At Dallas Seminary, all degree students were required to take six core classes in systematic theology each with a focus on a particular doctrine. I am grateful for two of these courses that specifically focused on the work and person of Jesus Christ. These courses not only provided a substantial foundation for understanding historic and biblically-informed Christian theology, but also encouraged students about the significance of rightly articulating theology.

The core of Christology was taught through the Trinitarianism course. My appreciation for this context has only grown stronger as I reflect on the interdependent working of each person as one God. Everything God the Son did was in accordance with the will of the Father and administered by the Holy Spirit. This enriched my study of Christ's earthly ministry in the Gospels, knowing that his every word and action functioned in accordance with the foundation laid from the birth of creation in Gen 1.

The Soteriology course provided the meat of Jesus's condescension,¹ death, burial, and resurrection. The study was enriched by examining atonement theories from historical perspectives. In combination with the two required historical theology classes, these courses provided a good means to spot Christological heresies and distortions regarding the atoning work of Christ.

These courses were instrumental in navigating through other areas of theology and through practical application courses. For me, they enforced

that God's redemption program through the Son is the chief anchor of Christian belief. What we believe about Jesus affects every other area of Christian faith and practice. So I was greatly encouraged to think Christologically through all of my coursework, including my master's thesis, in which I wrote on extra-scriptural divine speech. This Christological focus also affected how we considered mission in the proclamation of Jesus Christ. The common thread throughout seminary was to consider that God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, who, by the will of the Father, left his heavenly abode to take on flesh, perfectly obeyed the law, and provided a substitutionary sacrifice on our behalf to reconcile man to God. Salvation comes by no other, and this is the universal message for all mankind. I left seminary with this firm foundation and continue to absorb its significance to this day.

Our theological studies expounded greatly on the complexities of the divinity of Christ and the hypostatic union and rightly so. However, I believe Christological studies could have been strengthened with more consideration of the cultural aspects of the incarnation and what these mean for the message of salvation for a diverse people. I do not believe that such consideration suggests that we impose anything more on Scripture than what is stated, nor does it subject Jesus to a cultural standard to appease our sense of ethnic identity. But his condescension to earth in fulfillment of the divine purpose for which he was sent transpired in a particular cultural context. Cultural aspects were only considered to the extent that they conveyed a theological truth grounded in Scripture.

In the past few years, I have noticed an increased focus on Jesus's ethnicity and skin color to define him as a brown-skinned Jew. The impetus is to show that he is not "white." As I explain below, the historical portrayal of Jesus was borne out of a racial superiority that normalized a "white" paradigm that nearly erased his ethnic heritage. Jesus's ethnic heritage is of great importance because God's promise required a descendent from the line of David to fulfill the eternal kingship (2 Sam 7:11–16). While I believe that some consideration should be given to the ethnic composition of the incarnate Son to recognize his non-white identity, for me such consideration was never a primary issue. It was more important that he be represented as the one who reconciles us to God and is building a church of every tribe, tongue, and nation (Rev 7:9–10). The incarnate Son did not need to look like me to save me. However, for the African American seminary student that has a greater sensitivity to the whitewashing of Jesus's ethnicity, I can see how the lack of attention can create a slight and make heterodox models that over-emphasize race more attractive.

¹ Condescension refers to the act of God coming down to man to care for his creation. The condescension of Christ is demonstrated in the humility he displayed in the incarnation for God's redemptive purpose. See Phil 2:5–8 and Glenn Kreider, *God With Us* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2014), 15–16.

What characteristic or quality of Christ drew you to Christianity and continues to carry you in your faith today?

I came to Christ as a freshman in college in 1982 out of a great need to be found in good standing with God. I grew up in a missionary Baptist church but did not know the Lord. Like many people who do not believe they need Christianity, I believed I could be good on my own. Meeting two devoted Christians in college and accepting an invitation to a campus outreach ministry changed all of that for me, and thus began my journey of learning the one true Christ.

Since I came to Christ that first semester in college, I spent a few years as a young, zealous Christian but then descended into a thirteen-year rebellious period. After my repentance in 1999 from that rebellious stretch, I would experience bouts of wavering faith, sinful episodes, and inconsistent zeal. What anchored me most has been that my failures were always met with the perfection of Christ. Jesus provides something for me that I cannot do for myself.

The perfection stems from the divine nature of Christ, the second Person of the Trinity. He is the exact nature of God (Heb 1:3), which means he brought the perfection of God and all his attributes to bear in his incarnation, his earthly ministry, and his redemption for lost humanity. He condescended to a sinful and broken world to redeem it. This humility comforts me greatly.

Whereas I have not always obeyed the law of God, Jesus obeyed it perfectly and lived sinlessly. This was necessary to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law and for his imputed righteousness on my behalf (Rom 5:19; 8:1–4; 1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:21). I also find it truly remarkable how his perfect obedience interacted with those who were deemed imperfect by society standards—the poor, outcast, and sinner.

Jesus provided the perfect sacrifice to atone for sin and grant forgiveness.² His perfect atonement meant that sin for all time was sufficiently expunged (Heb 10:14). The legal demands for God's satisfaction have been met (Col 2:13–14).

It would have been enough if Jesus provided this perfect obedience and perfect sacrifice, but he took it one step further. He was seated at the Father's right hand and now serves as our advocate, in full awareness of our sinful tendencies and actions. As the writer of Hebrews says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet

² The book of Hebrews chs. 5–10 provide a thorough explanation of the perfection of Christ's atonement as the final sacrifice needed under the New Covenant.

without sin" (Heb 4:15 ESV). My periodic failures in belief and practice are met with advocacy on my behalf because there is nothing that can separate me from the love of God (Rom 8:39).

All of this provides a security for me to rest in what Jesus accomplished on my behalf, especially when feelings of inadequacy arise. He already knows my weakness, and God is always at work in those who are his (Phil. 2:13). I can rest in God's securing me as his own because of his seal of redemption by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13). I am also comforted to know that God disciplines those who are his (Heb 12:5–11). I have experienced this throughout my Christian journey and can attest to its goal of "bearing the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

The security provided by Christ's work and his continual advocacy also gives me room to breathe when I face uncertainty in navigating faith and practice in a complex world. I have definitely experienced some perplexity during this time where tensions over race and social justice seem to be at a fever pitch and members of Christ's body are very divided on how to best handle these issues. I may not always come to the right conclusions, but I know that Christ has me in his grip. He is not afraid of my questions or concerns, but rather he has provided a ready platform where I can boldly come before the Father's throne with confidence (Heb 4:16).

I would think this to be incredibly comfortable for Christians of color who are wrestling with the ways in which Christianity has been used to marginalize and disregard them. We can look beyond the transgressions of history to see what was intended for the Savior and Lord of creation who calls a diversity of people to himself as his body. While others have failed to recognize the inconsistencies of their belief and practice, we can see the perfection of God in the redemptive work of his Son. I rest in this acknowledgement over and above the transgressions of history.

The ultimate comfort comes in knowing that God's final redemptive act will perfect his creation when Jesus returns and renders judgment on all wickedness that worked against him. He will set everything right, and wipe all sin, pain, tears, and death away (Rev 21:1–4). Whatever darkness, tragedy, confusion, hate, chaos, factions, and hostilities exist now, will be completely eradicated upon his return.

What do you see as significant barriers for African Americans to accept Christ?

Before I delve into what I consider might be significant barriers for African Americans to accept Christ, I want to preface my explanation on the reality of what Scripture says regarding God's calling of the elect. I believe that the Father chooses whom he wills and draws that individual

to saving faith through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.³ Regardless of race or ethnicity, upbringing, or socio-economic status, we are naturally hostile to God because we are born into a sin condition that disables us from seeing his redemptive work properly. We are dead in our trespasses and sin (Rom 8:7; Eph 2:1–3). Upon hearing the good news of the gospel, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit enables a person to see his or her need of Christ and placing saving faith in him. There is no barrier that God cannot overcome in this regard. In Matt 19:26, when Jesus said that there is nothing impossible with God, he was referring to God's work in overcoming barriers to faith in his Son.

Nonetheless, we must consider man-made obstacles that might create an added burden to the objection of Christianity. Here is where I believe that we must peer into the annals of church history in the West to grasp how these man-made barriers have been erected and the impact these barriers have had upon many black people, particularly in the United States.

For many African Americans, Christianity has been seen as “the white man's religion.” The reasons for this perspective are due to the acculturation of Christianity to a Euro-centric framework that dominated the West for centuries and contributed greatly to shaping the cultural lens through which Christianity was viewed. The prominence of the Renaissance era and subsequently, the Reformation produced cultural artifacts that made this Euro-centric framework normative for Christian expression, such as liturgical and art expressions.

Simultaneously, the development of the false construct of a “black race” and a “white race” began to infiltrate the way Christianity was considered. As this paradigm took root in the development of the Americas, it further entrenched an ethos that deemed persons of African descent to be inferior. Sadly, this distortion of racial superiority found support from misguided interpretations of Scriptures such as Gen 9:20–25. The curse of Ham was construed to mean that persons of African descent were unworthy of equal value. Thus, churches became complicit in perpetuating a system of racial inferiority and articulated these sinful distortions as an authentic expression of Christianity.⁴ This line of thinking continued through Jim Crow segregation with impassioned resistance to integration and fair treatment of Blacks by those who also proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ. While conditions related to acceptance and fair treatment of African Americans have improved, unfortunately, pockets of this type of thinking still exist. It is not uncommon to hear objections to Christianity

³ I hold to a traditional Reformed understanding of election.

⁴ For an in-depth treatment, see Joel McDurmon, *The Problem of Slavery in Christian America* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision Press, 2017).

on the grounds that the Christian paradigm itself promoted this deep and abiding partiality rather than considering how misguided individuals distorted it with sinful interpretations and applications.

I believe a helpful counteraction to the objection of Christianity as the white man's religion is to recognize what Christianity is meant to be from revelation in Scripture. Starting with the creation account, God created man in his own image and gave a command to subdue the earth. After the Fall of man, God moved to reconcile his creation to himself through select individuals as representatives that foreshadowed the ultimate fulfillment of promises in his Son. These representatives hailed from geographic regions that today would not be considered white. The promise to Abraham clearly denotes that people from around the world would inherit covenantal blessings (Gen 12:1–3) that are fulfilled in Christ⁵ who is building a church from every tribe, tongue, and nation (Rev 7:9).⁶

The geographic trajectory of the spread of Christianity negates the idea that Christianity endorses a racial superiority of a “white” race. What started as a kernel in the bowels of the Middle East soon extended to all parts of the world spreading through the cities of Judea, Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and Italy. Northern Africa held great significance related to the transmission of Scripture and defenses of the Christian faith. Long before the Reformation, notable African church fathers such as Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius, and Augustine contributed greatly to the refinement of Christian theological articulation. In fact, Augustine's writings greatly influenced the work of the Reformation. Pointing to this early history directly contrasts the distortions that would later develop regarding African inferiority.

What are the benefits and challenges of using unique language to describe the person and work of Christ in an African American context?

As noted above, the historic context for African Americans of Christianity in America plays a considerable role in how Christianity was framed in light of the physical realities of enslavement and oppression of black people. For black Americans living under such conditions, Christianity was not a disembodied experience. Dependency on Jesus as Savior meant more than just a spiritual union denoting reconciliation with God.

⁵ Galatians 3:7–14 clearly indicates that those who place faith in Christ are heirs to the promises of God. Ephesians 1–2 lay the foundation for equal valuation regardless of ethnicity, a contradiction to decades of false paradigms regarding persons of African descent.

⁶ Acts 2:5–11 also demonstrates that God's post-resurrection work would equally engage people from various ethnicities.

But there was a longing for relief from oppressive conditions.

From the bowels of chattel slavery, language developed that was indicative of the unjust experience and paralleled the Exodus narrative. The Israelites bondage in Egypt and the oppression experienced under that bondage served as a correlation with the black experience as observed in many Negro spirituals that emerged from that time period. The deliverance that came through Moses was not just seen as a precursor to the spiritual deliverance that Christ would offer but also that this spiritual deliverance would result in freedom from physical oppression. Jesus furthers this idea when he speaks of freedom. So the language of deliverance and freedom from oppression became an expression of Christian hope for the whole person—immaterial and material—and later served as the backbone for black liberation theology.

Deliverance language is helpful to better understand the African American experience historically. One of the most unfortunate teachings to emerge from the system of chattel slavery was that slaves had good lives if they got to hear the gospel and convert to Christianity. While it is true that reconciliation with God through Christ Jesus is the most significant thing a person can experience, this dualistic way of thinking focused exclusively on the immaterial aspect of humanity and divorced God's ethics from the salvation paradigm granted to us through Christ. Short-circuiting Christianity in this manner created a longing to experience God's justice and goodness.

Second, it is helpful to consider the significance of physicality in God's created order. The first two chapters of Genesis demonstrate that God's goodness was tied to his physical universe and what he intended for it. After each step of creation, he declared, "It is good," with man being the pinnacle of goodness. I do not suggest that there is something inherently good in man post-Fall. Rather, God created man as a whole person whose embodied presence and obedience to God's mandates serve as the means by which the physical earth would reflect the glory of God.

After the Fall in Gen 3, the redemptive narrative of Scripture connects God's revelation to his physical acts of working through his chosen representatives (Abraham, Moses, David, prophets, etc.), culminating in the incarnation of God the Son. It was necessary for Christ to be embodied and serve as a living sacrifice for us and our salvation. This is why the physical nature of the church is significant in the New Testament; Christ's body is the means through which his work gets accomplished. God's ultimate act of redemption will involve glorified bodies and a new heaven and new earth. The tragedy of the injustices experienced through chattel slavery, Jim Crow, and any lingering post-Civil Rights Movement vestiges

is that the physical reality of oppression contradicted God's good intentions. Hearing the language of deliverance should remind us that God's ultimate rescue involves all of physical creation, not just the immaterial part of our being. By thinking in these holistic terms, we can have a greater appreciation for how tragically the Fall impacted human beings, particularly in the African American experience.

Whereas this unique language can garner a greater insight and appreciation for the African American experience, care must be taken to extract the language from the paradigm of Black liberation theology. Black liberation theology promulgated the language of oppression and deliverance into a redemptive model in purely soteriological terms. In black liberation, salvation comes when there is freedom from physical bondage, not when an individual comes to faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. This stands in contrast with a holistic paradigm of Christian faith and practice which recognizes that personal wholeness begins with spiritual union with Christ. It is quite possible that one who uses the language of liberation without careful attention to necessary distinctions could unwittingly adopt an unbiblical framework.

Interview with Lisa M. Hoff of Gateway Seminary

Lisa Hoff is the Director of the Kim School of Global Missions, Chair of Intercultural studies and Associate Professor of Intercultural Studies at Gateway Seminary. She has fifteen years of ministry experience in East Asia as an educator, intercultural trainer, and business entrepreneur. Dr. Hoff graduated with an MDiv and MAIS from Gateway prior to pursuing her PhD in Intercultural Studies at Biola University. She has supervised multicultural and multinational teams focused on urban engagement and community development in international settings.

How has interaction with Chinese Christians rejuvenated your faith?

Chinese Christians have long embraced a theology of suffering and sacrifice. Centuries of war, famine, persecution, and pain have built a church of resilient faith with roots that grow deep through the adversity of life. There are many Christians who equate the blessings of God with financial prosperity or physical well-being. For the Chinese Church in East Asia, however, God's blessing manifests through his ever-present faithfulness in the midst of suffering. This theological perspective reflects a church that keeps its eyes focused on Christ, recognizing the brevity of this life and the eternal glory that is to come (Rom 8:18).

Living in East Asia as an educator, intercultural trainer, and business entrepreneur has taught me important lessons about the value of a Christ-centered life. Lessons that undoubtedly would have been harder to learn in the comfort of my own cultural context. The life and testimony of Chinese Christians has challenged me for almost thirty years to see Jesus as my sufficiency and his glory as my goal. These men and women, on both sides of the Pacific, have modeled lives of sacrifice, grace, and humility for me.

One of my first Chinese friends in East Asia was a single woman in her late twenties. As the only follower of Christ in her household, her parents reluctantly agreed to allow her to be a Christian if it did not create too many problems for the family. She was an impassioned educator and evangelist who shared the gospel with any college student who would listen. Family bonds form the strongest social ties in Chinese society and so her parents became increasingly concerned as she grew older and was not yet married. In traditional culture, choosing not to marry carries social stigma and brings deep shame upon a family. Although outsiders may

minimize these issues, honor and shame are foundational to the worldview of most Chinese. Though my friend desired marriage, she knew that choosing to follow Christ meant it was unlikely to ever happen. There were few Christian men in her community and as a devoted follower she was unwilling to marry a non-believer. She weighed the potential cost of following Jesus long before making that commitment. In her culture she knew the price of discipleship may mean a loss of respect, honor, social standing, and potentially even her employment or freedom. Yet when asked how she could resist the pressure from her family to conform, her reply was simply "Jesus is worth it. Whatever the cost, he is worth it."

That theme of "Christ being worth it" was planted deep within my heart as a young twenty-something-year-old woman in East Asia. In the years that followed, countless Chinese Christians have reminded me of this truth. At one point in time, God brought an older Chinese sister into my life as both a treasured friend and mentor. Her obedience and faithfulness to follow Christ in the midst of persecution and imprisonment prepared her for an important discipleship role at her church. When the ministry team would identify men and women called to Christian service they would place them in a church training program. After completing several years of Bible study and missionary service it came time to select individuals who would take the next step into ministry leadership. In this final stage, my friend and her ministry colleagues would take these young Christians to a graveyard several hours away. In this place were the remains of Chinese believers and foreign missionaries who had given their lives for the sake of the gospel. During their visit, a challenge was offered to these young adults. Essentially they were asked one simple question. "These men and women sacrificed their lives so that you would have an opportunity to hear the gospel. They paid a price so that you could know the joy of walking with Christ today. Are you willing to give your life so that others may have that same opportunity? If you are not sure, then you are not prepared for ministry leadership." Even writing these words today convicts my heart of the sacrifice that is necessary for those of us who desire to follow Jesus. How differently would men and women consider a call to ministry service if they had to wrestle with this same question. Is Jesus worth it?

In an American context, the Chinese church has also exhibited a strong focus on making Christ known. Although the circumstances are different than in East Asia, the challenge to reaching the Chinese diaspora across the world is no less daunting. Is Jesus enough when faced with immigration or language issues? Is the sacrifice required to follow Christ as a minority in a new country worth the price? What about the loneliness

of living in a foreign culture? Once again, Chinese leaders have repeatedly affirmed for me that he is worth it even then.

My relationship with Chinese Christians has proven to be transformative over the years both in East Asia and the United States. These friendships have provided invaluable coaching and mentoring, particularly in the area of contextualized ministry and spiritual growth. Even when I fail to exhibit cultural competence in a given ministry situation, they extend grace and patience. In their service and support, Chinese Christians have consistently pointed me back to Jesus through their unique cultural experience and insights.

What biblical texts helped form your understanding of Christ and the Christian faith from an East Asian perspective?

A few years ago, I sat down to study the parable of the good shepherd (John 10) with brothers and sisters from a semi-nomadic people group in East Asia. After reading the text together, I quickly realized that these individuals had a deeper and more culturally connected understanding of Jesus as the Good Shepherd than I did. Mostly because they had family members who were shepherds! As an American woman, I had an intellectual grasp of the passage but not an experiential one. My semi-nomadic friends resonated with Jesus's role as our shepherd and had immediate insights into that passage that I had missed. On numerous occasions I have been reminded that each individual reads Scripture through a unique set of cultural lenses.

Evangelizing the Lost

Certain Bible passages elicit different applications according to a person's cultural perspective. In Luke 16:19–31, Jesus tells the parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus. In this story, the rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen during his life, while Lazarus was a beggar sitting at the gate. When they both died, the rich man went to Hades and Lazarus to Abraham's side. The rich man begs Abraham to send Lazarus to his family to warn them against following in his footsteps. Abraham refuses. Typically, this passage is a reminder for me to not get caught up in valuing the things of this world, like the Pharisees, but to instead follow hard after God. When friends and I studied this text in East Asia, however, they often interpreted this passage as a call to evangelism. In a collectivistic culture that deeply values family, this idea of an ancestor begging them to tell others the gospel resonated with their sense of familial responsibility.

Household Salvation

Evangelism and discipleship in the West is heavily influenced by individualism. Christians are taught to share the gospel, teach the Bible, and even do accountability one-on-one. Yet in the New Testament there are also examples of household conversions. The Philippian jailer and Lydia in Acts 16 are good examples of an individual and their entire household accepting the gospel and being baptized. Yet practically speaking, this is a foreign concept to many Western Christians. In a collectivistic and hierarchical society, however, this is not an alien idea. When the father or the head of a household makes a decision, other family members generally trust and accept their conclusion on behalf of the group. When applying this cultural difference to gospel proclamation, I like to refer to it as apple vs. grape evangelism. An individualistic society shares the gospel the way people pick apples, one at a time. In a collectivistic society, however, sharing the good news is often done in clusters of friends or family members. A person would not dream of going into a grocery store and requesting one grape, just as many people in a collectivistic society would not limit their gospel sharing to just one-on-one.

Prodigal Son

The Prodigal Son is one of the most engaging stories to view through an East Asian cultural perspective. Although it is a powerful example of redemption in any context, when viewed through a shame-honor lens it is unfathomable. In Luke 15:11–32 the story unfolds of a man's youngest son who essentially curses his father and wishes him dead. In a Confucian society that values filial piety, obedience, and social hierarchy, this kind of behavior would be unforgivable. Nothing could be worse than for the son to disrespect his father and leave the family.

When friends would hear this story I would ask if they thought the relationship between the father and son could ever be restored. They always said no, absolutely not. Then I would tell them the end of the story, where the father runs out to greet the youngest son and places his robe, sandals, and a ring on his finger. They repeat, that could never happen. The acceptance of the father and reconnection to the family identity is such a powerful illustration of love and restoration in that context that it frequently led to deeper spiritual conversations.

Describe the importance of identifying between first- and second-generation Chinese American believers as a minister of the gospel in the States.

The United States is home to more immigrants than any other nation. People have historically been drawn to this country in order to better their

future and provide greater opportunities for their children. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 led to national and ethnic diversification of immigrants to the US and increased their number fourfold.¹ The US foreign-born population reached a record 44.4 million people in 2017, which accounts for 13.6 percent of the US population.² According to Pew Research, by 2065 modern-era immigrants and their descendants will account for 88 percent of US population growth.³ California has the largest immigrant population of any state, followed by Texas and New York.⁴

Although much attention in the national dialogue has focused on immigration from the southern border, over the past ten years more Asian immigrants than Hispanics have actually migrated to the US.⁵ By 2055, Asians are projected to become the largest immigrant group and by 2065 they will comprise an estimated 38 percent of all immigrants.⁶ Asian immigrants are typically well-educated and comprise the majority of international students in the United States.

Distinguishing unique traits of first, 1.5, and second-generation immigrants is essential for ministry. First generation, or foreign born, refers to persons born outside of the United States to parents who are not US citizens. If a child or adolescent immigrates, he or she is referred to as 1.5 generation. Second generation denotes those who are born in the United States and who have at least one parent who is first generation. Individuals in each category have been uniquely influenced by the immigration experience.

Chinese Immigration

In 2017, China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong peoples comprised the second largest group of immigrants to the United States (2.9 percent).⁷ Although many Americans categorize Chinese immigrants as a homogenous

¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/17/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>.

² <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/17/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>.

³ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/17/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>.

⁴ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/17/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>.

⁵ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/17/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>.

⁶ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/17/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>.

⁷ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/17/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>.

block, they actually come from diverse backgrounds with unique historical, cultural, political, and linguistic variation. They speak a variety of languages such as Cantonese, Mandarin, Taishanese, and Taiwanese. Although most have a high level of English proficiency, an estimated 6 percent of Chinese immigrants speak Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) as their primary language in the home.⁸

Migration reflects dynamic push-pull factors that motivate a person to leave the comfort of home for a foreign country. Most immigrants from East Asia come to the United States for economic or educational reasons, but there are also those who immigrate due to religious persecution. The experiences of immigrants in their country of origin deeply affects who they are and what they pass along to their children.

Most first-generation Chinese place a strong value on hard work and education as a means to success. East Asian immigrants are more likely that US-born residents to have a bachelor's or advanced degree and pass this value for education along to their children.⁹ According to one Pew Research study, second-generation Asian Americans place more importance on hard work and career success than the general public.¹⁰ This drive to succeed also translates to the Chinese American experience in the church, affecting everything from time usage to financial resources. Many Chinese American youth, for example, may face pressure to commit more time to schoolwork than to youth group activities.

Second Generation

Chinese Americans who are 1.5 or second generation have a very different experience than their parents, both in society and the church. Depending upon their level of cultural assimilation, they will maintain some level of connection to their cultural heritage or home country while also putting down roots in the US. These individuals internally navigate their two cultural identities to formulate a greater whole.

Cultural assimilation is affected by various factors such as education, family stability, ties to the country of origin, and the type of community environment found in the US. The Segmented Assimilation Theory asserts there are three distinct kinds of assimilation by immigrants: consonant, dissonant, and selective.¹¹ Consonant acculturation happens when

⁸ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/17/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>.

⁹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/17/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>.

¹⁰ <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/02/07/second-generation-americans/>.

¹¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2882294/>.

children and parents learn American culture together and gradually leave behind language and cultural practices from the country of origin at about the same pace. Dissonant acculturation occurs when children learn English and adopt American ways faster than their immigrant parents which can lead to family pressure and a potential “downward assimilation” of second-generation kids. One example of this is when there is linguistic isolation in the home and children take on additional responsibilities for their parents when they lack the necessary English skills to engage in day-to-day activities. Selective acculturation and biculturalism occur when both the parents and children gradually learn American ways together while remaining embedded to some degree in their own ethnic community.¹²

Most second-generation Chinese Americans have a strong sense of identity with both their ancestral heritage and their American culture. They tend to live in multigenerational households until they are married and maintain strong family connections. Linguistically they may be bilingual, have limited written or verbal skills in their parent’s language, or be monolingual in English. Conversations in the household may involve a parent speaking to their child in his or her mother tongue with the child responding in English. In this kind of ministry context, it is important to help individuals and families cross both the linguistic and cultural divides between generations.

The Chinese Church

First-generation Chinese churches often reflect the cultural traditions, music, and leadership patterns from their country of origin. Even when individuals are fluent in English, they often prefer worshipping in their heart language. With the number of Chinese immigrants and their responsiveness to the gospel, it is no wonder that there are an estimated 1,679 Chinese churches in the United States (2016).¹³ These churches generally have both a Chinese language congregation for first-generation immigrants and an English congregation for 1.5- or second-generation Chinese Americans. Although there are many cultural similarities between the two congregations, there are also many dissimilarities that can cause friction. English congregations often resemble other American churches in practice, while maintaining many Chinese traditions.

A 2005 Duke Divinity School study found that “tensions in Asian American churches revolved around clashes between the generations over cultural differences in the styles and philosophies of church leadership

and control.”¹⁴ Because Chinese society is hierarchical in nature, the leadership of a Chinese congregation will often reflect this trait. English congregations, however, will typically have a more Americanized or flat organizational system of leadership and communication. First-generation Chinese pastors, for example, may be more steeped in Confucian tradition and view expressed disagreement as a personal attack. Second-generation pastors, however, may be more culturally accustomed to openly expressing opposing views.¹⁵ These kinds of communication issues between first- and second-generation Chinese Americans can often lead to cultural misunderstanding within the church.

How has your experience in East Asia influenced how you conduct ministry and discipleship with Asian Americans?

Ministry effectiveness in the twenty-first century requires leaders to grow in cultural competence and have the ability to form lasting partnerships with Christians from diverse cultural backgrounds. It is always challenging to step beyond personal comfort and engage with people who are different. However, changing demographics and the growth of a culturally diverse Christian church in America necessitates taking these steps. Christianity is growing most rapidly outside of the West and many of these believers are coming to the United States as students, professionals, and ministry leaders. This generation has an opportunity to build strong networks within the global church right in our own backyard. These relationships are not just important for better understanding, but indeed for the expansion of God’s Kingdom around the world.

My work in East Asia provided opportunity on a daily basis for me to engage individuals from various national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. This interaction nurtured my personal spiritual growth and helped me better understand the ways God is moving among people in different cultural contexts. Working in an intercultural setting overseas also highlighted personal blind spots and shortcomings in my own life, including pride and cultural arrogance. When surrounded by people who share a similar identity, it is easy to assume that there is only one way, or at least only one best way to approach a situation. Engaging spiritually mature Christians from different parts of the world has a way of sowing humility into our hearts by holding up a mirror to our cultural biases and assumptions.

¹⁴ <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-sep-29-me-beliefs29-story.html>.

¹⁵ <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-sep-29-me-beliefs29-story.html>.

¹² Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut, *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

¹³ <https://multiasian.church/data/number-of-churches/#c>.

Diverse contexts in Asia challenged me to develop a deeper level of cultural competence and grow my understanding of basic research skills. Early on I realized that any knowledge or insights I had were essentially useless if I could not communicate them clearly to people from different cultural and worldview backgrounds. Learning how to ask good questions and assess cultural clues resulted in stronger bridges of communication, relationship, and gospel sharing. It also helped me better understand nuances of culture that are affected by historical context, sociological change, language, and generational differences.

The experiences and relationships I had in East Asia have had a profound impact on my life and ministry in the United States. Living in Southern California brings daily opportunities to interact with diverse people from all around the world. This unique environment reflects a fusion of cultures that serves as a learning laboratory for ministry leaders, particularly those who intend to work overseas or in multicultural contexts. In this cauldron of diversity, individuals have to become more culturally adept to engage society and minister to the practical needs of people.

Nearly one-third of Asian Americans live in California.¹⁶ Los Angeles county has the largest Asian population of any county in the United States and is also home to the largest population of ethnic Chinese, Taiwanese, Filipino, Korean, Cambodian, Thai, Indonesian, Sri Lankan, Mongolian, and Malaysian peoples.¹⁷ My understanding of Chinese culture, religion, and worldview has enabled me to specifically connect with many first-generation Chinese immigrants. Yet my embrace of both American and Chinese culture has helped me understand second-generation Americans who also hold these two cultures in tandem. One of the keys to discipling both first- and second-generation Chinese Americans is finding out how much of their worldview is rooted in Asian or Western culture. This affects a person's expectation of leadership within the church (power distance), how they read Scripture, and even their concept of Christian family dynamics. It also reveals how collectivistic or individualistic they are in their approach to decision making or even speaking up in Bible study.

Southern California has a rich Asian American Christian legacy, particularly in the Chinese community. Many churches maintain strong ties to their cultural heritage through language, tradition, worship styles, and ongoing relationships with individuals in their country of origin. These churches are growing numerically and in spiritual depth, frequently sending out mission teams to serve the Chinese diaspora around the world and

reaching the lost at home. There is much to learn from highly qualified leaders in these Chinese congregations. Experiencing the value of partnership and learning to serve under non-Western leadership has helped me to embrace the value of mutual learning within the global body of Christ. It has also expanded my understanding of God's divine movement in bringing the nations to himself in culturally unique ways.

¹⁶ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/08/key-facts-about-asian-americans/>.

¹⁷ <http://www.laalmanac.com/population/po16.php>.

Book Reviews

Mark S. Gignilliat. *Reading Scripture Canonically*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. xvi + 125 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1540962065. \$21.99.

Reading Scripture Canonically is a brief and thought-provoking discussion of how to read and interpret the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. Mark Gignilliat's goal is to shape his readers' interpretive instincts by discussing the material form of the OT and by examining its main subject—the Trinity (p. xiii). The book is written for students with a background in biblical studies (p. xii) and emerges from the author's personal struggle to move beyond merely describing the Bible, to preaching it (pp. xi–xii). Overall, the book is a helpful introduction to the canonical approach, but students should be aware of at least one issue, discussed below.

Gignilliat begins with a short introduction (pp. ix–xiv). Here, he states that he aims to “equip readers with a theological grammar and a set of interpretive instincts to aid in their reading of Scripture as an enduring canonical witness” (p. xiii). The book is divided into two parts. In the first, the author discusses the material character of the Old Testament. The subject matter of the OT, the Trinity, is relayed in the second (p. xiii).

The author begins by discussing the topic of canon. This includes chapter 1's important discussion of terminology. Chapter 2 treats Scripture's final form. Here, we learn that the canonical approach prioritizes the final form of Scripture since the final form is the witness to divine revelation, not the sources used to compose it (p. 33). The relationship between canon and intentionality is discussed next (chapter 3). To end the first part of the book, chapter 4 investigates the discipline of textual criticism (p. 59).

After discussing the Old Testament's material form, Gignilliat explores the Old Testament's subject material, the Trinity (chapters 5 and 6). In these chapters, he relays in some detail the implications that derive from God being Scripture's author (p. 84).

The book has several strengths. First, Gignilliat is concise. In only 117 pages, he captures key issues of the OT canon and the implications of the Trinity being the OT's author. For example, he surveys the two main theories about the state of the OT text in the Second Temple period in five pages (pp. 59–64). Anyone familiar with this field understands the breadth

of literature on this topic. Gignilliat is to be applauded for his concision.

Second, the book offers helpful insight into the role of God as the author of Scripture. Gignilliat's main idea here is that interpretation of the OT canon should expand beyond the human author's historical and literary context. This does not mean that Trinitarian authorship contradicts the meaning of the original human author. Rather, he argues that the “*literal sense* or given verbal form is not left behind for greener New Testament pastures” (p. 98, emphasis original). Instead, the enriching character of the OT, coupled with the fact that the Trinity is its author, allows “for a fuller appreciation of the Old Testament's range of signification” (p. 98). Understanding the harmonious relationship between the OT's human and divine authors helps the reader understand how the trajectory of the OT is indeed Christ. His discussion here is helpful.

Despite these strengths, there is at least one important area of concern. Gignilliat does not provide sufficient justification for prioritizing one form of the OT over another. His method prioritizes the final form of Scripture, but he does not identify this final form. In his discussion of the canon and textual criticism, he asks the question, “[S]hould we prioritize the Hebrew text, or should the Septuagint have pride of place canonically?” (p. 66). Unfortunately, he then states that this book has no final word on the matter (p. 66). This presents a problem for the canonical approach. If we cannot determine which form of the Scripture is the final form, then how can we utilize a method that depends on analyzing the text's final form? Moreover, if we are unable to determine which form has priority, we are left either with a no “final form” situation or one where there are several “final forms.” Gignilliat should have provided more discussion on this topic since it is foundational to his method.

Overall though, Gignilliat's work is helpful. He concisely surveys important concepts and emphasizes that our method of studying Scripture must be shaped by the text's supreme subject—the Trinity. Despite these strengths, the book's biggest drawback is its lack of justification for which form is indeed the “canonical form.” I will recommend this book to seminary students who want an introduction to the canonical approach but will also give them my reservations.

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Matthew H. Patton and Frederic Clarke Putnam, Miles V. van Pelt, eds. *Basics of Hebrew Discourse: A Guide to Working with Hebrew Prose and Poetry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 288 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0310535768. \$29.99.

The editor of this volume, Miles van Pelt, is well known as the author, with Gary Pratico, of a Hebrew grammar published by Zondervan that is now in its third edition. *Basics of Hebrew Discourse* is a valuable addition to Zondervan's family of Hebrew language resources that includes the grammar by Pratico and Van Pelt, vocabulary cards and guides, a *Graded Reader*, plus other learning helps. Matthew Patton is a pastor and scholar who has also published in the area of Old Testament studies, producing a more technical work published by Eisenbrauns (*Hope for a Tender Sprig: Jehoiachin in Biblical Theology*), a Bible study guide on Deuteronomy (Crossway, 2017), and a forthcoming commentary on Jeremiah. Frederic Putnam is a veteran professor who has published several books, including a Hebrew grammar (*A New Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Sheffield, 2010).

The basic task of all preachers and teachers of the Old Testament is to determine and communicate the meaning of Hebrew texts. In performing that task, one mistake that results in interpretational errors is focusing on morphological or even syntactical issues without attending to discourse issues related to the larger structures of a text. In other words, we should interpret the parts in light of the whole. Discourse analysis aims at helping students of the Hebrew Bible look at the larger structures of texts.

The study of Hebrew typically progresses from small to large. In the beginning, Hebrew students learn the forms and sounds of letters, then syllables, words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, in that order. *Basics of Hebrew Discourse* helps readers take the next step in understanding Hebrew texts. For example, interpreters should be able to parse Hebrew verbs, but they also should know the nature and meaning of verbal aspect in Hebrew, and how Imperfect and Perfect verbs function in various contexts. As Patton writes, "In-depth knowledge of individual words, phrases, and clauses is of little value if we cannot relate each of these parts together in the text," and "We have identified the flow of a text when we can describe how each part relates to the other parts in the text, and this description of a text's flow of thought is the goal of discourse analysis" (p. 29).

The approach to discourse analysis in this book is text oriented. The authors define terms related to the subject, and they interact with more philosophical discussions in the footnotes. Primarily, however, this book is devoted to helping readers understand and use discourse analysis in the interpretation of texts in the Hebrew Bible. The authors provide a guide,

a handbook, that students can use to grow in their understanding of the way Hebrew texts convey meaning.

Basics of Hebrew Discourse is divided into two parts. Patton writes Part 1, "Working with Biblical Hebrew Prose." Putnam writes Part 2, "Working with Biblical Hebrew Poetry." In Patton's presentation of the discourse structures of Hebrew prose, he shows the various ways Hebrew clauses relate to one another, and he discusses the terms that indicate such relationships. For example, what are the Hebrew words that introduce conditional clauses or comparison clauses? What verbs communicate verbal sequences in narrative, and how do they do so? A strength of this discourse grammar is the regular use of examples to illustrate each concept the authors introduce. They describe discourse relationships, and then they demonstrate such relationships with sentences and paragraphs from the Hebrew Bible. Patton also provides a three-step process for discourse analysis with Hebrew prose, plus four extended examples.

Putnam's section on biblical Hebrew poetry differs from the first part of the book just as Hebrew poetry differs from Hebrew prose. The mere existence of the second part of the book is a strength, since poetry is ubiquitous in the Hebrew Bible and poetic discourse "works" so much differently than prose. Putnam's descriptions will help readers become more competent interpreters of Hebrew poetry. His goal is to help readers "understand the text as it was meant to be read and not to impose our own logic or structure on it" (p. 155). Hence, Putnam asks questions like "How is this poem organized?" And since poetry does not have structural devices like the *wayyiqtol* verb in narrative, Putnam explores the factors that create cohesion in poetry, like semantic relationships or participant reference. Like Patton, Putnam illustrates discourse concepts with numerous passages from the Hebrew Bible, thereby showing readers how to use discourse analysis in exegesis.

Basics of Hebrew Discourse will surely be used broadly. It deserves such use since it meets a need and provides practical help in the task of the exposition of the Old Testament.

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Jacqueline Vayntrub. *Beyond Orality: Biblical Poetry on Its Own Terms*. New York: Routledge, 2019. v + 252 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1138235625. \$155.00.

In *Beyond Orality*, Jacqueline Vayntrub demonstrates that the scholarly pursuit of original ideas is not an effort in futility. Vayntrub walks a well-trodden path and invites her readers to see the path in a new light. Her

work is prodigious because she seeks to rethink the essence of biblical poetry, reframe the meaning of *mashal*, critique the standard approach to the development of biblical literature, and contribute to the debate about the “oral” and the “written” in biblical literature.

Vayntrub argues that biblical scholars have adopted an evolutionary model of the development of biblical literature in chapter 1 (oral proverbs → oral poetry → written prose). Vayntrub suggests that this model derives from the presentation of the biblical text in which poetry in a narrative frame is presented as spoken words in the distant past and poetry in a non-narrative frame is attached to legendary heroes. Without accepting this evolutionary model, Vayntrub invites scholars to pay more careful attention to the literary shape of biblical poetry.

In chapter 2, Vayntrub surveys the interpretive history of the essence of biblical poetry which is intimately tied to perceptions of the meaning of the Hebrew word *mashal*. The medieval Jewish poets described biblical poetry/*mashal* in terms of *mimesis* (i.e., representation or imitation of the real world). Robert Lowth (1710–1787) defined biblical poetry/*mashal* as sententious, figurative, and sublime (the defining element for Lowth). Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), against Lowth, suggested that biblical poetry/*mashal* should not be privileged above the poetry of other cultures based on its sublimity. Twentieth-century structuralists suggested that the parallelistic structure of biblical poetry/*mashal* is its essence. In response to these ideas, Vayntrub contends that biblical poetry and *mashal* should not be equated. Instead, *mashal* should be defined based on its presentation in the biblical text.

Vayntrub begins chapter 3 by contending that the “wisdom literature” category is circular since many scholars assume a priori that Proverbs is “wisdom literature” and then determine the other “wisdom” books based on their relationship to Proverbs. Moreover, she contends that *mashal* is not the basic literary form of “wisdom literature” because it has numerous alternative uses outside of traditional “wisdom literature.” Instead, Vayntrub outlines the primary characteristics of *mashal* as follows,

1. in narratives the *mashal* is framed as speech performance,
2. those who speak in *mashal* are not necessarily its authors, and it is sometimes described as speech that has been transmitted across generations,
3. the *mashal* asserts claims as conventional, widely held views, and expresses these claims in parallelistic verse (p. 80).

Vayntrub concludes the chapter by inviting scholars to refocus their attention on the literary depiction of *mashal* rather than on its original *Sitz*

im Leben.

Vayntrub puts her theory to the test in chapters 4, 5, and 6. Vayntrub argues that the frame of Balaam’s *mashal* speeches is a key to the meaning of the speeches in chapter 4. She writes, “One considers the frame of a poem because this frame further contextualizes the composition and provides a represented social context that shapes the meaning of the text” (p. 130). The frame of Balaam’s *mashal* speeches portrays them as prophetic utterances. However, stripped of their frame, his speeches fall into the category of instruction. Balaam’s speeches serve as instruction to King Balak about Israel’s uniqueness among the nations and their immunity to curse.

In chapter 5, Vayntrub analyzes the *mashal* in Isa 14:4b–21 and in 1 Sam 24. She argues that the frame of the *mashal* for Isa 14:4b–21 (i.e., 14:4a) shapes the text into an anticipated performance (i.e., a taunt of Babylon’s king) for the time after Israel’s release from captivity. Vayntrub claims the following for the *mashal* in 1 Sam 24:14:

I argue that the *mashal* itself functions to establish the category of evil and its associated behavior. In its performed context, David uses the general claim of the quip to advance a particular claim: that he does not belong to the category of “evildoers.” (p. 167)

Vayntrub applies her research on *mashal* to the book of Proverbs in chapter 6. She demonstrates that Proverbs is unique among ancient Near East “wisdom literature” for presenting wisdom sayings apart from speech performance. She contends that the lack of a performance context draws attention to the written form of the sayings. She argues, “The work uses its frames to shift authority from a fictional moment of speech performance, in the voice of a named-and-famed individual to the enduring presence of the text itself” (p. 205).

Beyond Orality deserves approbation because it advances the study of Hebrew poetry by critically engaging with the history of research and by carefully analyzing the biblical *meshalim*. Vayntrub convinced the present reviewer of her central claims (listed in the first paragraph of this review). Moreover, *Beyond Orality* deserves commendation for reminding the scholarly community that, despite its many benefits, historical criticism often distracts scholars from attending to the literary conventions of the biblical text in its final form. Finally, *Beyond Orality* deserves praise for offering fecund readings of and reading strategies for approaching the biblical *meshalim*.

Despite large-scale agreement with her argument, I question Vayntrub’s analysis in two places. First, she invites her readers to read Balaam’s speeches apart from the *mashal* frame as instruction rather than prophecy (p. 134). However, I think it might be more advantageous to

draw on her insight that Balaam's speeches are instruction and view them as instruction-through-prophecy because of their frame. Second, Vayntrub demonstrates that the absence of an explicit speaker in Proverbs leaves the text itself to be the speaking medium. I agree with her analysis here. However, I think it might be worth reading sections of Proverbs (e.g., 16:1–15, a royal section of Proverbs) in light of the book's frame and imagine Solomon as the speaker of these words.

Beyond Orality is groundbreaking research in the field of biblical poetry and, hopefully, the work will exert influence in the field.

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Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum, eds. *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Exposition of the Messiah in the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody, 2019. 1,434 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0802409638. \$39.99.

The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy, dedicated to the late John H. Sailhamer, is a compendium of articles that address the Messianic nature of the Hebrew Bible. Despite critical scholarship's denouncement of the use of "Messiah" in the Old Testament or the perceived late concept of a messianic deliverer, this book affirms that "there was indeed a clearly intended messianic message in the Hebrew Bible" (p. 29).

The work begins by defining the term "Messiah" as the "eschatological, royal, Servant of the Lord, springing from the Davidic dynasty, who is consecrated by God to provide redemption from sin, bring deliverance for Israel, rule the world, and establish a kingdom of peace, justice, and righteousness" (pp. 32–33). This definition sets the stage for understanding multiple texts' foreshadowing of the messianic king, using prophetic prediction and patterns. Building upon John Sailhamer's scholarship, the authors of this publication take the messianic intent that Sailhamer outlined in the narratives and poetry of the Pentateuch and extend it to the Prophets and Writings as well.

The first half of the book addresses issues such as textual criticism and messianic prophecy, the Messiah in Intertestamental Literature (i.e., Talmud, Mishnah, and Targums), the biblical theology of the Messiah, and the Messiah in Medieval Jewish Literature. However, the most significant contribution of this work is the second half, which aims to reclaim the Messianic elements of particular texts whose nature was lost to unsound exegesis. Extended expositions of classic messianic passages appear here,

as well as other texts not commonly interpreted as messianic. In this review, for the sake of space, I briefly summarize three selected passages, one from each section of the *Tanakh*.

From the Torah, Seth D. Postell discusses Num 24:5–9 and 15–19. Reading one of the strangest stories of the Hebrew Bible, Balaam and his talking donkey, one might question the messianic nature of such a tale. Long interpreted in a non-messianic fashion, Postell notes that Balaam's oracles allude to "the last days," a common reference in the Torah to the reign after David. Israel's messianic future here in Num 24 is viewed in terms of her glorious past, the exodus (Num 23). As the Pentateuch links the exodus with the messianic figure (p. 53), Balaam's prophetic discourses provide intertextual links not only between the two speech acts contained within the passage, but to Jacob's prophecy of the Messianic King in Gen 49:1 and 8–12.

From the Prophets, Abner Chou tackles what is "considered one of the greatest interpretive challenges of the Hebrew Bible" for OT scholars, Zech 11:4–14. Chou argues that the rejected shepherd is the Messiah, since this reading justifies how the NT Gospels apply it to Jesus. Some of his examples include inner biblical allusions and shepherd motifs (Isa 53, Dan 9, Ezek 37), which ultimately result in his conclusion that "this text is not merely about the fact of the Messiah's betrayal, but also its importance in redemptive history" (p. 1,282).

From the Writings, implicit messianic references can be seen throughout oft-debated books such as the Psalter. Robert Cole shows that Ps 1–2 thrust the reader into an eschatological rendering that serves to establish the principal topics for the rest of the book. Of the many messianic portrayals, he outlines implicit references to the deity of the "blessed man." These include phonological parallels between YHWH and the verb "meditate" (*yehegeh*), resonance with Josh 1:7–9 on the meditation of the Torah, and Ps 1:2–3 where "king in Zion" parallels Ps 2:6 "established on Zion." Cole points out multiple other parallels, since they "exist on practically every conceivable level, whether semantic, lexical, morphological, or phonological" (p. 480).

Many more texts, less commonly viewed as messianic, have been fleshed out in this work, and it should be commended for multiple reasons. While evangelicals often adopt a hermeneutic that explains away a significant number of such prophecies, this book stands as a testament, and scholarly defense, of the Messianic character of the entire Hebrew Bible. Sailhamer's thoughts that the Hebrew Bible was not written as the national literature of Israel, but as an expression of the "deep-seated messianic hope of a small group of faithful prophets & their followers," is the

driving force behind the compendium (p. 59). Whether or not one is convinced of the cogency of the argument for the Messianic nature of the Hebrew Bible, I encourage all serious students and scholars to consider the arguments for the perspectives in this work.

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Grant R. Osborne. *Acts: Verse by Verse*. Osborne New Testament Commentaries. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019. xi + 543 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1683592747. \$15.99.

The Osborne New Testament Commentaries series is the culmination of a lifetime of practice of biblical scholarship by one of the most respected evangelical New Testament scholars, the late Grant R. Osborne, longtime faculty member at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Its stated goal is “to remove the complexity of most modern commentaries and provide an easy-to-read explanation of the text” (p. x). A threefold use envisioned by Osborne is to serve as a devotional, to guide Bible study groups, and to aid sermon preparation. He is well qualified to accomplish this task through his academic scholarship, pastoral experience, and international pastor training ministry.

Osborne notes that the genre of “Acts” in ancient literature was reserved for the doings of a famous personage, but this Acts is the record of a movement rather than a person—and of the Holy Spirit of God. He thinks a composition date during Paul’s imprisonment (circa AD 62) is most likely. Interestingly he postulates that the apostles were probably “note-takers” and Luke, as a careful researcher and historian, would have availed himself of those notes (p. 5).

Osborne’s analysis of the text includes necessary background information, careful exposition of the meaning of each passage, and some attention to contemporary application. An example of the kind of background information he provides is the note on the shipwreck on Malta: When the ship runs aground (Acts 27:41), he explains that the seabed in that region is very hard clay and would be prone to holding fast a ship which had run into it (p. 469). Another example precedes his discussion of the Jerusalem council in Acts 15: Osborne briefly notes the difficult question of its relationship to Paul’s account of deliberations on the same issue of Gentile inclusion in the church in Galatians 2. He then states his opinion that the two accounts refer to separate events, with the writing of Galatians preceding the Acts 15 council (p. 270). Unfortunately, though, he does not provide the evidence that persuades him to hold this position.

Sensitivity to the canonical context of the text is also evident in Osborne’s exposition. In his analysis of the church’s prayer for boldness in response to persecution in Acts 4, he notes that the shaking of the place where they were assembled is reminiscent of the trembling when God met Moses on Mt. Sinai (Exod 19:18), of Isaiah’s experience of God (Isa 6:4), and of the Jerusalem earthquake upon Jesus’s death which coincided with the veil of the temple torn in two and the graves being opened (Matt 27:51).

The evenness of Osborne’s interpretation is evidenced throughout this commentary. He does not avoid the issue of the legitimacy of *glossolalia* as an experience for contemporary believers. He rightly notes that nowhere in the biblical text is it mandated, nor is there biblical support for its prohibition, so he adopts a “seek not, forbid not” position (p. 43). On the question of New Testament leadership structure, he notes that at the Jerusalem council three groups are mentioned and all are involved in the decision-making process—the church, the apostles, and the elders.

Other examples of Osborne’s interpretive acumen and faithfulness to the text occur in his analysis of two narrative events after the Jerusalem council that are often interpreted with assertions beyond textual warrant. On the dispute between Paul and Barnabas over the inclusion of John Mark, he does not speculate on why Mark left them in Pamphylia, nor why Paul is not willing for him to rejoin them now. He notes that we cannot know if the use of the term *paroxysmos* in 15:39 indicates anger between them, nor does the text assign blame to either party (p. 291). He also rightly concludes that the disciples of John which Paul encounters in Acts 19 cannot be used as evidence for the reception of the Holy Spirit as an event distinct and separate from salvation. Their unawareness of repentance and faith in Jesus clearly indicates they were not yet believers (p. 342).

It is commendable that this kind of non-academic expositional commentary is produced from the context of Osborne’s lifetime of biblical scholarship to serve lay people and to enhance sermon preparation. It should help those preachers serving faithfully without benefit of formal academic training. Nevertheless, this commentary and its companions in the series are not a replacement for more thoroughly researched and documented academic commentaries, including Osborne’s own offerings such as *Matthew* in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the NT and *Revelation* in the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT series. For the academically trained preacher and teacher, this volume should not be used as a shortcut to avoid deeper exegetical research. However, after that pro-

cess is completed, it could serve as a valuable model for a faithful exposition of the text.

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James D. Dvorak and Zachary K. Dawson, eds. *The Epistle of James: Linguistic Analysis of an Early Christian Letter*. Linguistic Exegesis of the New Testament 1. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019. 348 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1498224581. \$40.00.

This recent volume, edited by James D. Dvorak and Zachary K. Dawson, is the first in a projected series of volumes analyzing various corpora of NT books from a linguistic perspective. Based on the series preface, the goal of these volumes is to provide “a collection of linguistically informed exegetical analyses of a sub-corpus of the New Testament” with a “consistent and unified linguistic perspective across each volume” (p. vii). This inaugural volume offers a group of essays on the book of James from the perspective of Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL). The essays are predominantly by either faculty or students (current or former) at McMaster Divinity College.

The introduction, authored by the editors, provides a brief defense of SFL as the unified approach adopted by the contributors, as well as an overview of the contents of the book. The first essay, by Cynthia Long Westfall, presents a discourse analysis of Jas 1:2–27, culminating in a structural outline of the chapter. The second essay, by Stanley E. Porter, is a response to the claim by Martin Dibelius that the book of James is incoherent. Porter argues that the real issue is whether James has cohesion, and he demonstrates the cohesion of the book by examining the interactions between cohesive chains. These first two essays both focus on higher-level textual concerns in the book of James.

The third essay, by Christopher D. Land, is a rebuttal to the assertion in Dale Allison’s ICC volume on James that Jas 2:18 (on faith and works) is unintelligible. He proposes a new interpretation of this verse based on the situational and literary contexts. The fourth and fifth essays share a common focus on intertextuality in James. The fourth essay, by Ji Hoe Kim, attempts to link the neologism *δίψυχος* (Jas 1:8; 4:8) to the call to whole-heartedness in the *Shema* (Deut 6:4–5) via the language of “divided hearts” found in Hos 10:2. The fifth essay, by Xiaxia E. Xue, attempts to explain the significance of James’s link between Rahab the prostitute and the patriarch Abraham by looking at the use of Abraham and Rahab elsewhere in contemporary Jewish and Christian literature.

The last four essays each address the “interpersonal” dimension of the book of James. The sixth essay, by Zachary K. Dawson, analyzes the function of diatribe in Jas 2:14–26 in terms of James’s ideological goals and the relations that he seeks to establish with his readers. The seventh essay, by James D. Dvorak, examines James’s use of questions to “reposition” the readers to accept the group values and ideology that James seeks to promote. The eighth essay, by Benjamin B. Hunt, is a study of James’s use of various forms of address to affect his relationship with the readers. The ninth essay, by Jonathan M. Watt, examines whether James uses what M. A. K. Halliday called “anti-language.” The conclusion supplied by the editors evaluates the linguistic competence of Dale Allison’s ICC commentary on James and demonstrates the superiority of linguistic approaches.

One benefit of this book is that it demonstrates the value of linguistics for exegesis. One noteworthy contribution in this regard is the essay by Westfall, which shows how the use of discourse analysis clarifies the structure and message of Jas 1:2–27. Her essay is also exemplary in its accessibility. Another contribution exemplary in both clarity and exegetical value, is the essay by Kim. The linguistic analysis of the use of *δίψυχος* in Jas 1:8 and 4:8 and its relationship to Hosea and Deuteronomy provides significant insight into James’ influences and thought.

In addition to the exegetical value of these contributions, this collection of essays demonstrates the main strength of SFL, namely the focus on language with reference to its social functions. Exemplary in this regard is the chapter by Dvorak on the use of questions, which features a rigorous grammatical study to analyze the letter’s social function.

One noteworthy limitation on the accessibility of this volume is the level of linguistic knowledge assumed. Because the contributors all work from within SFL, concepts derived from this framework are often left unexplained. Furthermore, while linguists and specialists will no doubt derive much benefit from the essays, non-specialists may find themselves asking whether the effort of sloughing through pages of technical linguistic terminology is worth the narrow, specific results yielded. However, advanced students and specialists will find this volume a noteworthy contribution to the study of the book of James.

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Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry, eds. *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019. xxviii + 372 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0830852574. \$40.00.

Elijah Hixson is junior research associate in New Testament Text and Language at Tyndale House, Cambridge, and author of *Scribal Habits in Sixth-Century Greek Purple Codices*. Peter Gurry is assistant professor of New Testament and codirector of the Text and Canon Institute at Phoenix Seminary. He is author of *A Critical Examination of the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method in New Testament Textual Criticism* and coauthor (with Tommy Wasserman) of *A New Approach to Textual Criticism*. In addition, Hixson and Gurry have made important contributions to text-critical scholarship through their essays, presentations at academic conferences, and frequent posts on the Evangelical Textual Criticism blog.

Hixson and Gurry planned the volume under review out of love for the Bible because they observed that “statistics, facts, and arguments meant to bolster confidence in the Bible” were actually undermining trust in the Scriptures “because they were misinformed, misapplied, or misstated.” This concern prompted them to gather a cadre of Christian scholars working in the field of New Testament textual criticism to set the record straight on several false claims regarding the text of the Greek New Testament. Such claims are made by some Christian apologists and even occasionally by respected textual critics and New Testament scholars.

The book addresses errors in several different categories, such as those based on outdated information, others based on unverified information, errors based on abused statistics, and some caused by selective use of the evidence. Space will allow a discussion of only a few of these errors. Scholars often compare the number and antiquity of New Testament manuscripts to that of the manuscripts of important classical texts. They rightly argue that skeptics operate with a double standard when they claim that the New Testament text cannot be reliably restored but classical texts can be, since the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament are more numerous and date closer to the time of composition than the manuscripts of classical texts. Unfortunately, those making this argument have often depended on old sources for the data on classical texts, thus overlooking the manuscript finds of the last few decades. They have also unintentionally exaggerated the number and age of New Testament manuscripts at times. Readers who discover the flaws may get the impression that Christian scholars are skewing the evidence to support their faith claims.

An important example of an error based on unverified information is the oft-repeated claim that one can reconstruct the entire New Testament (minus 11 or so verses) exclusively from second- to fourth-century church

fathers’ NT quotations, even if no manuscripts of the NT had survived. However, this myth is based on second-hand information regarding an informal breakfast conversation about amateur biblical research. The claim “appears to be a conflation of two unsubstantiated, unpublished nineteenth-century studies” that were never subjected to scholarly review.

Abused statistics come into play when some Christian apologists seek to minimize the amount of variation in manuscripts of the Greek New Testament. Scholarly estimates based on solid data suggest our surviving manuscripts of the Greek New Testament have about 500,000 differences among them, not counting spelling differences. Almost half of these differences are meaningless mistakes, but some are theologically significant. Although it is true that no essential Christian doctrine depends solely on a variant worthy of serious consideration as the original text, to imply that variants have no significance for Christian theology or practice is misleading.

Unlike many collections of essays in which some chapters are excellent and others are of considerably less quality, every essay in *Myths and Mistakes* is packed with valuable information. The book will be helpful not only for Christian apologists (the primary audience) but also for New Testament students, New Testament scholars, and textual critics. Scholars familiar with recent monographs and journal literature in the field will already be aware of some of the content of the book. Even so, it assembles in one place discussions scattered across several different sources in a convenient and accessible manner. The essays also break new ground in some important ways. These features make *Myths and Mistakes* essential reading for anyone interested in New Testament textual criticism.

The book is an important reminder that authors, including even highly respected New Testament scholars and textual critics, sometimes make mistakes and unwittingly propagate myths. Although every scholar must depend on the work of his predecessors to a certain degree, *Myths and Mistakes* highlights the need to read all works with a critical eye. The many examples of false and unintentionally misleading statements in trusted sources make a strong cumulative case for the claim that scholars must exercise greater care and caution in their research and writing. And writers’ admissions of the great amount of work still to be done in the field should serve as a powerful incentive to students to focus their research on this important area of scholarship.

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Shawn J. Wilhite. *The Didache: A Commentary*. Apostolic Fathers Commentary Series 1. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019. 326 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1498205108. \$38.00.

Shawn J. Wilhite, author of this recent commentary on the Didache, is Assistant Professor of Christian Studies at California Baptist University and serves as director and research fellow for the Center for Ancient Christian Studies. He holds a ThM in Patristics and a PhD in New Testament from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and is a PhD Candidate in Patristics at Durham University. He has published several works on the Didache, including *“One of Life and One of Death”: Apocalypticism and the Didache’s Two Ways* (Gorgias, 2019). This commentary is the first installment in the Apostolic Fathers Commentary Series. According to the series preface, it “offers a literary and theological reading of the final form text in an intelligible fashion for a broad audience” (p. xiv).

The commentary begins with an original translation of the Didache. Part 1 then contains introductory essays on the Didache. In chapter 1, the author discusses the manuscript witnesses to the text of the Didache, its role in the ancient church, its date and place of origin, and the structure of the document. Wilhite acknowledges the difficulty of attaining certainty regarding the origins of the Didache and opts for a “window” of time between 80–110 CE in which the composite text may have “become” the Didache (p. 21). He believes the Didache emerged “concurrently with or after the composition of Matthew” (p. 21).

Chapter 2 considers the use of Scripture in the Didache. It focuses on four explicit biblical traditions (Matt 6:9–13; 7:6; Mal 1:11; Zech 14:5), although the commentary proper addresses many more parallels. Chapter 3 addresses the theology of the Didache, including its doctrine of God (incipient Trinitarian ideas alongside binitarian theology), liturgical teaching, doctrine of salvation (not explicit but present via “salvation metaphors”), ethics, ecclesiology, and eschatology. This chapter is a helpful contribution since scholars have frequently denied the theological nature of the Didache.

Part 2 consists of the commentary proper and is divided into five chapters based on the proposed outline of the text (title[s], 1.1–6.2; 6.3–10.7; 11.1–15.4; 16.1–8). Within each chapter the commentary proceeds unit-by-unit, based on the outline proposed in the introduction.

A few helpful features set this commentary apart. First, there is detailed interaction with the secondary sources in the footnotes. This allows readers to follow up on discussions raised in the commentary with the relevant literature. However, while the commentary is firmly rooted in the secondary literature, it never loses its focus on the Didache itself. Second,

there are numerous discussions regarding the relationship between the Didache and other primary sources, both biblical and extra-biblical. Wilhite cites the Didache’s numerous parallels with the OT, the NT, and early Jewish and Christian documents but also illustrates these by means of tables, with primary sources in the original languages.

Third, the commentary fulfills its aim to be both literary and theological. Wilhite introduces units with comments about their structure and makes appeals to the discourse features of the document. Syntactical features receive significantly less attention, though they are not completely neglected. Significant word usage is also explored, such as the use of *κύριος* for God/Jesus (pp. 97, 184, etc.). Wilhite also weaves theological commentary throughout as he explores language and concepts with reference to contemporary literature.

One minor critique of this commentary is that its treatment of text-critical issues leaves something to be desired. Knowledge of the text of the Didache is highly dependent upon one late Greek manuscript (H54), dating about 900 years after the document’s composition. This manuscript seems to be the basis for the commentary, but according to Wilhite, the “final form” remains “hypothetical” (p. 192). While this conclusion is to some degree unavoidable, establishing the text appears to receive less attention than it deserves, given the other witnesses to it (cf. pp. 6–9).

To conclude, Wilhite’s commentary represents an invaluable contribution to the study of the Didache. Its up-to-date engagement with the primary and secondary sources and its attention to literary and theological details provide an excellent resource for those who are interested in understanding this ancient document. The commentary is accessible to students and specialists alike (though it assumes the knowledge of Greek). In sum, Wilhite provides faithful guidance through the maze of issues that pertain to the Didache. Hopefully, future contributions to the Apostolic Fathers Commentary Series will be as useful as this volume.

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Matthew R. Crawford. *The Eusebian Canon Tables: Ordering Textual Knowledge in Late Antiquity*. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. xxvii + 372 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0198802600. \$105.00

Matthew R. Crawford is Associate Professor and Director of the Program in Biblical and Early Christian Studies in the Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry at Australian Catholic University. He is the author of *Cyril of Alexandria’s Trinitarian Theology of Scripture* as well as co-editor of *The*

Gospel of Tatian: Exploring the Nature and Text of the Diatessaron.

Part 1 of his latest work, *The Eusebian Canon Tables*, focuses on the origins of biblical canon tables. Crawford demonstrates that the use of tables was surprisingly rare in the ancient world. Although tabular presentation was used in cuneiform tablets, primarily in astronomical works, as few as four tables appear in Latin works prior to the fourth century. Unfortunately, no comprehensive investigation of tables in Greek sources yet exists. Nevertheless, enough evidence is available to claim confidently that Eusebius's work was strikingly innovative. Eusebius was probably introduced to the helpfulness of tables in his reading of the treatise on the date of Easter by the Laodicean bishop Anatolius, whose work was modeled on Ptolemy's astronomical tables.

The purpose of Eusebius's tables was twofold: to divide the four long Gospel narratives into smaller sections and to show the relationships that exist between those four separate narratives. Ammonius of Alexandria had placed parallels from other Gospels alongside the Gospel of Matthew in a format later called a synopsis. Ammonius's synopsis probably lacked section numbers and may not have included portions of the three other Gospels that had no parallel in Matthew. Eusebius contributed the section and canon numbers and composed the canon tables necessary to identify and locate parallel material. Eusebius's work was a huge advancement over Ammonius's contribution since it permitted readers to identify parallel passages in the Gospels without disrupting the original order of pericopes in the individual Gospels. This advancement made Eusebius "a true founder of Christian biblical scholarship."

However, the arrangement of Eusebius's system into ten canons is artificial. Since the tenth canon actually contains four canons (material unique to each of the four Gospels), a system of thirteen canons might have been more consistent. Crawford suggests that the ten-canon table was ordered based on Eusebius's view (expressed in his *Oration in Praise of Constantine*) that the number 10 (1+2+3+4) was important in the divine ordering of the universe. Perhaps Eusebius believed that the canon tables portrayed the sacred text as a divinely ordered microcosm. Later users of the Eusebian tables including Victor of Capua, Sedulius Scottus, Dionysius bar Salibi, and Nerses Snorhali certainly believed that the ten tables displayed the similarity between the harmony in the Scriptures and the harmony in the cosmos.

The Eusebian canon tables influenced the reading of the four Gospels in three major ways. They served to bind the four Gospels into a single corpus, thereby excluding other gospels and intensifying the canonizing effect of the codex. They encouraged reading one Gospel passage in light

of its parallels. They introduced readers to both the similarities and tensions between parallel accounts and permitted the reader to draw his own conclusions about how to explain these features.

Part 2 of the book focuses on the reception of the canon tables. Three chapters examine the usage of the canon tables by Augustine, the Peshitta, and the Hiberno-Latin tradition. A final chapter treats the artistic adornment of the canon tables in Armenian commentaries. The book includes four helpful appendices, the first of which is Crawford's own translation of Eusebius's letter to Carpianus, in which he explains the origin, purpose, and use of the canon tables.

Crawford's work is a product of careful and thorough research. The book is also visually impressive. The 52 high-resolution photographs of ancient texts and images result in a book so beautiful that readers will be hesitant to highlight the text or add notes in the margin. It breaks new ground in several areas that will be helpful even to scholars who have done extensive work with the canon tables. For example, the book contains what is likely the most extensive analysis thus far of the Peshitta revision and its relationship to Eusebius's original work. Consequently, it is an indispensable guide to any scholarly study of the Eusebian canon tables.

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Cyril of Alexandria. *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, intr. Gregory K. Hillis, trans. Nicholas P. Lunn. Fathers of the Church, vol. 137. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018. 354 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0813231310. \$45.00

Cyril of Alexandria. *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, trans. Nicholas P. Lunn. Fathers of the Church, vol. 138. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019. 264 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0813231617. \$45.00

Cyril of Alexandria is well known for the fifth-century Christological controversy with Nestorius of Constantinople. His writings comprise ten volumes in the *Patrologia Graeca-Latina* (PG). Despite the volume of his literary output, translators only recently turned their attention to his commentaries on the Bible and other works concerning Scripture. His dogmatic works, particularly those from the Nestorian Controversy, found their way into English more than his commentaries. However, more recent translations make Cyril's biblical exegesis available for a wider audience. The current volumes join this growing list of English translations,

remedying the neglect of Cyril's Scriptural exegesis.

The current two-volume translation is accompanied by an introduction from Gregory Hillis, which itself is worth the price of admission. Hillis, Associate Professor of Theology at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky, summarizes Cyril's life and ministry, locating him within the greater Alexandrian tradition. Hillis explains the purpose and structure of the commentary as a theological exegesis of the text, in which Cyril begins with the literal reading and moves to the higher, Christological reading from which the Christian may learn Christ and his way of life. The *Glaphyra* is a theological reading of the Pentateuch.

In the section, *The Bishop as Exegete and Enlightener*, Hillis explains Cyril's contention that the interpretation of the Pentateuch requires the Spirit's guidance to the proper Christological meaning of the text. Exegesis is a spiritual exercise that allows the bishop to fulfill his highest calling: the teaching of Scripture to his congregation. Cyril was a pastor whose spiritual care for his congregation came through instruction in Scripture.

Regarding the anti-Jewish flavor of the commentary, Hillis helps readers understand that because the Christian and Jewish communities were at odds in Alexandria at the time, those political disagreements surely influenced Cyril's language. Hillis also points out that Cyril's main purpose is theological: "That the Jews fail to see Christ in their very own scripture is an endless source of bafflement and frustration for Cyril" (p. 22).

At the core of Cyril's explication of the Pentateuch are the two themes of Jesus Christ as the Second Adam, and the work of the Holy Spirit. After surveying recent scholarship on Cyril's Old Testament exegesis, Hillis shows how that exegesis results in Cyril's understanding of the text. The introduction is an entry-point into Cyril as an exegete of Scripture and not merely a dogmatic theologian in conflict with Nestorius.

Nicholas Lunn, for his part, offers a readable and reliable translation of one of Cyril's most important exegetical writings. He serves as a Translation Consultant with Wycliffe Bible Translators and Associate Tutor in Old Testament at Spurgeon's College, London. Translating the *Glaphyra* into English is long overdue. Because of the importance of the Pentateuch in Scripture itself, and in the church's understanding of the gospel, an exegesis of the text is of inestimable importance. Fortunately, Lunn has given the church a highly accessible translation that is close enough to the original Greek to enable those consulting the PG to follow the English, while also making Cyril's often challenging Greek construction readable for those not familiar with Greek. This is no easy task, but Lunn has far exceeded expectations in his translation. Certainly, his work as a consultant with Wycliffe Bible Translators has shaped his sensitivity to English readers.

Cyril's Greek is difficult enough, but there are terms that are vital to his exegesis that challenge any reader or interpreter. Thankfully, in his preface, Lunn not only alerts the reader to the underlying Greek vocabulary but also gives his reasons for choosing one possible translation over another. Scholars familiar with Cyril will be aware of different readings of Cyril's exegesis, based on particular understandings of what he means when he uses technical terms. Competing interpretations of Cyril rest on (and often determine) how these terms are understood and, therefore, translated. Lunn bases his choice of English vocabulary on both lexical evidence and recent scholarship. Providing this information upfront affords the English-only reader with additional resources regarding Cyril's exegesis. Lunn's awareness of the theological issues at stake and the varied uses of technical terms in the commentary give the reader confidence.

To conclude, the translation is most helpful as it gives English readers the first opportunity to delve into Cyril's exegesis of the Pentateuch. Cyril is a representative biblical interpreter from the ancient church. He is an example of how Christians in the Alexandrian tradition read and understood the Pentateuch. He is also a pastor whose primary responsibility was interpreting the Bible for the church, not for scholarship. Readers discover both Cyril's methodology and the conclusions he garnered from reading the Law of Moses. These conclusions were, in his estimation, beneficial to the Christian congregation. Lunn's translation and Hillis's interpretation are rich contributions both to patristics scholarship and to the church. Pastors can discover the rich tradition of early Christian Christological interpretation of the Old Testament and perhaps understand more fully Jesus's statement, "Moses wrote of me."

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Darren Sarisky. *Reading the Bible Theologically*. Current Issues in Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. xix + 407 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1108497480. \$120.00.

Drawing on the late John Webster's question posed to theological studies, one might interrogate recent approaches to Scripture and theology as follows: What makes theological exegesis "theological"? and What makes the theological interpretation of Scripture "theological"? *Reading the Bible Theologically* is Darren Sarisky's attempt to answer. Like Webster's own response, Sarisky believes that "theological reading" of Scripture, at its most basic level, must understand both the biblical text and the reader in relation to God (p. xi). Sarisky serves as Associate Fellow and Departmental Lecturer in Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford,

and he comes to this task well familiar with the field as a prominent contributor, represented principally by his *Scriptural Interpretation: A Theological Exploration* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

With *Reading the Bible Theologically*, Sarisky purposes “to ascertain what the text signifies about divine reality and how this reality enfolds readers themselves” (p. 2). To accomplish his goal, Sarisky divides the monograph into two parts: “The Model of Augustine” (Part 1) and “A Constructive Proposal” (Part 2). In chapter 1, “The Reader, Redemption, and Signs,” Sarisky gleans from Augustine the idea that biblical words are a “species of signs” that “allow something to be known” (pp. 96–97). In addition, Scripture envisions an “implied reader” who possesses a set of predispositions (e.g., faith) and human capacities (i.e., embodied-souls), which are uniquely designed for divine grace to work its proper ends in the reader, through the mediate access the Bible supplies (pp. 80–81). Chapter 2, “Between *Scientia* and the Trinity,” then draws upon Augustine’s case for the incarnation to serve as the transition from the *scientia* (sensory knowledge) of the biblical text that gives way to the *sapientia* (the direct contemplation of the eternal God and his truth), a movement Augustine identifies as the *telos* of humanity.

The transition to Part 2 flows from Augustine’s theological ontology of the text and the reader and his “substantive” account of the practice of Bible reading. This sets the parameters within which interpretive questions, answers, and strategies should be posed (p. 142). To demonstrate that method, Sarisky examines Spinoza’s impact upon contemporary biblical interpretation in chapter 3, “In Contradistinction to Naturalism.” Here he shows how Spinoza’s “procedural,” “naturalist” method relegates theology to what is *explained*, instead of that which *explains* (p. 157), whereby the Bible reader becomes simply “a self-determining, textual analyst” (p. 165). In contrast, Sarisky responds with chapter 4, “Faith and the Ecclesial Community,” to argue that faith renders the reader “receptive to the text’s claims because a theological reader has the capacity to exercise faith in the God who discloses himself through the text” (p. 189). Moreover, the practice of faith-filled reading should conduct itself in its God-given social location of ecclesial life (pp. 211–13).

In chapter 5, “The Bible and Theological Semiotics,” Sarisky carefully considers how to relate the text (“what is written”) and its subject matter (“what is written about,” p. 242). Then the final chapter, “Exegetical Ends and Means,” puts forward three stages of theological reading (*explicatio*, *meditatio*, *applicatio*) to serve Sarisky’s stated goal of interpretation, which is “the movement of attending to God via the text” (pp. 287, 294). Sarisky closes the monograph with an extended response to the charge of eisegesis, something he identifies as probably the strongest objection to his

proposal (p. 332). He addresses this issue in familiar ways already on display in the prior chapters, and then ends the book in a modest tone, hopeful that his work can carve out a healthier path for the ongoing discussions and practice of “reading the Bible theologically.”

Sarisky has made a valued contribution to the “Current Issues in Theology” series. His case is well-made, from his exhaustive engagement with the diverse abundance of secondary literature to his careful, methodical working through several of the central points of discussion. Perhaps the most compelling aspect of Sarisky’s proposal emerges in his relentless devotion to his overarching claim: Theology does, indeed, make a difference to reading the Bible when the text and the reader are theologically understood. In this respect, the reward of Sarisky’s monograph is the clear, rigorous articulation and defense of the necessity of a “theological ontology” for the biblical text and the reader, due to Scripture’s own claims.

Anyone who embarks upon the challenge of *tolle, lege* will find this volume a deeply thought-out and instructive read that unashamedly desires to confess and advance the peculiar endeavor of Christian, theological reading of the Bible. This text would yield rich conversation for students and teachers in graduate and doctoral level settings, ranging from courses/seminars concerned with hermeneutics to bibliology to theological method. It is highly recommended for those with an interest in relating Scripture and theology and will likely become a new standard contribution to the field.

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Han-Luen Kantzer Komline. *Augustine on the Will: A Theological Account*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. xv + 469 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-0190948801. \$125.00

Han-Luen Kantzer Komline’s *Augustine on the Will* is a valuable contribution to the broader discussion of the nature and freedom of the will. It highlights the fact that multiple major views of the will in the history of Western thought draw on significant ideas in Augustine. Kantzer Komline approaches Augustine’s thought chronologically and developmentally and analyzes the progression of his conception of the will. Though she recognizes that a *strict* chronology would excise too many significant works, she adopts a generally chronological approach that allows for a debatable dating of some primary texts (pp. 7–8).

Kantzer Komline’s work divides neatly into two sections. The first three chapters provide an extensive survey of the development of Augustine’s thought on the will from *Soliloquia* (386/87) and *De Libero Arbitrio*

(388–95) to *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* (429–30), touching on most of the works written in between. Her mastery of the Augustinian corpus is on impressive display through these chapters, and she highlights Augustine's movement from taking a generally autonomous view of the will in *Soliliqua* and the first two books of *De Libero Arbitrio*, through the famous turn in *Ad Simplicianum*, to a much more complex view that arose out of the Pelagian controversy. In this section, she highlights the human powers of the will as *created* (*posse non peccare*) and the will as *fallen* (*non posse non peccare*).

Chapters 4 through 6 focus on the development of Augustine's view of the will during the Pelagian controversy. Here the author emphasizes the Trinitarian element of Augustine's view of the will, his formulation of the *redeemed* will (*posse non peccare*) in regards to the work of God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and concludes with a discussion of the *eschatological* will (*non posse peccare*) that believers will attain in the heavenly city.

Kantzer Komline has three central points to make in her work, and she makes them all convincingly. First, she shows that Augustine does not provide one account of the will, but instead develops a concept of the will that is contextualized by theological periods of creation, fall, redemption, and eschaton. Second, she demonstrates that Augustine's approach to the will was neither completely innovative nor derivative on early accounts—such as the Stoic *Horme* (419–20). Instead, Augustine draws on sources that already put biblical, theological, and philosophical discussions into dialogue (e.g., Cicero, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyprian, and Ambrose), and that he adapts and innovates from this basis. Third, Augustine's view of the will does not move from being philosophical to theological but is instead simultaneously philosophical, theological, and biblical throughout his career. She stresses that even in *Soliliqua*, *De Libero Arbitrio*, and other early works, Augustine is at pains to ground his ideas in Scripture (pp. 52–56).

Nevertheless, a question to raise from Kantzer Komline's treatment of Augustine's work is whether he understands the will as a faculty or an action. Her own answer is that Augustine understands the will as a dynamic action *rather* than a faculty (pp. 266–69). She claims that this is an unchanging feature of his view (p. 418). However, while Augustine does refer to the will as “a movement of the mind” throughout his corpus, his early conception of the will as a *cardo*, or hinge, that turns the person towards good or towards ill reads much more like a faculty than a dynamic act. While she competently defends Augustine's understanding of will as action in his later works, the question seems open in his earlier works.

A second question concerns the relation of the will to the passions. Kantzer Komline effectively defends the contention that Augustine

comes to equate “will” with “love”—specifically *caritas* and *cupiditas* as two distinct wills (pp. 246–49). However, she indicates that even from the beginning of his career, Augustine understood the will to be *prior* to the passions: In some sense, for early Augustine, we *love* that which we *will* rather than the other way around (p. 108). Nevertheless, she also suggests that the will is, for Augustine, conditioned by circumstances both social and theological (pp. 150, 258–65, 280). These seem to be contradictory ideas, though perhaps this is due to a misreading by the reviewer. In any event, more explanation would be helpful.

Overall, as John C. Cavadini says (back cover), Kantzer Komline's treatment of Augustine's view(s) of the will is destined to become a “standard resource.” She shows a deep mastery of the Augustinian corpus and a broad familiarity with the secondary literature in English, French, and German. Her arguments, even where she highlights apparent and unresolved conflicts, are bolstered by her emphasis on Augustine's reliance on narrative and metaphor (p. 225), and on the development of his thought over time.

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Petrus van Mastricht. *Theoretical-Practical Theology: Faith in the Triune God*, vol. 2, ed. Joel Beeke, trans. Todd M. Rester. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019. xxxviii + 660. Hardback. ISBN 978-1601785596. \$50.00.

Petrus van Mastricht (1630–1706) ministered as a pastor and professor during the Dutch Further Reformation (*Nadere Reformatie*) of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Paralleling Puritan efforts in England, the Netherlands's *Nadere Reformatie* emphasized practical piety along with Reformed doctrine. One sees a chief example of this experiential approach to theology in Petrus van Mastricht's seven-volume work, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*. Although the Anglophone world has lacked access to Van Mastricht's Dutch magnum opus, the Dutch Reformed Translation Society is working to publish these volumes into English for the first time. In 2019, the Society, led by editor Joel Beeke and translator Todd Rester, published Van Mastricht's second volume of these works. This second volume presents Van Mastricht's doctrine of God, entitled *Faith in the Triune God*.

Many consider Van Mastricht's magnum opus as the premier work of theology for pastors and preachers. Van Mastricht combines piercing exegesis with clear doctrinal presentations, insightful polemics, and pastoral applications. However, lovers of the lofty truths of Reformed theology

often disconnect the theologians concerned from their original contexts. Van Mastricht ministered and taught theology when the Netherlands faced political crises from the Roman Catholic armies and philosophical threats from Cartesian metaphysics.

Van Mastricht speaks with prophetic conviction against the inevitable outcomes of rationalizing faith in God. Modern Christians see the results of these ideas in the havoc wreaked within contemporary ethics and theology by post-modernism. Van Mastricht's theology is essentially pastoral in nature. He believes that these high truths would comfort souls and ward off wolves. Van Mastricht's theological method remains relevant today for pastors and theologians who seek to recover preaching, teaching, and counseling that informs the mind and engages the heart with God's Word.

Reflecting his commitment to present both a theoretical and practical system, Van Mastricht foregoes traditional organizations of theology proper and introduces the doctrine of God with an explication of saving faith. The editors comment that Van Mastricht aims to instruct his readers and students in the necessary disposition of faith if they desire to study God. One must engage the study of God from saving faith. The editors state that Van Mastricht aims for readers to "believe with true faith for the salvation of their souls, and bear faith's good fruit in a life of humble obedience to God" (p. xxxi). In the first chapter, Van Mastricht distinguishes saving faith from counterfeit faith by exploring the pathologies of various forms of faith and its activities and responses to God within the world. Van Mastricht calls for academics to reform Christian education by returning theological pedagogy to the context of the local church, where pastors and members evaluate prospective students for saving faith and its fruit.

Van Mastricht uses traditional theological categories to explain the attributes of God. He organizes God's attributes under three statements according to their functions: (1) what God is, (2) how great God is, and (3) what qualities God has (p. 121). With reference to himself—what God is—God is simplicity and spirituality (pp. 129ff.). These attributes require omnimodal immutability, "for he who is ... does not admit someone prior who would change him, and he who is most simple does not have anything that would, through change, be taken away or remain" (p. 153). After these first-class attributes proceed characteristics that describe the *quantity* of God—how great God is—in his unity, infinity, and eternity. One derives from God's infinity his omnipresence with reference to space, his eternity with reference to time, and his immortality with reference to life and being. As the living Spirit par excellence, God demon-

strates rational, emotional, and volitional faculties and their perfect attributes—what qualities God has. From these faculties stem the typical communicable attributes assigned to God such as truthfulness, goodness, grace, love, mercy, righteousness, and holiness. These primitive attributes insinuate three final summary attributes: perfection, glory, and blessedness.

Van Mastricht's unique contribution to theology consists in this clear presentation of the logical connections between the divine attributes. Many Christians take an inductive approach to theology proper where one gathers the various attributes assigned to God throughout Scripture and taxonomizes each characteristic or trait. Van Mastricht deduces the nature of God starting from God's ectypal revelation as Spirit and each logical subsequent attribute. This methodology provides balance between the divine attributes and prevents the privileging of one characteristic over another. For example, as an omnimodal, immutable, omnipotent, and eternal Spirit, God's love and mercy cannot override his sovereign rule over creation since his moral attributes derive from his essence and perfections.

Van Mastricht concludes with a helpful summary of the doctrine of the Trinity. He establishes the relationship between the attributes of God and each divine personality, which he defines as "a rational, incommunicable substance" (p. 503). He also explores the individual operations of each member of the Trinity in relation to one another and humanity. Since many heresies arise from misunderstanding or distorting the doctrine of the Trinity, Van Mastricht's clear presentation and pastoral application of the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will benefit many contemporary theological discussions.

This volume will contribute to the growing library of translated works from the *Nadere Reformatie* and the study of practical piety. Van Mastricht is a friend of counselors and pastors who desire to connect theological truths to the lives of counselees and congregants. Van Mastricht challenges all students and leaders in theology and ministry to recover theology's great goal of "living for God through Christ" (p. xxxv).

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F. Albert Tizon. *Whole and Reconciled: Gospel, Church, and Mission in a Fractured World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. xxi + 230 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0801095627. \$22.99.

Al Tizon, executive minister of Serve Globally, presents a thought-provoking argument for reconciliation as an integral part of mission in a

fractured and broken world. Speaking directly into the context of the holistic mission debate among evangelicals, he wholeheartedly calls for both evangelism and social justice, but argues that “holistic mission also needs to be about joining God in *putting the world back together* again” (p. xvii). Tizon is unapologetically evangelical as he prioritizes the gospel and humanity’s need for reconciliation to God. Without this vertical (God-people) reconciliation, the horizontal (people-people) and circular (God-people-creation) reconciliations cannot come to fruition (p. 87).

Tizon defines reconciliation as “God’s initiative to restore wholeness to a shattered creation” (p. xviii). He argues it is part of mission through a series of four sections. He describes the context (one world), defines the message (one gospel), introduces the key players (one church), and states the task (one mission). In doing so, he approaches reconciliation in mission from sociological, theological, ecclesiological, and practical angles (p. xxi).

In the first section, he describes globalization, post-Christendom, and postcolonialism and wrestles with their implications for mission in the twenty-first century. His description of each trend is comprehensive, yet concise, and he offers readers a solid introduction to the discussions, as well as major issues each trend presents in mission. This section demonstrates that reconciliation uniquely contributes to mission today due to the wounds and brokenness of the current global context.

Next, Tizon argues for the whole gospel, which he contrasts with the false gospels of hate, prosperity, comfort, and empire, as well as the half gospels of personal salvation (that only focuses on the spiritual aspect) and social liberation. This section forms a crucial part of his argument in which he calls for an expanded understanding of the gospel to include kingdom shalom. He includes thoughtful narratives, well-argued critiques of other false or half gospels, and a biblically anchored picture of a whole gospel that includes both personal and social aspects (p. 62).

In the next section, Tizon describes a whole church as a group of whole people who are broken, yet bold. Drawing from the Trinity’s plurality, distinctiveness, and love, he calls for the church to “practice the Trinity” through community, diversity, and love (pp. 112–13). While few people would argue with his major points, some evangelicals might contest their explicit connection to the Trinity.

Finally, Tizon highlights the whole mission. His section on the Great Commission and its relationship to other “Greats” in the Bible is beautiful and winsome. He proposes that instead of replacing the Great Commission, passages such as Luke 4:18–19, Matt 5–7, the texts describing Jesus’s death and resurrection, and Rev 7:9 “fill in, deepen, beautify, and complete it” (p. 167). These other passages in Scripture show believers what

it means to “[teach] them to obey all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:18–20). Tizon concludes with a call for peace-making, or reconciliation, in mission. Unfortunately, his sudden shift from reconciliation, which he uses in previous chapters, to peace-making is confusing and disjointed, and this section, which should have been an important part of the book, feels rushed.

As another point of critique, while he is often fair and balanced, Tizon occasionally veers towards examples from one side of the spectrum without acknowledging the existence of other views. This weakness is most felt in some of his discussions about American Christians. Though this fault does not detract from the overall usefulness of the book, Tizon could have made an even stronger argument by giving a fuller picture of the diversity in American evangelical Christianity.

In any event, this book stands apart from others in this genre because Tizon attempts to use different definitions to paint a fuller picture instead of pitting them against each other. For example, Tizon presents four aspects of discipleship—evangelism, justice, compassion, and reconciliation—as perspectives of the whole. Instead of emphasizing one perspective at the expense of the others, Tizon uses them all together to deepen Christian understanding.

In sum, Tizon attempts to navigate the sometimes-treacherous waters of the holistic mission debate while also adding reconciliation to the conversation. Anyone thinking critically about mission in the twenty-first century should interact with Tizon’s work. Even if one does not agree with his overall thesis, his presentation of current topics in this field is invaluable to those who are new to it and to those who have worked for decades but recognize the cultural shift around them. He presents a fair critique of the major camps represented in the current argument and searches for a way forward that is faithful to God’s word in the twenty-first-century global context.

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John C. Lennox. *Can Science Explain Everything?* Epsom, UK: The Good Book Company, 2019. 128 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1784984113. \$9.83

Many believe that relating science to faith is antagonistic to humanity’s move towards greater truth, happiness, and progress. Historically, naturalism has prevailed as the dominant worldview in academia and Western culture, particularly in medicine and the sciences. Dating back to the an-

cient Greeks, naturalism proposes that the motions, properties, and interactions of atoms are sufficient to explain every aspect of the world and human life. In fact, the success of science has led many to assume that science, faith, and God do not mix well in our twenty-first-century culture. To tackle this subject, John C. Lennox writes *Can Science Explain Everything?* He aims to address specific questions he has encountered through his long career of teaching, dialoguing, and witnessing to those who reject the Christian faith. Topics he addresses range from the relationship of science and religion, to miracles and the historicity of Christ's death and resurrection.

In chapter 1, the author asks whether a scientist can believe in God. As a scientist and academic himself, Lennox answers with a resounding affirmation, citing the many scientists and Nobel Prize winners who have declared a belief in God. However, there have also been many scientists denying God's existence. Therefore, the conflict is not whether a scientist can believe in God but whether science fits better within a naturalistic or theistic worldview. Then, in chapter 2, Lennox considers the historical developments leading to the antagonism between science and religion in Western culture. He argues that a major factor behind this phenomenon is the confusion surrounding both the nature of scientific explanation and how one interprets the nature of God. Specifically, many scientists overlook the different realms of explanation in science and religion. Lennox summarizes,

Suppose you ask: Why is the water boiling? I may say that heat energy from the gas flame is being conducted through the copper base of the kettle and is agitating the molecules of the water to such an extent that the water is boiling. Or, I may say that the water is boiling because I want a cup of tea. We see at once that both of these explanations are equally rational—they each make perfect sense—but they are very different. The first is scientific and the second is personal, involving my intentions, will and desire. What is also obvious is that the two explanations do not conflict or even compete. They complement each other. (p. 36)

Following this observation, Lennox addresses two central myths of the science-faith relationship in chapters 3 and 4. The first is that religion depends on faith, but science does not. The second is that science depends on reason, but Christianity does not. On the first, he argues that faith is a necessary component of all knowledge in both science and religion, given the vast complexity and mysteries of the universe. On the second, he observes that Jesus Christ himself had a high view of reason as he argued extensively with the leading intellectual and religious scholars of his day

(e.g., John 8:39–40).

In chapter 5, Lennox addresses biblical interpretation in the light of scientific advancements. He argues that a literal interpretation of scripture should consider metaphorical and literary motifs to avoid confusion and contradictions with scientific discoveries, such as the evidence for the Big Bang. In chapter 6, he discusses the possibility of miracles by arguing against David Hume's primary objections against them, namely that miracles were part of pre-scientific cultures, ignorant of our modern scientific understanding, and that they violate the laws of nature. Then, in chapters 7 and 8, Lennox establishes the reliability of Scripture and the reality of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Specifically, he argues that Christianity is falsifiable if anyone can provide a reasonable argument against Christ's resurrection.

Overall, this book is a good introduction, presenting major objections to naturalism and scientism, and towards religious belief and faith. The book condenses many of the arguments Lennox has made in public forums and debates in a format accessible to the layperson. For well-read Christians, it is a good refresher on the topic and a great resource for church discussions and Bible studies. However, the book's brevity prevents a deep exploration of the history and arguments surrounding science and faith. This is particularly evident in the short sections on hermeneutics, the reliability of the New Testament, and the resurrection of Christ. Other scholars, such as Gary Habermas or Alister McGrath, would be more appropriate resources for those wanting to explore these areas in greater depth. Nevertheless, Lennox's book serves as a succinct argument for the harmony between science and faith in the modern scientific age.

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