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CONTENTS

ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEWS

STR 12.1 (Spring 2021): 1–2

Introduction

Benjamin L. Merkle
Editor

This un-themed issue of *STR* is jam-packed with six essays from a wide variety of disciplines, including Old Testament, ethics, theology, ecclesiology, and missions. The first essay is by Catherine McDowell, Associate Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, NC. Her article, "What Isaiah Knew: The LORD Is God and There Is No Other," explains how Isaiah not only uses sarcasm and other literary devices to combat Israel's idolatry, but he also interacts with the Mesopotamian Washing and Opening of the Mouth ritual as a rhetorical strategy to emphasize that Yahweh alone is God.

Jordan Steffaniak, currently a PhD candidate in philosophy at the University of Birmingham (UK), contributed the second essay titled, "Saving Masculinity and Femininity from the Morgue: A Defense of Gender Essentialism." After first defining "gender" and then "essentialism," he defends traditional evangelical essentialism, rejecting some of the extremes, and demonstrates that this view of gender is good for all people, especially women.

The third essay, "Inseparable Operations of the Trinity: Outdated Relic or Valuable Tool?" is by Torey Teer, a PhD candidate at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Teer defends the classic doctrine of inseparable operations of the Trinity as having historical precedent, being methodologically viable, and being theologically sound. The relevance for this doctrine comes with its ability to explain difficult concepts such as the full divinity (and thus participation in all divine activity) of both the Son and the Spirit, the incarnation (including the cry of dereliction) of the Son, and the Spirit's activity in world religions.

The fourth essay ("The Sonship of Christ in the Contexts of Mission: Chalcedonian Retrieval as Missiological Necessity among Muslims"), coauthored by Brandon Smith and Matthew Bennett of Cedarville University, addresses the issue of contextualizing references to the Sonship of Jesus, especially among Muslims. Smith and Bennett argue that the Chalcedonian articulation of Christ's Sonship has relevance for contemporary Christian missiology.

C. J. Moore, the author of the fifth contribution, is a PhD candidate in Biblical Studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. His essay,

"An Ecclesiological Mission: The Basis for William Carey's Threefold Mission Strategy," details how Carey's missiology was based on a sound ecclesiology. Thus, his strategy was (1) missional or evangelistic, (2) word-centered, often focusing on Bible translation, and (3) didactic, thereby prioritizing education.

The final essay, "A Missiology of Hope: Reading Lesslie Newbigin in a Post-Pandemic World," is by Stephen Stallard, lead pastor of Mosaic Baptist Church in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. Stallard leverages the work of Lesslie Newbigin, a twentieth-century missiologist, to counter the current crisis of despair and offer a message of hope.

STR 12.1 (Spring 2021): 3–14

What Isaiah Knew: The LORD Is God and There Is No Other

Catherine McDowell
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, NC

Despite being God's covenant people, ancient Israel was deeply entrenched in idolatry for most of its pre-exilic history. In response, the prophets spoke sharply, often using startling imagery, sarcasm, and creative rhetorical strategies in an effort to seize Israel's attention. Isaiah's idol parodies, specifically Isa 40:18–20 and Isa 44:9–20, showcase his use of emphatic syntax, sarcasm, literary devices, foreign vocabulary, and interaction with idol-making rituals, perhaps the Mesopotamian Washing and Opening of the Mouth, by which gods were thought to become manifest in their statues. The result was not only an effective rhetorical strategy but one that highlights in a creative and convincing way Isaiah's emphasis that Yahweh alone is God and there is no other.

Key Words: aniconism, idol making, idol parodies, idolatry, image, Isaiah, Monotheism, Washing and Opening of the Mouth, mīs pî pīt pî

Isaiah's emphasis on "God alone" is a hallmark of the book that bears his name. To be sure, this is a *biblical* theme, but it is particularly prominent among the prophets who call Israel back to their exclusive covenant with Yahweh. The covenant demanded Israel's full allegiance: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exod 20:3). It also required Israel to abstain from fashioning idols: "You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Exod 20:4). Fidelity proved difficult for Israel to maintain. At Sinai, they created and then worshipped a golden calf (Exod 32), and later, at Shittim, they sacrificed to the Moabite god, Baal of Peor (Num 25:1–3; Deut 4:3). After settling in the promised land, they adopted Phoenician, Ammonite, Moabite, and Canaanite gods as their own, creating carved images of Baal and Asherah and worshipping them in shrines and temples they built in Samaria, Bethel, and Jerusalem (1 Kgs 11:15, 33; 2 Kgs 21; 23:13). In the Solomonic temple courts, Israel worshipped the hosts of heaven. During the reign of Manasseh, they sacrificed their children to foreign deities (2 Kgs 21:6, 9, 11). Judean women wove garments for the goddess Asherah (2 Kgs 23:7), and as families, they offered sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven (Jer 7:18;

44:17–19, 25). Despite Yahweh's strict requirements for exclusivity, Deuteronomy's repeated warnings against creating and worshiping images, and the LORD's longsuffering with his rebellious people, Israel's history was replete with syncretism.

The prophets' primary task was to remind Israel of her covenant obligations—to expose her rebellion, to pronounce judgment, to speak of God's mercy and a great future hope, and to call Israel back to the LORD. However, their "God alone" message was not exclusively about Israel's covenant faithfulness. *It was a proclamation of monotheism.* Israel was to worship Yahweh not only because he was their God, but because he *is* God and *there is no other* (Isa 37:20; 43:10–13; 44:6–8; 45:5–6, 14, 18, 21–22; 46:9).

Monotheism and aniconism were difficult for Israel to accept. Hence, the prophets mixed stinging words, sharp attacks, impassioned pleas, and grand visions of hope with extreme prophetic acts to jolt Israel out of her idolatrous stupor. The prophets' startling and, at times, blunt and sarcastic communicative style is perhaps best exemplified in a series of prophetic messages known collectively as the idol parodies,[1] in which the prophets expose the pure folly behind Israel's belief that humans could create a god. The detail with which the prophets describe the idol-making process suggests that they were quite familiar with it. In particular, Isaiah uses language and imagery in Isa 40:18–20 and Isa 44:9–20 that indicates his awareness of how gods were "born." He may even have been familiar with the ancient ritual by which the gods supposedly became manifest in their cult statues—the "Washing and Opening of the Mouth" (*mīs pî pīt pî*). Whatever his sources, Isaiah demonstrates familiarity with the methods and materials preserved in *mīs pî pīt pî* and the theological assumptions behind them.[2] He then cleverly refutes them to make a startling point: those who fashion and worship idols become ignorant, gullible, deluded, and enslaved because they worship an object they themselves have created (Isa 44:20).

In what follows, I will introduce the "Washing and Opening of the Mouth" ritual and mention a few recent studies that have explored possible interactions by biblical authors with the *mīs pî pīt pî*. I will then examine specific features of Isa 40:18–20 and Isa 44:9–20. Whether Isaiah was interacting directly with the *mīs pî pīt pî* or some other related body of knowledge on cult statue manufacture, hiss parodies reflect explicit

[1] Isa 40:18–20; 41:5–7; 42:8, 17; 44:9–22; 45:16–17, 20–21; 46:1–7; 48:5; Jer 10:3–15, Pss 115; 135.

[2] Christopher Walker and Michael Dick, *The Induction of a Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian Mīs Pî Ritual* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001), 25.

knowledge about idol-making, which he uses in surprising ways to refute their claims.

A Brief Introduction to the Washing and Opening of the Mouth (*mīs pî pīt pî*) Ritual

The ritual instructions and the accompanying incantations from Mesopotamia, which describe the physical manufacture and ritual birth of a cult statue, are known collectively by the Babylonian title *mīs pî* ("washing of the mouth") and *pīt pî* ("opening of the mouth"). The tablets were discovered at nine different sites,[3] including Nineveh and Babylon, and date to the 8th–5th centuries B.C.E.[4] However, that these texts may have been part of a long-standing tradition is suggested by the additional, albeit few, historical references to the washing and/or opening of the mouth found as early as the Ur III period, where priests performed the rite on statues of Gudea, the deified king of Lagash,[5] and on statues and other objects in the Old Babylonian period (2000–1600),[6] the Middle Babylonian period (14th–13th century),[7] and the Neo-Assyrian period.[8] The purpose of the *mīs pî* was to purify the recipient in preparation for cultic activity.[9] Priests performed it on the king and his royal insignia, various animals and sacred objects, individual humans, priests, royal statues, and on statues of the gods.[10] By contrast, the mouth-opening rite (*pīt pî*) was reserved for inanimate objects.[11] Its purpose was to consecrate, activate, and/or enliven the object in preparation for cultic use. When applied to a divine statue, the Opening of the Mouth was thought to animate the statue's sensory

[3] In addition to Nineveh and Babylon the *mīs pî* texts were found at Assur, Huzirina (Sultantepe), Hama (Syria), Sippar, Nippur, Kalḫu (Nimrud) and Uruk.

[4] See Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 27–29 and footnote 96 where they cite possible 3rd and 2nd millennia sources.

[5] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 18–20 and Irene J. Winter, "'Idols of the King': Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Action in Ancient Mesopotamia," *JRS* 6 (1992): 13–42.

[6] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 21.

[7] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 21–22.

[8] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 22–24.

[9] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 10–13, 16; A. Berlejung, *Die Theologie der Bilder: Herstellung und Einweihung von Kultbildern in Mesopotamien und die alttestamentliche Bilderpolemik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1998), 187.

[10] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 10–11.

[11] Walker and Dick *Induction*, 13–14; A. Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth: The Consecration of Divine Images in Mesopotamia," in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Karen van der Toorn (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 44–72, esp. p. 45.

organs and limbs, enabling it to consume offerings, smell incense, and move about freely.[12] Once the mouth washing and opening were complete, the statue was considered a fully functioning, living manifestation of the divine.[13]

The *mīs pî pīt pî* and the Old Testament

Several texts in the Old Testament indicate the authors' awareness that manipulating the sensory organs activated the individual. In Isa 6:6–7, a seraph removes Isaiah's guilt by touching his lips with a burning coal, readying him for prophetic service. Yahweh himself touches Jeremiah's mouth, enabling the prophet to proclaim the LORD's message (Jer 1:9–10). The sensory organs can also be deactivated to render someone unfit for their mission. Due to Israel's unfaithfulness, Yahweh vows to make their rebellious hearts dull so they cannot understand, their ears heavy so they cannot hear, and their eyes blind so they cannot see (Isa 6:9–10). Similarly, the psalmists warn that anyone who trusts in idols will conform to them. Like the anthropomorphic statues of the gods, worshippers will have eyes that cannot see, ears that cannot hear, a mouth that cannot speak, and a nose that cannot breathe nor smell (Pss 115:1–8; 135:15–18).

Genesis 1:26–27 and Gen 2:5–3:24 interact with the *mīs pî pīt pî*, or at least the ideas they contain, to redefine an "image of God."[14] Humans, not man-made statues, are God's living representatives. J. Kutsko compares the animation of divine statues in the "Washing and Opening of the Mouth" to the reconstitution of Israel by the breath (*rûaḥ*) of God in Ezek 37:9–10. He comments, "Ezekiel is intentionally contrasting creating humans with imagery involving divine statues."[15] N. Levtow proposes that

[12] As indicated in Incantation Tablet 3, "[…]This statue cannot smell incense without the 'Opening of the Mouth' ceremony. It cannot eat food nor drink water," in Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 140–41, 151 (lines 70–71).

[13] See Winter, "'Idols of the King,'" 14; T. Jacobsen, "The Graven Image," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller, Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 15–32; Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth," 46; and Walker and Dick *Induction*, 6–7.

[14] Catherine L. McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden; The Creation of Humankind in Genesis 2:5–3:24 in Light of the mīs pî pīt pî Rituals of Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015).

[15] J. Kutsko comments, "Ezekiel is intentionally contrasting creating humans with imagery involving divine statues" (*Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000], 197).

the idol parodies in Isa 44:9–20 and Jer 10:1–16 borrow terminology specifically from the Babylonian cult,[16] and M. Dick cites evidence from Isa 40:18–20 and Isa 44:9–20 to demonstrate the prophet's firsthand knowledge of Babylonian idol-making practices.[17]

In addition to what Levtow and Dick have noticed, there is further evidence in Isa 40:18–20 and Isa 44:9–20, which indicates that the prophet had personal knowledge of idol construction and consecration. Through an analysis of select vocabulary, syntax, and imagery in Isa 40:18–20 and Isa 44:9–20, by consulting the translation history of these passages in the ancient witnesses and select modern English Bibles, and by considering a relevant comparative text, I will attempt to bolster the case that Levtow and Dick have made. I will also suggest that Isaiah used his knowledge of idol-making practices, and perhaps even the *mīs pî pīt pî* itself, to create a compelling prophetic message against the creation and worship of idols.

Isaiah 40:18–20: מְסֻכָּן, *musukkānu and mēsu*

וְאֶל־מִי תְּדַמְּיוּן אֵל וּמַה־דְּמוּת תַּעַרְכוּ לוֹ: 40:19הַפֶּסֶל נָסַךְ חָרָשׁ וְצוֹרֵף
בַּזָּהָב יְרַקְּעֶנּוּ וּרְתֻקוֹת כֶּסֶף צוֹרֵף: 40:20הַמְסֻכָּן תְּרוּמָה עֵץ לֹא־יִרְקַב[18]
יִבְחַר חָרָשׁ חָכָם יְבַקֶּשׁ־לוֹ לְהָכִין פֶּסֶל לֹא יִמּוֹט:

> To whom will you liken God, or what likeness will you compare to him? As for the idol, a craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith with gold gilds it, and silver chains he casts. מְסֻכָּן wood[19] (for) an offering,[20] wood that will not rot he chooses. A skillful craftsman he seeks for himself to set up an idol that will not move.

The Hebrew term מְסֻכָּן occurs only here in the MT. The LXX and Peshitta of Isa 40:20 offer no equivalent for this term, but the Vulgate renders it as *orte lignum*, "strong wood" and the Targums reads אורן, "laurel tree." HAL (606) suggests that מְסֻכָּן is a pual participle of the Middle Hebrew סכן, "to become poor," a view that is, unfortunately, followed by most English translations: "a person too poor" (NIV), "he who is too

[16] Nathaniel Levtow, *Images of Others: Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 64.

[17] Michael B. Dick, "Worshipping Idols: What Isaiah Didn't Know," *Bible Review* 18 (2002): 30–37.

[18] 1QIsa[a] reads ירבק vs MT ירקב. The DSS reading is likely the result of metathesis.

[19] The type of wood is unknown. See *CAD* 10.2:237–39.

[20] The addition of "for" follows Robert Alter's suggestion in his *Prophets*, vol. 2 of *The Hebrew Bible* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2019), 751. There is no equivalent for תְּרוּמָה in the Peshitta, Targums, and the Vulgate.

impoverished" (ESV), "he that is so impoverished" (KJV). The Vulgate and Targums, however, find support in the cognate Akkadian term *musukkānu*. This noun denotes an unidentified species of tree (or its wood) imported into Mesopotamia from Gandara and Karmana (in modern-day Pakistan) in the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods, but which was locally available in Assyria and Babylonia in the 1st millennium.[21] The Sumerian equivalent, *'mes* or *mēsu*, is identified in "Erra" and "Eshum," an 8th century BC Mesopotamian myth contemporary with Isaiah, as "the flesh of the gods,"[22] meaning that the basic form or wooden core of the statue was made from *mēsu*/*musukkānu* wood. Because Isaiah used the Hebrew cognate of Akkadian *musukkānu* in his parody, M. Dick concludes that the prophet must have had "personal knowledge of Babylonian cult images and their dedication ceremonies."[23] At the very least, Isaiah's choice of מְסֻכָּן rather than the generic Hebrew term for "wood" (עֵץ), indicates he had particular rather than general knowledge of idol-making.

Isaiah 44:11: וְ and מֵאָדָם

הֵן כָּל[24]־חֲבֵרָיו יֵבֹשׁוּ וְחָרָשִׁים הֵמָּה מֵאָדָם יִתְקַבְּצוּ כֻלָּם יַעֲמֹדוּ יִפְחֲדוּ
יֵבֹשׁוּ יָחַד:

> Behold, all of its worshippers will be put to shame, for the craftsmen are merely human! Let them assemble, all of them, let them stand up. They will be terrified. They will be put to shame together.

Given the וְ + noun combination in וְחָרָשִׁים the וְ probably represents a disjunctive, "For the craftsmen,"[25] contra the ESV, which renders it as a conjunction, "and the craftsmen." The disjunctive accent *zāqēp qāṭôn* above יֵבֹשׁוּ separates it from the following וְחָרָשִׁים and further indicates there is a break at this point.[26] Although they interpret the pause differently, the NIV and NASB recognize the disjunction, translating it with a combination of punctuation and an pronoun (NIV) or a preposition (NASB), as follows:

[21] P. R. S. Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries: The Archaeological Evidence* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 352.

[22] "Erra and Eshum," trans. Stephanie Dalley (COS 1.407:150).

[23] See M. Dick, "Worshipping Idols," 36.

[24] 1QIsa[a] 37:16 differs only in two insignificant ways: הנה for הֵן and the plene spelling כול for MT כָּל.

[25] See B. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 129, 650.

[26] Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 2006), 58.

People who do that will be put to shame; such craftsmen.… (NIV)

Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen.… (NASB)

Why this is significant is related to the preposition מִן on מֵאָדָם.[27] The LXX of Isa 44:11a has a different reading,[28] and the DSS is inconclusive.[29] The Vulgate and the Targums are somewhat ambiguous:

Vulgate:

fabri enim sunt ex hominibus

the carpenters, in fact, are from/out of (but?) men

Targums:

וְאוּמָנִין עָבְדוּנִין מִבְנֵי אֱנָשָׁא

the craftsmen, from men,[30] made them

However, the ESV, NIV, NASB, NRSV, and NKJV translate the מִן on מֵאָדָם as follows:

and the craftsmen are only human (ESV)

such craftsmen are only human beings (NIV)

for the craftsmen themselves are mere men (NASB)

the artisans too are merely human (NRSV)

And the workmen, they are mere men (NKJV)

Given the probability that the וְ is disjunctive, that the Vulgate and Targums of Isa 44:11a only make sense if the they used *ex* and מִן in the sense of "but," "merely," or "only," that in the Masoretic tradition there is a break after יִבָּשׁוּ, and the collective opinion of scholars on the translation committees of several major English translations, it is reasonable to conclude that Isaiah uses a disjunctive וְ + מִן intentionally to create a more emphatic statement than merely using the disjunctive וְ or the מִן alone. How ludicrous, says Isaiah, for Israel to think that *mere humans* can create a god!

[27] This may be a *min* of material. See Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 130.

[28] καὶ πάντες ὅθεν ἐγένοντο ἐξηράνθησαν, καὶ κωφοὶ ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπων.

[29] The DSS is identical to the MT: יחר□ים המה מאדם.

[30] The בנים in מִבְנֵי אֱנָשָׁא may designate a group, class, or guild, as it does in Hebrew in 1 Sam 10:5, Amos 7:14, 1 Kgs 20:35, Isa 19:11, Eccl (Qoh) 10:17, Neh 3:8, and 2 Chr 24:7 and *HAL* 137. Alternatively, it may simply mean "human," as it does in Dan 2:28 and 5:21. Whatever the case, to translate מִבְנֵי אֱנָשָׁא as "merely human" takes the מִן into account.

Isaiah's emphasis is all the more understandable if he is responding to the *mīs pî pīt pî* texts, or at least the image-making rituals they preserve. At one point in the "Washing and Opening of the Mouth," the artisans symbolically cut off their hands and repeatedly swear that they were not involved in the statue's creation:[31] "I did not make him (the statue), Ninagal (who is) Ea (god) of the smith made him."[32] "Esarhaddon's Renewal of the Gods" expresses a similar view.[33] After his father, Sennacherib, had sacked Babylon, destroyed its temples, and captured its gods (their statues), Esarhaddon restored the statues before attempting to return them to Babylon. He claims:

> Whose right is it, O great gods, to create gods and goddesses in a place where man dare not trespass? This task of refurbishing (the statues) which you have constantly been allotting to me (by oracle) is difficult! Is it the right of deaf and blind human beings who are ignorant of themselves and remain in ignorance throughout their lives? The making of (images of) the gods and goddesses is your right; it is in your hands; so I beseech you, create (the gods), and in your exalted holy of holies, may what you yourselves have in your heart be brought about in accordance with your unalterable word. Endow the skilled craftsmen whom you ordered to complete this task with as high an understanding as Ea, their creator. Teach them skills by your exalted word; make all their handiwork succeed through the craft of Ninshiku.[34]

Esarhaddon acknowledges that creating cult statues is exclusively a divine task. His prayer, however, is that the gods would endow the human craftsmen with supernatural ability. This may be the idea to which Isaiah responds. Despite the *mīs pî pīt pî's* repudiation of human involvement, its repeated proclamations that a team of divine craftsmen created the statue, and Esarhaddon's prayer to fill the human craftsmen with divine wisdom, Isaiah replies emphatically וְחָרָשִׁים הֶמָּה מֵאָדָם, "As for the craftsmen, they are merely human!" Their creation is nothing but a block of wood, a shameful lie in their right hand (Isa 44:19–20).

Isaiah 44:14: אֹרֶן and *erēnu*

Isaiah may further demonstrate his familiarity with idol-making rituals by using another *hapax legomena* in Isa 44:14. He lists four types of wood

[31] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 65 (lines 173–175 and 179–86), 76, 80 (lines 51–52).

[32] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 76, 80 (lines 51–52).

[33] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 25–26.

[34] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 25.

used in the process of idol-making: אֲרָזִים (cedar), תִּרְזָה (cypress?),[35] אַלּוֹן (oak), and אֹרֶן. Two Hebrew manuscripts suggest אֶרֶז (cedar) as a *kethib* for אֹרֶן,[36] but this has no support among the ancient witnesses.[37] The LXX and Peshitta of Isa 44:14 lack an equivalent term. However, the Vulgate translates it as *pinum* (pine, fir), and the Targum renders it as אוֹרָן (laurel).[38] H. R. Cohen, followed by M. Dick, has identified Hebrew אֹרֶן as the Akkadian loanword *erēnu*, "cedar."[39] Cedarwood and its oil were used in various rituals, including the "Washing and Opening of the Mouth."[40] If Isaiah was familiar with the rituals for making a cult statue, it is not surprising that he would mention it in the context of an idol parody.

Isaiah 44:14 and the Growing and Felling of Trees

הָלַךְ[41] לִכְרֹת־לוֹ אֲרָזִים וַיִּקַּח תִּרְזָה וְאַלּוֹן וַיְאַמֵּץ־לוֹ בַּעֲצֵי־יָעַר נָטַע אֹרֶן וְגֶשֶׁם יְגַדֵּל׃

> He cuts down cedars for himself. He takes a cypress tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. (Isa 44:14)

Isaiah's description of the craftsman felling trees, of strengthening the tree, and of rain as the agent which causes the tree to grow may reveal his familiarity with one of the incantations[42] from the *mīs pî pīt pî* entitled, "As you come out/grow in greatness from the forest."[43] In the incantation, the god Enki waters the tree, causing it to drink the pure water of the

[35] This, too, is a *hapax legomenon*. The species to which it refers is unknown.

[36] See M. Dick, "Prophetic Parodies of Making the Cult Image," in *Born in Heaven Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Michael B. Dick (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 29 note y.

[37] The LXX and the Peshitta of Isa 44:14 offer no equivalent for Hebrew אֹרֶן.

[38] It is also preserved in 1QIsa[a] (with plene spelling) as אורן.

[39] H. R. Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena in the Light of Akkadian and Ugaritic* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 44–45.

[40] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 54 (line 13), 55 (lines 26, 37), 56 (line 45), 62 (line 132), 78 (lines 17, 20), and 80 (line 41).

[41] The MT reads לִכְרֹת־לוֹ without הל but cf. the LXX (*ekopsen* , "he cut") and the Vulgate (*succidit*, "he cut"). This emendation is suggested by D. Winton Thomas, "Isaiah XLIV. 9–20: A Translation and Commentary," *Hommages à André Dupont-Sommer*, ed. A. Caquot and M. Philonenko (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1971), 326. It is adopted by Richard J. Clifford, "The Function of Idol Passages in Isaiah," *CBQ* 42 (1980): 450–64 (see especially p. 461n28), and Dick, "Prophetic Parodies," 1–53 (see especially p. 28 note v).

[42] Incantation Tablet 1/2 (ST 199) in Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 114–22.

[43] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 114–21 esp. lines 13–40.

Apsû,[44] and the god Ninildu "touches" (chops down) the tree with his great ax, his fine chisel, and his pure saw.[45] By identifying the rain, which elsewhere Isaiah attributes to Yahweh (Isa 55:10), as the agent which waters the tree, and the human craftsman as the one who cuts it down, Isaiah may be subtly denying the involvement of, and probably, in light of Isa 44:6–8, the existence of, the other gods supposedly involved in making the idol. This is especially so given the preceding emphatic וְ + מִן combination in וְחָרָשִׁים הֵמָּה מֵאָדָם ("As for the craftsmen, they are merely human) in vs. 14, discussed above.

Isaiah 44:15, 17: אֵל and פֶּסֶל

אַף־יִפְעַל־אֵל וַיִּשְׁתָּחוּ

also he makes a god and bows down,

עָשָׂהוּ פֶסֶל וַיִּסְגָּד־לָמוֹ

He creates[46] it, an idol, and falls down before it. (Isa 44:15)

לְאֵל עָשָׂה לְפִסְלוֹ

Into a god he makes his idol

יִסְגָּוד־לוֹ וְיִשְׁתַּחוּ

his idol, and he falls down to it and worships. (Isa 44:17)

Twice in Isa 44:15, 17 Isaiah mockingly defines אֵל, a god, as a פֶּסֶל, a derogatory term used consistently throughout the Old Testament as a term for an abominable image made of stone, wood, or metal.[47] The syntactic parallelism in v. 15 underscores his sarcasm:

> verb (יִפְעַל, עָשָׂהוּ) + object (אֵל, פֶּסֶל) + waw consecutive (וַיִּשְׁתָּחוּ, וַיִּסְגָּד)

Isaiah also departs from the standard Hebrew word order in v. 17. Instead of leading with verb-subject Isaiah highlights the objects אֵל by placing it at the front of the clause.[48]

Isaiah's pairing of אֵל with פֶּסֶל may be another indication of his familiarity with idol-making practices. The terms *ilu* (god) and *ṣalmu* (image)

[44] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 116, 120 (line 31).

[45] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 116, 120 (lines 33–35).

[46] For עשׂה as "to create" see HAL עשׂה I qal 4.

[47] See Exod 20:4; Deut 4:16; 2 Kgs 21:7; Jer 10:14; 51:17; Hab 2:18; and Ps 97:7.

[48] See Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 346–47.

are used interchangeably throughout the *mīs pî pīt pî*, both before and after the image was purified and animated. In other words, the image was simultaneously a statue and a god both before and after its ritual birth. The materiality of a divine being created no dissonance for ancient worshippers, but this is precisely the issue Isaiah addresses—God cannot and does not exist in a manmade statue. It was necessary, thus, in order for Isaiah to make his point, that he emphasize the idol's material nature.

Although *ṣelem* was one of many Hebrew terms for "idol," Isaiah never uses it, perhaps because its Akkadian cognate *ṣalmu* was equated with a divine being and because its range of meaning in Hebrew was not exclusively materialistic—a point Isaiah consistently emphasized. Perhaps Isaiah may have chosen פֶּסֶל[49] because it refers specifically to a *manufactured* image, whether carved from wood, sculpted in stone, cast in metal, or plaited with gold and silver.[50]

There is yet an even more significant reason for Isaiah's choice. פֶּסֶל is the term God himself uses in Exod 20:4, and Deut 5:8, לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה־לְךָ פָסֶל, "You shall not make for yourself a carved image …". Isaiah may intend for פֶּסֶל to remind Israel of the specific commandment prohibiting idol-making and the covenant as a whole.

Isaiah 44:18 and Malfunctioning Sensory Organs

Finally, the reference to the blind and ignorant craftsmen in Isa 44:18 suggests that Isaiah had firsthand knowledge specifically of the *pīt pî* portion of the ritual. Concerning the human craftsmen he states:

לֹא יָדְעוּ וְלֹא יָבִינוּ כִּי טָח מֵרְאוֹת עֵינֵיהֶם מֵהַשְׂכִּיל לִבֹּתָם

> They do not know, nor do they discern, because he (Yahweh) has smeared over their eyes so they cannot see (and) their hearts so they cannot understand.

To enable the god/statue to see, hear, smell, speak, breathe, and move about as a living being, the priest performed activation rituals. The Babylonian version even explicitly mentions the opening of the eyes.[51] That the priest places the image facing the sunrise in the Nineveh version suggests a similar emphasis on the eyes' animation.[52] By claiming that Yahweh has smeared over the craftsmen's eyes to blind them and hardened

[49] From the verb פסל, "to carve out, to hew." See *HAL*, 949.

[50] *HAL* 949, *BDB* 820, and Hadley, Judith M. פסל *NIDOTTE* 3:641.

[51] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 76 (line 53), 80 (line 53). See also Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth," 66–67.

[52] Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 59n82; Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth," 56 and 56n49; Berlejung, *Die Theologie der Bilder*, 221.

their minds so they cannot discern nor understand, Isaiah reveals that idol worship *deactivates* the senses. The idols are not the only ones who are inanimate. Those who worship them become like them, having eyes that cannot see and minds that cannot know nor discern (cf. Pss 115:8 and 135:18).

Conclusion

The creation and worship of cult images was widespread throughout Israel's history, from the manufacture of the golden calf at Sinai to the worship of the Queen of Heaven in the last days of Jerusalem (Jer 7:18; 44:18–19, 25). Idolatry was so entrenched in the hearts and minds of God's people that the prophets were forced to speak sharply, often using startling imagery, sarcasm, and creative rhetorical strategies to seize Israel's attention. Isaiah was no exception. He masterfully weaves various literary genres and devices, unusual syntax, captivating imagery, and clever taunts to create a long series of powerful, prophetic messages. His idol parodies in Isa 40:18–20 and Isa 44:9–20, in particular, showcase his use of emphatic syntax, sarcasm, literary devices, foreign vocabulary, and effective engagement with prominent cultural ideas about the gods. Whether through the *mīs pî pīt pî* or other means, Isaiah was well acquainted with contemporary idol-making practices and the theology behind them. He was thus able to create an effective rhetorical strategy that creatively and convincingly highlighted the unique message of the Old Testament prophets:

> For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!),
> who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!):
> I am the LORD, and there is no other.
> I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness;
> I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek me in vain.'
> I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right.
> Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you survivors of the nations!
> They have no knowledge who carry about their wooden idols,
> and keep on praying to a god that cannot save.
> Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together!
> Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old?
> Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no other god besides me,
> a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me.
> Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!
> For I am God, and there is no other. (Isa 45:18–22 ESV)

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Saving Masculinity and Femininity from the Morgue: A Defense of Gender Essentialism[1]

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This essay offers a contemporary defense of gender essentialism that engages the growing body of academic literature, provides clarity on what is essential about gender, and explains how it is politically good for all people—especially women. Therefore, the goal of this essay is to recover and defend an essentialist understanding of gender. It rejects many of the narrow extremes of traditional evangelical gender essentialism of the past without abandoning essentialism altogether. The essay proceeds in three broad steps. First, gender is defined broadly and then from a conservative evangelical viewpoint. Second, essentialism is defined, and potential defeaters are engaged on the various versions of essentialism. Finally, the goodness of essentialism is explored.

Key Words: essentialism, femininity, gender, manhood, masculinity, sex, womanhood

The Philosophy of Gender is an explosive field of study in contemporary academic philosophy and theology, particularly among feminists. Robust and riveting debates abound—but one thing has become largely clear: gender essentialism is supposedly dead.[2] Gender essentialism, like nearly all traditional understandings of gender, is a primary target for feminists because of its apparent implicit sexism through patriarchy and androcentrism.[3] Despite the death knell from the wider academic community, most conservative evangelical thinkers continue to assert the terminology of gender essentialism. Yet, much of their scholarship on gender has a striking level of ambiguity and a stunning lack of depth and

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[2] Natalie Stoljar, "Essence, Identity, and the Concept of Woman," *Philosophical Topics* 23.2 (Fall 1995): 261.

[3] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 22.

engagement with the broader academic community.[4] Therefore, if gender essentialism is to be defended in the current academic climate, it needs serious rehabilitation. A contemporary defense requires engagement with the growing body of literature, clarity on what is actually essential about gender, and how it is *politically good* for all people—especially women. Therefore, I attempt to recover and defend an essentialist understanding of gender. I will reject many of the narrow extremes of traditional evangelical gender essentialism of the past without abandoning essentialism altogether. My method is largely philosophical rather than biblical. While biblical exegesis has a very important role in this conversation, it is necessary to engage the larger community from a natural aspect as well. This does not mean I intend to contradict Scripture or that I neglect its supreme importance—only that I hope to defend apart from simple proof-texts.

The Definition of Gender

Before defending gender essentialism, it is necessary to clarify terminology. Conservative evangelicals often assume sex and gender are the exact same thing, but this is not always agreed upon. Traditionally *sex* refers to *biological* features such as chromosomes, sex organs, and hormones. If someone has a Y chromosome, they are male.[5] If someone doesn't, they are a female. *Gender* typically refers to clusters of *social* characteristics and abilities (e.g., norms, positions, performances, phenomenological features, self-ascriptions, or roles).[6] Given this distinction, sex and gender can be defined broadly as follows:

> **Sex**: *Biological* features of a person such as chromosomes, sex organs, and hormones
>
> **Gender**: *Social* features of a person such as norms, positions, performances, phenomenological features, behavioral traits, self-ascriptions, and roles

For much of history, sex and gender were seen as largely coextensive. If someone had male sex organs, they were a man (i.e., masculine). If someone had female sex organs, they were a woman (i.e., feminine). This is the *traditional coextensive* view. On this view there is no substantial

[4] See, e.g., Owen Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity: A Theology of Mankind* (Geanies House, UK: Christian Focus, 2019), 174.

[5] Denny Burk, *What Is the Meaning of Sex?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 180–82.

[6] Sally Anne Haslanger, *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 42–43.

sex/gender distinction. While it is possible to separate the terms for conceptual purposes, gender is *causally* linked to one's biological sex—being *biologically* caused rather than socially caused. Many take this to mean that it is not only our bodily structure that is determined by our sex but our emotional tendencies and personal interests as well.[7] But this is not universal in the literature. Therefore, while gender does conceptually differ from sex, focusing on social features rather than biological, it isn't free to be understood apart from it because biological properties have causal influence on social properties. As a result, gender is metaphysically grounded in biological sex. Whereas gender may be "constitutively constructed" since it makes reference to social features, it is not causally grounded because social features do not play a causal role in bringing it into existence.[8]

However, since at least the twentieth century, with the advent of modern technology there has been an overwhelming urge to separate sex from gender.[9] Some have attempted to merely reduce the causal role of biology while others have claimed the term gender refers to social features that are *not* linked to biology at all.[10] Therefore, man and woman are socially constructed terms like wife, criminal, and hero.[11] To be a man or woman requires particular social properties and relations.[12] Therefore, depending on the role one performs or the social norms one inhabits, a male could be gendered as a woman. For example, depending on the culture, a male performing traditional domestic duties at home would be feminine and a female being the sole-breadwinner for a family would be masculine. This is the *revisionary disjunctive* view. Now, there are two broad ways the revisionary view is cashed out. The less radical view agrees with the traditional view and sees sex as referring to biological features, but it argues that gender is based purely on social features. This is the *soft revisionary disjunctive* view. Sex remains a legitimate category grounded in biology, but gender is often unhinged from biology. The more revisionary option sees *both* sex

[7] Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 132.

[8] Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 87.

[9] Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 184.

[10] Tomas Bogardus, "Evaluating Arguments for the Sex/Gender Distinction," *Philosophia* 48.3 (July 2020): 873–74; Mari Mikkola, *The Wrong of Injustice: Dehumanization and Its Role in Feminist Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 21–22.

[11] Alex Byrne, "Are Women Adult Human Females?," *Philosophical Studies* 177.12 (December 2020): 3783–84.

[12] Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 86.

and gender as referring to social norms, requiring the traditional view to be completely false—women and men are not defined by their biology at all but entirely by their social location. This is the *strong revisionary disjunctive* view.[13] For the purposes of this paper, I ignore the strong revisionary disjunctive version, assuming that sex is a biological reality since Gen 1:27 ("male and female he created them") and contemporary science all but require it.

Given these definitions, there are two broad ways to understand gender. First, on the traditional coextensive view, gender refers to social features but is biologically grounded, meaning that biology causes and directs one's gender. As Charlotte Witt explains, "There is no plausible way of thinking about gender that is entirely detached from bodily, biological existence even if—as we have just seen—those biological processes, or sexual and reproductive functions, are complex and culturally mediated."[14] Second, on the revisionary disjunctive view, gender is a social construct that is *not* grounded in biology. They can be defined broadly below:

Traditional Coextensive View: Gender is *biologically* grounded

Revisionary Disjunctive View: Gender is *socially* grounded

Now, it is important to note that these distinctions can be (*and often are*) blurred. For example, the traditional view can allow for more social construction and the revisionary view can allow for some level of biological direction, but I will use these strict distinctions for the sake of clarity. It is also important to remember that regardless of the view one takes on what grounds gender, gender is primarily about *social* characteristics. The question is not whether gender is social but what *grounds* these social characteristics.[15]

Conservative Evangelical Beliefs About Gender

Evangelical theological conservatives typically assume the necessity of both sex and gender. Since sex is essential and gender is biologically grounded in sex, gender is essential too. They often cash out these essential gender features in culturally traditional ways, regularly calling them

[13] See for example Adrian Thatcher, *Redeeming Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[14] Charlotte Witt, *The Metaphysics of Gender*, Studies in Feminist Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 36.

[15] While many conservative evangelical thinkers assume only a traditional coextensive understanding has the conceptual resources to maintain gender essentialism, I think both views can accommodate gender essentialism. Despite this, I intend to focus on the traditional coextensive view since it is the most held view among conservative evangelical thinkers.

"duties and vocations."[16] For example, John Piper, while noting the similarities between his mother and father, claims their differences are "not mainly a biological fact" but "mainly a matter of personhood and relational dynamics."[17] From these differences he defines masculinity as leading, providing, and protecting.[18] Owen Strachan is similar, considering masculinity to be about toughness, assertiveness, physical fortitude, and bravery.[19] For him a "failure to show strength means a failure of manhood."[20] He also suggests that "provision is part of manly identity and the role given to men by God in the home."[21] These gender norms are *essential* to men. Men necessarily display toughness and assertiveness because of their biological sex. Regarding femininity Piper defines it as those who "affirm, receive, and nurture" men.[22] Strachan again echoes Piper, saying, "The woman is called to see herself as her husband's helper. The Lord makes the woman in order to bless the man and serve him."[23] Ray Ortlund Jr. is no different, claiming that "a man, just by virtue of his manhood, is called to lead for God. A woman, just by virtue of her womanhood, is called to help for God."[24] Therefore, masculinity is directed outward and femininity is directed inward.[25] More recent conservative evangelical scholarship has suggested broader definitions, such as Patrick Schreiner, who defines masculinity along the lines of sonship, brotherly love, and potentiality for paternity, and femininity about daughterhood, sisterly love, and potentiality toward maternity.[26]

Regardless of how the various exemplar evangelical authors define gender, a theme emerges from their definitions and examples. Masculinity

[16] Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 144.

[17] John Piper, "A Vision for Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 31. Admittedly, I am bewildered by this claim and find little clarity in Piper's piece as to what it means that it isn't mainly a biological fact but a fact about personhood.

[18] Piper, "A Vision for Complementarity," 35.

[19] Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 140.

[20] Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 139.

[21] Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 162n41.

[22] Piper, "A Vision for Complementarity," 48.

[23] Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 135.

[24] Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 102.

[25] Patrick Schreiner, "Man and Woman: Toward an Ontology," *Eikon* 2.2 (Fall 2020): 76.

[26] Schreiner, "Man and Woman," 85.

is biologically driven to *achieve, create, and protect* whereas femininity is biologically driven to *nurture, receive, and sustain*.[27] Therefore, I take it that conservative evangelical definitions of gender are broadly understood as follows:

Conservative Evangelical Masculinity: Biological males are biologically ordered to be achievers, creators, and protectors

Conservative Evangelical Femininity: Biological females are biologically ordered to be nurturers, receivers, and sustainers

These particular social characteristics (e.g., achievement for masculinity and nurturing for femininity) are essential because they are stipulated in Scripture. And the gender roles in creation "were corrupted, not created, by the fall."[28] Therefore, the various gender features described in Scripture are an assumed theological good. As Schreiner suggests, "Paul and the rest of the authors in the Bible did not *construct* gender roles. They *recognized* them. They based sociological and organizational instructions on a deeper reality found in creational order."[29] Therefore, they assume that these gender norms are powerful social practices with natural grounding.[30] But where in Scripture do they find gender defined as *these* social characteristics and actions?

Some of the primary texts conservative evangelical thinkers draw gender characteristics from are 1 Kgs 2, 1 Pet 3:7, Deut 22:5, and 1 Cor 11. Consider Deut 22:5, which says, "A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God." Owen Strachan extrapolates from this text that "the grouping of cross-dressing with sexual immorality shows us that this practice is part of a complex of behaviors that are wrong through and through."[31] Jason DeRouchie agrees, claiming that "*loving others and God means that people will maintain a gender identity that aligns with their biological sex and will express this gender in a way that never leads to gender confusion in the eyes of others*."[32] Therefore, it is believed that certain gender norms are essential based on one's biological sex. Consider also 1 Cor 11, specifically 11:7–15:

For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and

[27] Schreiner, "Man and Woman," 76.

[28] Piper, "A Vision for Complementarity," 35.

[29] Schreiner, "Man and Woman," 72.

[30] Steven Wedgeworth, "Good and Proper: Paul's Use of Nature, Custom, and Decorum in Pastoral Theology," *Eikon* 2.2 (Fall 2020): 97.

[31] Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 174.

[32] Jason DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2017), 448 (emphasis original).

> glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering.

This text is admittedly difficult to understand, but there are several aspects that are relevant. First, there is an assumed distinction of gender norms based on biological sex. Second, this is taught by "nature." Therefore, the Bible appears to require gender to be essential and linked to sex. Many conservatives have concluded from this that whatever is traditional is essential. For example, throughout Owen Strachan's recent anthropology book he continually identifies masculinity and femininity with traditional 1950s American household arrangements. He decries "the dadmom, who stays at home to care for the kids while the wife provides for the family."[33] Elsewhere he explains that a woman's "vocation" is to "sacrifice her own free time, her serious intellectual and vocational interests …" and her goals are "to care for little children, make healthy and tasty meals for her loved ones, organize, manage, and clean a home, express support and love … her husband as he works hard to provide, and teach her progeny the word of God in all its fullness."[34] However, it is not clear *what counts* as essential or *what it means* to be essential for these thinkers. Yes, masculinity and femininity are essential, but what does it mean for them to be essential and how much of their characteristics are needed for it to remain masculine or feminine? Can a male function as a nurturer and remain masculine? Can a female work outside the home and remain feminine?

Gender Essentialism Defined

Given these various understandings of gender and the desire for it to be essential among conservative evangelical thinkers, I will clarify what gender essentialism means and which versions are worth revitalizing for conservative evangelicals. Essentialism in general means that certain properties of objects are necessary for identity. These properties are the most central, objective, and context-independent *de re* facts about these

[33] Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 162n41.

[34] Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 158.

objects that cannot be lacked—whereas others are accidental and can be either lost or lacked.[35] In other words, essentialism holds that there are context-independent facts that every object has in every world in which it exists. Most often these essential/necessary properties are understood as having causal/explanatory power, relevance for kind classification, or minimal necessity for identity.[36] But depending on the thinker, which properties count as necessary vary, as do their taxonomies of essentialism. Therefore, I need to clarify various versions of essentialism before determining how to defend gender essentialism.

For my purposes, I will only note five variants of essentialism. First, there is the rather unpopular *maximal essentialism* that takes everything to be essential for identity—whatever properties an object has are essential. If it loses any property it is no longer the same object. Second, there is the view popularized by Saul Kripke—*origin essentialism*—where what is essential is an object's origin story. If an object came from somewhere else, it would no longer be identical to itself. Third is the view of *sortal essentialism*, which requires an object to be of the same kind. Whatever kind an object is, it cannot change kinds without becoming a different object.[37] The members of each kind are determined by possession of a certain property or cluster of properties.[38] Fourth is the view that an entity's essence either explains or causes its characteristics. Whatever is the fundamental causal or explanatory power is essential and whatever is on the receiving end of the causal or explanatory relation is accidental.[39] As Edward Feser explains, this version of essentialism is "not a property or cluster of properties. It is rather that *from which* a thing's properties *flow*,

[35] L. A. Paul, "The Context of Essence," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 82.1 (March 2004): 170; Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2010), 14.

[36] Charlotte Witt, "Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Theory," *Philosophical Topics* 23.2 (Fall 1995): 321.

[37] Teresa Robertson Ishii and Philip Atkins, "Essential vs. Accidental Properties," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2020), https://plato. stanford.edu/entries/essential-accidental/; Penelope Mackie, *How Things Might Have Been: Individuals, Kinds, and Essential Properties* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 118.

[38] Alexander Bird, "Essences and Natural Kinds," in *The Routledge Companion to Metaphysics*, ed. Robin Le Poidevin et al., Routledge Philosophy Companions (New York: Routledge, 2009), 497.

[39] Michael Gorman, "The Essential and The Accidental," *Ratio* 18.3 (September 2005): 286.

that which *explains* its properties."[40] The essential is explanatorily basic.[41] Call this version *causal essentialism*. Fifth, Charlotte Witt has advocated for what she calls "uniessentialism" wherein an object's *function* is the essential property it must have. For example, when is a heap of materials a house? When it *functions* to shelter. It is a singular individual property that is essential.[42] As another example, consider the Coke machine. It must have the *function* to provide a Coke in exchange for money. It can take whatever shape or form it wants. As long as it dispenses Coke in exchange for money it remains a Coke machine.[43] Therefore, being a male or female produces particular social norms. Their bodies either play the role of conceiving and bearing or begetting.[44]

As can be seen, defending gender essentialism requires clarity as to *which* essentialism one means. While a rejection of "essentialism" is common in feminist literature, there is a growing realization that such a rejection fails to account for the varieties of essentialism.[45] There isn't just one essentialism. Moreover, even if an essentialism is targeted, such as a sortal essentialism that affirms that men and women share some common feature or criteria that defines them, there still isn't agreement on what these properties are.[46] Therefore, one must be careful in navigating a defense of essentialism. Fine grained distinctions are necessary at every turn.

Defeaters for General Gender Essentialism

Before expanding on the various virtues or possibilities of gender essentialism, it is necessary to consider the objections to *any* form of gender essentialism. While many theological conservatives are content to proof-text their way to gender essentialism without considering objections, this strategy is insufficient in the current cultural climate that is predisposed to reject such views. For example, some thinkers go so far as to suggest that the entire edifice of "substance metaphysics" is a mere power grab

[40] Edward Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*, Editiones Scholasticae 39 (Heusenstamm: Ed. Scholasticae, 2014), 230.

[41] Ross D. Inman, *Substance and the Fundamentality of the Familiar: A Neo-Aristotelian Mereology* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 42.

[42] Witt, *The Metaphysics of Gender*, 6.

[43] Witt, "Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Theory," 325–26. Note also that Witt categorizes origin and uniessentialism as varieties of "individual essentialism" and sortal essentialism as "kind essentialism."

[44] Witt, *The Metaphysics of Gender*, 40.

[45] Fellipe do Vale, "Can a Male Savior Save Women? The Metaphysics of Gender and Christ's Ability to Save," *Philosophia Christi* 21.2 (Winter 2019): 318–19; Witt, "Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Theory."

[46] Mikkola, *The Wrong of Injustice*, 28.

kept in force by the univocal hegemonic discourse. One of the most popular defenders of this view is Judith Butler, who claims that "the notion of an abiding substance is a fictive construction produced through the compulsory ordering of attributes into coherent gender sequences."[47] Therefore, identity as a concept is completely irrelevant. There is no such normative ideal and any talk of "being" a sex or gender is flatly impossible.[48] Butler claims that "the literalization of anatomy not only proves nothing, but is a literalizing restriction of pleasure in the very organ that is championed as the sign of masculine identity."[49] She has suggested that gender is "always relative to the constructed relations in which it is determined."[50] Therefore, if any form of essentialism is to be maintained the major objections must be met.

Charlotte Witt has identified four primary arguments against gender essentialism. The first argument is the *exclusion argument*, which claims that any version of gender essentialism will invariably exclude certain women and thus cannot be true. The second argument is the *instability argument*, which claims that groups are unstable because of language being inherently normative and productive and not representing reality. Essentialism rests on a mistaken view of language that thinks language can be purified from its normative content. The third argument is the *power argument* that claims gender essentialism just points to power congregations and not enduring substantial realities.[51] The fourth argument is the *core argument* that identifies essentialism with biologism. Since gender is socially constructed it can't be essential.[52] Women are *not* naturally passive, irrational, and emotional because gender is socially constructed rather than biologically grounded.[53] The complexity of human relationships cannot be reduced to biological ones.[54] I will focus on responding to the exclusion and core arguments below as they are the most powerful in my opinion. I consider the others rather innocuous and sufficiently defeated elsewhere.[55]

[47] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 33.

[48] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 23, 26.

[49] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 97.

[50] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 14.

[51] Witt, "Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Theory," 323.

[52] Witt, "Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Theory," 324.

[53] Stoljar, "Essence, Identity, and the Concept of Woman," 262.

[54] Elaine Storkey, *Origins of Difference: The Gender Debate Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 28, 33.

[55] See Witt, "Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Theory."

The most popular argument against essentialism is the exclusion argument, which hinges on the varied experience of humans across the globe.[56] Because of the diversity of experiences, to claim that there is a binary gender characteristic that is essential to each sex is naïve. Consider even 1 Cor 11—most assume it doesn't require women to wear head coverings in today's context.[57] But gender *essentialism* is supposed to mean that these social practices are necessary. If this is true, why assume other gender norms are essential if it's admitted that some can change? Many gender essentialists simply assert that there are the same differences everywhere.[58] From their assumption that there is not a truly varied experience, they ignore the examples of variation that would lead to the exclusion argument. Since most intuitively agree that the differences between men and women are the same across all contexts there is no reason to admit of the diversity of experiences. When pressed about this variation, the reply is often that *most* women are more nurturing than men and this *can't* be by accident.[59] Variations be damned. Others reply vaguely that while the cultural outworking can differ, there is an unchanging truth that men and women are different. For example, the reason head coverings were a mere cultural outworking is because they symbolized something deeper in that culture than they do in the current one.[60] Another reply notes the fact that variations aren't simply between the sexes but within the sexes. Therefore, variations or vagueness alone do not disrupt gender essentialism since most are willing to accept that being a human is an essential property despite the variations between humans.[61] Thus, the problem with the exclusion argument is epistemological rather than metaphysical at its core. Moreover, for one to make good on this objection, they must deny that there are common features of any sort.[62] If there is even one common feature among men and women, the objection loses its force.

Second is the core argument. This argument can be deflated rather

[56] Mikkola, *The Wrong of Injustice*, 30.

[57] Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women, & Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 19.

[58] See, e.g., J. Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2014), 46.

[59] Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex*, 50–51.

[60] Benjamin L. Merkle, "Paul's Arguments from Creation in 1 Corinthians 11:8–9 and 1 Timothy 2:13–14: An Apparent Inconsistency Answered," *JETS* 49.3 (September 2006): 533; Thomas R. Schreiner, "Head Coverings, Prophecies, and the Trinity," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 138.

[61] Thatcher, *Redeeming Gender*, 139.

[62] Witt, "Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Theory," 329–30.

easily if gender isn't causally socially constructed. It is also deflated if essentialism is not equated with biologism. Just because gender is biologically grounded (i.e., caused, directed, linked), doesn't mean it is biologically determined in every respect.[63] Moreover, even socially constructed objects can have features that are necessary to satisfy kind membership. Charlotte Witt's Coke machine example is paradigmatic. To fall under the kind "Coke Machine" one *must* dispense Cokes.[64] Therefore, essentialism can be maintained even on socially constructed identities. If this is true, the argument lacks force.

There is one final argument against essentialism worth noting. Charlotte Witt offers her own argument that *persons* cannot be essentially gendered since persons are capable of self-reflection (e.g., having a first-person perspective) and self-reflection is an inner mental property that exists independently of social relations. Only a whacky object would be essentially gendered if gender is a social role. Therefore, it is a category mistake to apply gender to persons since gender is a social term whereas human organism is a biological term. If gender is essential, it won't be essential to human organisms because persons aren't the right sort of thing to be gendered since they are immaterial first-person perspectives.[65] Therefore, gender isn't essential to human organisms or persons. But why accept either of these premises? Both are contentious and the likelihood of affirming both of them is small.

Rehabilitating Gender Essentialism

Given the claims of conservative evangelical thinkers that certain gender norms are essential and are caused by biological sex, which essentialism is best suited for the claim that gender is essential? Whereas many conservatives often flippantly use "essential" language, their meaning is often vague and unclear. Therefore, I will consider each possibility in turn.

Evaluating Maximal Essentialism

Maximal essentialism may capture the claim from some conservative evangelicals that desire a maximal set of gender norms and activities to be properly masculine or feminine. Rather than a global maximal essentialism in the sense that every single property of a person is essential, this

[63] This is precisely why I avoid the terminology of "biological determinism." Despite the conceptual overlap between terms like determinism and causation, determinism is often linked with a complete causation that negates any freedom or variation.

[64] Witt, "Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Theory," 325.

[65] Witt, *The Metaphysics of Gender*, 65.

would be a local maximal essentialism where *each and every* traditional gender feature is essential. In certain statements Owen Strachan appears to affirm such a view. His understanding of masculinity is about toughness, assertiveness, physical fortitude, bravery, provision in the home, etc.[66] His understanding of femininity is even more specific. Females are to sacrifice their free time and intellectual and vocational interests. They are to care for children, make meals, organize and clean the house, and support their husbands.[67] But here is the problem: becoming overly specific like this doesn't match the generality of masculinity and femininity. Men and women can do these same specific acts in their own way. What if I, as a male, stay home to watch the children for an evening while my female wife shops for her birthday? I am then functioning in a traditionally feminine way, acting as the primary caretaker. But if this is an irregular activity, why would I be required to be feminine? Therefore, men can care for children without violating their masculinity. Women can be brave without violating their femininity. It is rather odd to claim that every single gender feature is essential. In fact, it's flatly implausible. Moreover, maximal essentialism is fraught with philosophical difficulty and should only be exercised as a last resort.

But maybe the claim is not that every traditional gender feature is essential but that every scriptural gender feature is essential. These are the social features that are required to avoid "*gender confusion*."[68] But even a local scriptural maximal essentialism is posed with two problems. First, their gender lists typically include social practices that go beyond Scripture and eliminate others that are within. See Owen Strachan's list again. Nowhere does Scripture say that females must necessarily clean their homes whereas men, due to biology, circumvent this "role." The closest that something might come is Titus 2:5 where Paul commands the older women to teach the younger women to work at home. But nowhere is it claimed that this gender role is *essential* to females nor is it *inessential* to males. The second problem remains as above—if gender essentialism needs all of these norms, roles, performances, etc. to be essential for masculinity or femininity then males and females will be in a constant state of flux from masculinity to femininity because none of these social actions are fundamentally necessary to their identity. It is one thing to say that biological males and females are essentially biologically *ordered* to particular social features but to stoop to a crude form of deterministic biologism for the sake of traditional gender norms is self-defeating.

[66] Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 140.

[67] Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 158.

[68] DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, 448 (emphasis original).

Evaluating Origin Essentialism

Origin essentialism does little to defend the essential aspect of gender, at least for conservative evangelicals. It would allow for Sally to practice whatever gender roles or traits she desired and remain gendered as feminine so long as she couldn't be born again another way. Therefore, it's unlikely that anyone desiring to maintain gender essentialism defends a thin origin essentialism as sufficient.

Evaluating Sortal Essentialism

Sortal essentialism appears to capture much of what conservative evangelicals desire without the problems of maximal essentialism. To claim that both sex (*male* and *female*) and gender (*man* and *woman*) are natural kind terms fits well with many of their thinkers.[69] As Joshua Farris explains, "The descriptive content of what makes one male or female is a natural property essentially instantiated by each individual."[70] Since gender is something that is essential beyond individuals and can be instantiated without a social network it constitutes a natural kind. Those that are masculine must have a certain number of properties. Men *must* achieve, create, and protect. Women *must* nurture, receive, and sustain. These properties are normatively *and* biologically essential to biological males and females.

But there are several problems for this sort of gender essentialism. First, if the claim of gender essentialism is supposed to be that there is a direct biological link to these essential qualities, why is it that other genders can fulfill them? Can women *never* achieve, create, and provide?[71] Property sharing simply doesn't constitute a kind by itself. Men and women can both achieve. Men and women can both nurture. The virtues listed by Owen Strachan, John Piper, and Ray Ortlund Jr. for defining masculinity and femininity are done by both in the Bible.[72] Therefore, it is unclear what would constitute an essential natural gendered kind. Maybe they would lean on J. Budziszewski's proposal that masculinity and femininity are the social expression of sexual powers for procreation.[73] In other words, females are potentially mothers, and males are potentially

[69] Bogardus, "Evaluating Arguments for the Sex/Gender Distinction," 888.

[70] Joshua R. Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 224.

[71] Marc Cortez, *Resourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 205.

[72] Schreiner, "Man and Woman," 80–81.

[73] Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex*, 24.

fathers.[74] However, the natural kind of masculinity and femininity would be incredibly thin, amounting to physical generating and bearing children—even to only *potentially* doing so. This is a far cry from the robust natural kind gender essentialism that most conservatives would desire. Another option is from Patrick Schreiner's recent proposal. He realizes the challenge that comes from definitions like Strachan's, Piper's, and Ortlund's since they are "not true in enough situations to stand as the heart of masculinity and femininity."[75] Therefore, he defines masculinity and femininity as follows: "The fundamental meaning of masculinity is sonship, brotherly love, and potentiality toward paternity. The fundamental meaning of femininity is daughterhood, sisterly love, and potentiality toward maternity."[76] His third aspect mirrors Budziszewski, but do the other two additions avoid the problem? I don't think so. First, defining gender as sonship and daughterhood doesn't convey much. These terms reduce to a biological male or female for Schreiner with no further content. The reason he adds these terms is because they don't need to be actualized like motherhood and fatherhood.[77] But they don't explain why both genders can fulfill the various virtues in the same way. Nor do they clarify the distinction in natural kind for gender. Yes, it can explain the difference between sexual natural kinds, but it doesn't explain the robust gendered natural kind that requires certain properties to be essential given that these necessary properties are instantiated by both sexes. The second aspect of his definition is also lacking. Defining gender as love that is brotherly and sisterly is mostly vacuous. He fails to fill out this concept in his article, but I take it that he means a similar locution as Budziszewski who admits that both males and females instantiate the same virtues. They merely inflect them differently.[78] As Kintner and Wester say, "The sex of the person displaying each trait will shape the way it is displayed. Our biological sex matters and is central to our lives as human beings."[79] Both are loving but they are loving in distinct sexed ways. But this doesn't comport with a robust gender essentialism that desires to maintain robust social features for males and females. It can maintain difference between the sexes, but maintaining robust social features instantiated by males and females is entirely lacking.

[74] Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex*, 54–59.

[75] Schreiner, "Man and Woman," 86.

[76] Schreiner, "Man and Woman," 85.

[77] Schreiner, "Man and Woman," 85.

[78] Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex*, 51.

[79] Jenn Kintner and Joshua Wester, "Sameness and Distinction: Rethinking Assumptions about God's Design of Men and Women," *Eikon* 2.2 (Fall 2020): 22–31.

A second problem is this: if we want to have masculinity and femininity reflect the objective facts of nature, *which* properties are necessary and/or sufficient for kind membership? Being nurturing? Being creative? Having a uterus? Is it essential for me to fulfill the role of bread-winner? Of aggressor? Of achiever? Of father? As a reminder, typically an object x has a property P essentially if and only if x has P in every world in which x exists.[80] There are lots of possible worlds where a male doesn't achieve, doesn't create, doesn't protect, doesn't display brotherly love, isn't a father, etc. Does this mean they are not masculine? Does this mean these characteristics aren't masculine?

Maybe one would reply threefold: (1) Gender is a complex and unanalyzable universal. No necessary and sufficient conditions can be discerned.[81] Therefore, it's not a problem that the properties can't be completely discerned. (2) Natural kinds such as gender are rich sources of inductive knowledge. We can infer from subsets of properties to the remainder of properties.[82] While we may not have complete clarity on the necessary and sufficient conditions, we can make educated assumptions. As Farris says, "Gender is not reducible to a physical reality, but the physical reality is the obvious epistemic evidence for gender and is lawfully connected to it. In this way, biological sex places limitations on gender, and biological sex yields specified social realities."[83] (3) Gender essentialism is more about *potentiality* than actuality. Masculinity and femininity are social characteristics that have certain levels of potential capacity that differ. One doesn't need to function in these ways to be masculine or feminine—they just need the potential to do so. But if this is the definition of gender essentialism, the concept is far thinner than many often claim it to be. It is hard to make sense of claims like Owen Strachan's that "provision is part of manly identity and the role given to men by God in the home" if gender essentialism is properly about potentiality rather than actuality.[84] A second problem is that gender appears to be a phase sortal rather than a substance sortal. I wasn't always an adult male. At one time I was a child. If my gender changed at some point, is it really essential? A concept is supposed to be a sortal concept *only* if it provides a criterion of identity (principle of individuation) and gender doesn't seem to fit the bill.[85] There are two replies here. First, essential properties can be added at a point in

[80] Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, 60.

[81] Mari Mikkola, "Elizabeth Spelman, Gender Realism, and Women," *Hypatia* 21.4 (Autumn 2006): 92.

[82] Bird, "Essences and Natural Kinds," 502.

[83] Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 226.

[84] Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 162n41.

[85] Mackie, *How Things Might Have Been*, 120.

time and remain essential. Second, it isn't clear that my gender changed from childhood to adulthood. While the term for it may have changed, the specific social characteristics of gender didn't—neither did my sex.

Evaluating Causal Essentialism

Causal essentialism is a strong fit for maintaining the conservative evangelical understanding of masculinity and femininity since it claims gender is biologically grounded. It also avoids the sortal essentialism cost by not requiring particular social characteristics to be displayed—it only requires that there be an essential causal explanation for them. In this case, the causal explanation is being created as a male or female. The causal explanation is *not* ultimately social factors. While social factors may play some role, they are not the basic grounding for them. The idea is that "God has built, or etched, an order into the world …"[86] Men are *ordered* to certain virtues and women to others—or at least ordered to certain expressions of them. For example, a mother is ordered to express nurturing in a different way than a father upon the birth of a child. Since only the mother is capable of breastfeeding a child, she is given to a form of nurturing that the father is not. While the father can display the same amount of nurturing, he cannot display the virtue in the same ways. Therefore, the social characteristics can be shared by both, but each sex has the potential to display them differently.[87] Here the core distinction is biological sex rather than the expressed action. For example, Aimee Byrd says, "I do not need to do something in a certain way to be feminine.… I simply am feminine because I am female."[88] This is the key insight—social features can change but the grounding is in biological sex.

Given this explanation, does this mean men and women would have different *telos*? Aimee Byrd finds the proposal that Christians should have different goals (e.g., manhood and womanhood) as wrongheaded. Virtues are not gendered. Never are we exhorted to be "masculine" or "feminine." Everyone has the single *telos* of knowing and enjoying God.[89] However, this critique lacks bite. Yes, all human beings have the same ultimate *telos* of knowing and enjoying God, but this doesn't eliminate the reality of a subordinate *telos*. As a father I have the *telos* of generating and training

[86] Craig G. Bartholomew and Ryan P. O'Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom Literature: A Theological Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 89.

[87] A key question that I lack the space to address here is exactly *how* biological properties cause social properties.

[88] Aimee Byrd, *Recovering from Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: How the Church Needs to Rediscover Her Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 114.

[89] Byrd, *Recovering from Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, 109–11.

my children. This doesn't overrule my ultimate *telos* of knowing and enjoying God, but it is a legitimate *telos* in its own right, though subordinate. Therefore, this proposal *does* mean that men and women have a different subordinate *telos*.

A final question for causal essentialism is whether it really fulfills the robust gender essentialism that many conservative evangelicals desire. I don't think it does since it allows for extreme flexibility in the virtues displayed by the sexes—but I think that's because conservative evangelicals desire something far more robust than is philosophically feasible or biblically warranted. Claiming that certain roles are essential to males or females is incoherent. While each sex can be ordered to particular tasks or roles, this doesn't negate the possibility that others function alternatively.

Evaluating Uniessentialism

Uniessentialism fits well with the language and examples of many conservative evangelicals that exhort one to fulfill the gender *function*. As Owen Strachan suggests, a "failure to show strength means a failure of manhood."[90] Masculinity in this case relates to function. When a male is functioning in strength, he is masculine. When he is functioning in weakness, he is effeminate. But it seems like gender could change in ways that are inconsistent with the essential character that they desire if this is true. Strachan and company want an essential—as in absolutely necessary—gender. This is based upon how one acts and is subject to change.

Rehabilitating Essentialism

Based on the above descriptions, I take it that causal essentialism is best suited for gender essentialism. However, this does require a revision to the conservative evangelical definitions of masculinity and femininity. It is not that men and women are ordered to cause specific traits but that they are ordered to *primarily* cause specific traits. The distinction here is fine grained. It is this: Human beings of either sex can practice every virtue indiscriminately. Men are not designed to practice protection whereas women are designed to practice nurturing, as if it is a scale of extremes with men and women on opposing sides and only physically capable of pursuing certain virtues. Men and women can pursue all the same virtues—love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, self-control, etc. However, biology does determine that men have differing levels of *capability* than women to display particular virtues and differing levels of *potentiality* to display them. The conservative evangelical position has too often made

[90] Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 139.

statements akin to maximal essentialism that require specific social features to be essential when the essential aspect is sex, which essentially orders men and women to inflect the virtues in gendered ways. Given the essential nature of gender, how does this impact the goodness of creation? How is it good news for males and females?

The Goodness of Gender Essentialism

Social justice has been a prime concern of feminist philosophy for decades. Dismantling the systems and structures that promote oppression, domination, and discrimination is at feminism's core.[91] Feminism is an eminently practical discipline. Thus, if gender essentialism is to captivate a new generation, it must not only appeal to the head but the heart and hands. Moreover, gender essentialism has often been used to justify oppression of women. For example, feminists have suggested that if gender is completely biologically determined, then no one is responsible when women are hurt through oppressive structures.[92] Feminine and masculine gender norms have resulted in behaviors that reinforce women's subordination by teaching them to be passive, ignorant, docile, and emotional helpmates.[93] Traditional gender norms have constrained women from being free as active agents.[94] Therefore, feminism has worked to release all humans to more just designs of living, to free them from patriarchal civil and ecclesial structures and intellectual systems that support those structures.[95] But is gender essentialism oppressive?

Before displaying the positive aspects of gender essentialism, I will consider whether the claim that gender essentialism is necessarily harmful to women is true. The claim appears to be that gender essentialism perpetuates sexism and oppression of women. But correlation does not mean causation. Moreover, it could be abuse of gender essentialism that causes sexism and oppression.[96] There is no empirical evidence that links gender essentialism in the way defined here to sexism or oppression—unless sexism is defined in a radically thin way that assumes a belief in difference is sexism. But I take it that most feminists do not do this. For example, consider Mari Mikkola's account of "dehumanization" as an "indefensible setback to some of our legitimate human interests, where this setback

[91] Mikkola, *The Wrong of Injustice*, 1; Johnson, *She Who Is*, 29.
[92] Mikkola, *The Wrong of Injustice*, 21.
[93] Mikkola, *The Wrong of Injustice*, 25.
[94] Mikkola, *The Wrong of Injustice*, 47.
[95] Johnson, *She Who Is*, 9.
[96] Bogardus, "Evaluating Arguments for the Sex/Gender Distinction," 881.

constitutes a moral injury."[97] Therefore, sexism and patriarchy "systemically target women and prevent them from being able to lead certain kinds of lives."[98] But claiming that gender is essential in a causal sense, leading to certain virtues in certain circumstances, doesn't prevent women from leading lives free from morally injurious setbacks. It is fully consistent with a physical, mental, and social well-being, promoting the basic goods of life such as life, health, the absence of pain/suffering, non-stigmatization, the absence of groundless anxiety, friendship, minimal income, and access to a tolerable environment.[99]

The obvious counter example is likely that of the pastoral office. Conservative evangelicals point to 1 Tim 2:12 as proof that women cannot lead certain kinds of lives. Women are not allowed to teach men. But this command need not be linked to gender essentialism. It's clear that God can stipulate norms irrespective of underlying biological realities such as with the priesthood and the Levites.[100] But the perceptive reader is likely to notice 1 Tim 2:13–14, which grounds the command of 2:12. The Apostle grounds this command in *creation*.[101] He says that women cannot teach *because* woman was formed second and was deceived. However, this is not an ontological fact about women but rather a historical fact about them. The Apostle's grounding, therefore, is not primarily biological but redemptive-historical.

The primary benefit of gender essentialism is that physical bodies lend themselves to particular gender norms such as bearing and feeding children or career vocation.[102] Such an observation is in harmony with current research in biology that documents sex differences in numerous areas such as anthropometric traits, energy metabolism, brain morphology, and immune and cardiac function.[103] Men and women differ not just in brain activity but in brain organization and development.[104] Sex influences numerous areas of the brain including emotion, memory, vision, hearing, facial processing, pain perception, navigation, neurotransmitter levels,

[97] Mikkola, *The Wrong of Injustice*, 145.
[98] Mikkola, *The Wrong of Injustice*, 150.
[99] Mikkola, *The Wrong of Injustice*, 168.
[100] Cortez, *Resourcing Theological Anthropology*, 209.
[101] Douglas Moo, "What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 190.
[102] Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 145.
[103] Sahin Naqvi et al., "Conservation, Acquisition, and Functional Impact of Sex-Biased Gene Expression in Mammals," *Science* 365, no. 6450 (July 19, 2019): eaaw7317, https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aaw7317.
[104] Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex*, 38.

stress hormone action on the brain, and disease states.[105] Larry Cahill even notes that "sex differences exist in every brain lobe, including in many 'cognitive' regions such as the hippocampus, amygdala and neocortex."[106] If gender is grounded in biology and whatever is natural is good, it is good to be in harmony with one's body. The physical make-up creates the intended function. Our bodies have a *telos* and our psychology should follow it. The subjective should follow the objective.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I argue that gender essentialism isn't dead—nor is it even at the morgue. While many may have assumed it was dying, it actually has a long life ahead of it. While it is true that the various versions of maximal essentialism, which are often flippantly buttressed by conservative evangelicals, are dead ends, this does not mean that gender essentialism is. There are various avenues to affirm gender essentialism and maintain a broad commitment to the distinction between the men and women. I hope this essay has been a small nudge to chasten conservative evangelical claims about gender without giving up the central desire to promote the goodness of essential difference.[107]

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[105] Larry Cahill, "Why Sex Matters for Neuroscience," *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 7.6 (June 2006): 477.

[106] Cahill, "Why Sex Matters for Neuroscience," 478.

[107] I would like to thank Fellipe do Vale for his insightful comments and criticisms on an early draft of this paper.

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Inseparable Operations of the Trinity: Outdated Relic or Valuable Tool?

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The doctrine of inseparable operations has fallen out of favor for many theologians of the Trinity, though it continues to flourish in the trinitarian discourse of many others. Is the axiom to be regarded, per the first camp, as an irrelevant or inconsistent vestige of theology past or, per the second camp, a fruitful device for theology present? By surveying the voice of the fourth-century fathers, critiquing an alternative approach to the Trinity (social trinitarianism), and addressing potential problems regarding the axiom's coherence, I offer a three-stranded evidentiary cord (historical, methodological, and theological) in support of the inseparability principle's ongoing vitality for Christian conversation.

Key Words: Catherine Mowry LaCugna, Church Fathers, Divine Missions, Inseparable Operations, Social Trinitarianism, Trinitarianism

The twentieth-century resurgence of interest in trinitarianism led to the reconsideration, reformulation, or rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity and many of its classical tenets. One casualty of this historical and theological development is the doctrine of inseparable operations.[1] In some circles, the inseparability principle has fallen out of fashion in trinitarian discourse—it is eyed with suspicion, reinterpreted, or repudiated. On the other hand, many theologians are defending, clarifying, and employing the doctrine for their own theological endeavors. Thus, a sort of tug-of-war manifests, prompting me to ask the question, "Is the doctrine of inseparable operations incompatible with, or irrelevant for, contemporary pursuits in Christian theology, or is it a valuable theological tool to be guarded and applied?"

[1] As I explain elsewhere, "The doctrine of inseparable operations affirms that all external works of the triune God are undivided (*opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*). That is, in every divine act in the world (*ad extra*; i.e., 'toward the outside'), all persons of the Godhead work together as one, by virtue of their one shared nature, will, and power (*ad intra*; i.e., 'toward the inside,' or who God is in himself). Thus, when the Trinity acts, there is only one action, not three" (Torey J. S. Teer, "'As the Father Has Sent Me, Even So I Am Sending You': The Divine Missions and the Mission of the Church," *JETS* 63.3 [2020]: 537).

In this article, I argue in favor of the latter option—the inseparability rule possesses fecundity for ongoing theological conversation and construction. I proffer this argument by way of three "strands" of evidence. First, I canvass the fourth-century fathers' unanimous witness vis-à-vis the unity of the Godhead in nature and in work to validate the historical merit of inseparable operations. Next, I review the twentieth-century revival in trinitarianism that led to social conceptions of the Trinity and then evaluate Catherine Mowry LaCugna's paradigmatic approach, revealing the weaknesses of her model and preserving classical trinitarianism as the methodologically viable basis for the inseparability principle. Finally, I address two concerns regarding inseparable operations in order to exhibit the axiom's theological soundness. It is my hope that this article will encourage scholars to confidently and continually utilize the rule as they reflect on the triune God, his works, and his ways.

The Historicity of Inseparable Operations: The Pro-Nicene Consensus

In recent decades, it has become increasingly popular to argue in favor of a distinction between early Eastern and Western trinitarian theology, suggesting that the East emphasized the three distinct persons within the Godhead, while the West emphasized the unity of the Godhead.[2] Some scholars have even rejected the doctrine of inseparable operations on such grounds.[3] On the other hand, certain theologians have repudiated the

[2] E.g., Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 196–97, 210; Adolf Von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. E. B. Speirs and James Millar (London: Williams and Norgate, 1898), 4:84, 113–34; Stanley Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 8–12; Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 10–12; Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 33; Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, rev. and exp. ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2019), xxviii-xxxv. Theodore de Régnon, in his late-nineteenth-century work *Études de théologie positive sur la sainté Trinité*, is often credited as the origin of the East-versus-West paradigm. For more on this subject, see D. Glenn Butner Jr., "For and Against de Régnon: Trinitarianism East and West," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 17.4 (October 2015): 399–412.

[3] E.g., LaCugna, *God for Us*, 97–100; Alan Spence, *Incarnation and Inspiration: John Owen and the Coherence of Christology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 135–36;

East-versus-West proposal, instead affirming a shared trinitarian vocabulary between the East and the West—called pro-Nicene theology.[4] In light of such competing historical claims and in favor of the latter position, I briefly survey several fourth-century contributors to inseparable operations, showing that there was indeed a pro-Nicene theological consensus that supported the doctrine.[5]

In the East, Athanasius of Alexandria (290–374) wrote against the Sabellians, who argued for a kind of modalism, and the Arians, who argued that Jesus was a created being. Though he elsewhere addressed the co-eternality of the Holy Spirit,[6] Athanasius's espousal of the inseparability principle typically appeared in his discussion on the co-equality of the Father and the Son: "The divine teaching knows Father and Son, and Wise and Wisdom, and God and Word; while it ever guards Him indivisible and inseparable and indissoluble in all respects."[7]

The Cappadocian fathers also supported the inseparable operations of the Trinity. Basil of Caesarea (329–379), in his treatise demonstrating the divinity of the Holy Spirit, asserted, "In every operation the Spirit is

Arie Baars, "'*Opera Trinitatis Ad Extra Sunt Indivisa*' in the Theology of John Calvin," in Calvinus Sacrarum Literarum Interpres: *Papers of the International Congress of Calvin Research*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Gottingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 131–41.

[4] E.g., Michele René Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 237–40; Bradley G. Green, *Colin Gunton and the Failure of Augustine: The Theology of Colin Gunton in Light of Augustine* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 169–201; Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 264–83; Keith E. Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity and Religious Pluralism: An Augustinian Assessment* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 20–21, 51–54; Kyle Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together: Defending the Historic Doctrine of the Inseparable Operations of the Trinity," *JETS* 56.4 (2013): 781–800.

[5] Although I presently survey fourth-century evidence in favor of inseparable operations, language *resembling* or *anticipating* the inseparability principle appears in earlier authors such as Justin Martyr (AD 100–165), *1 Apology* 63 (*ANF* 1:184); *Dialogue with Trypho* 61 (*ANF* 1:227–28); Tertullian of Carthage (160–225), *Against Praxeas* 2–3, 8, 19 (*ANF* 3:598–99, 603, 614–15); Origen of Alexandria (184–253), *On First Principles* 1.2.6, 1.2.12, 1.3.7 (*ANF* 4:248, 251, 255). All dates listed in this section are approximate.

[6] E.g., Athanasius of Alexandria, *Discourse against the Arians* 4.13, 14, 29 (*NPNF*[2] 4:427–38, 444–45).

[7] Athanasius, *Discourse against the Arians* 4.9 (*NPNF*[2] 4:436); see also 4.1, 10 (4:433, 436).

closely conjoined with, and inseparable from, the Father and the Son."[8] Elsewhere, responding to charges of tritheism and Sabellianism, Basil maintained, "In the quickening power whereby our nature is transformed from the life of corruption to immortality, the power of the Spirit is comprehended with Father and with Son, and in many other instances.… He is inseparably united."[9]

Basil's younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa (335–396), also embraced the inseparability axiom. In his endeavor to demonstrate the co-divinity of the Son and the Spirit alongside the Father without espousing three distinct gods, Gregory avowed,

> But in the case of the Divine nature we do not similarly learn that the Father does anything by Himself in which the Son does not work conjointly, or again that the Son has any special operation apart from the Holy Spirit; but every operation which extends from God to the Creation, and is named according to our variable conceptions of it, has its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy Spirit. For this reason the name derived from the operation is not divided with regard to the number of those who fulfil it, because the action of each concerning anything is not separate and peculiar, but whatever comes to pass … comes to pass by the action of the Three, yet what does come to pass is not three things.[10]

Gregory of Nazianzus (330–390), a close friend of Basil and Nyssen, wrote on the unity of the Godhead more with respect to nature than operation.[11] He did, however, affirm the undivided power of the Godhead in the three persons.[12] Another Eastern father, Cyril of Jerusalem (313–386), immediately after acknowledging all three persons of the Godhead,

[8] Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit* 16.37 (*NPNF*[2] 8:23); see also 26.63 (*NPNF*[2] 8:39); *Against Eunomius* 3.2–4 (DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz, 187–91).

[9] Basil, *Letter* 189.5 (*NPNF*[2] 8:230). John L. W. James treats Athanasius's and Basil's espousal of inseparable operations at length, concluding, "Athanasius and Basil establish inseparable operation and divine unity by establishing both ontological equality and relational subordination as necessary outcomes of the relations in question. In doing so, they counter their subordinationist opponents without slipping into the opposite heresy of polytheism" ("An Examination of *Homotimia* in St. Basil the Great's *On the Holy Spirit*, and Contemporary Implications," *WTJ* 74.2 [Fall 2012]: 265n51).

[10] Gregory of Nyssa, *Not Three Gods* (*NPNF*[2] 5:334); see also *On the Trinity, and of the Godhead of the Holy Spirit* 5–7 (*NPNF*[2] 5:327–33).

[11] E.g., Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 34.8–9, 15 (*NPNP*[2] 7:336, 338).

[12] E.g., Nazianzus, *Oration* 31.14 (*NPNP*[2] 7:322).

articulated the one God's unity of operations: "For though He is called Good, and Just, and Almighty and Sabaoth, He is not on that account diverse and various; but being one and the same, He sends forth countless operations of His Godhead, not exceeding here and deficient there, but being in all things like unto Himself."[13]

In the West, Hilary of Poitiers (315–367), like Nazianzen, focused more on upholding the Godhead's essential unity rather than its operational unity.[14] Although, Hilary sometimes hinted at the unity of operations,[15] and he even explicitly mentioned the unity of power in operation—albeit regarding the Father and the Son alone—in his comments on John 5:19: "If Both have the same power in operation, and both claim the same reverence in worship, I cannot understand what dishonour of inferiority can exist, since Father and Son possess the same power of operation, and equality of honour."[16]

Ambrose of Milan (339–397), too, affirmed the inseparability principle. In his work on the Holy Spirit, he expounded upon the unity of divine nature and action. For example, toward the end of Book 3, he wrote, "And so as the Father and the Son are One, because the Son has all things which the Father has, so too the Spirit is one with the Father and the Son, because He too knows all the things of God.… Therefore, if He works all these things, for one and the same Spirit worketh all, how is He not God Who has all things which God has?"[17]

Ambrose's star pupil, Augustine of Hippo (354–430), is perhaps the most well-known proponent of inseparable operations. In one instance, he quite comprehensively explained,

> For the union of Persons in the Trinity is in the Catholic faith set forth and believed, and by a few holy and blessed ones understood, to be so inseparable, that whatever is done by the Trinity must be regarded as being done by the Father, and by the Son, and by the Holy Spirit together; and that nothing is done by the Father which is, not also done by the Son and by the Holy Spirit; and nothing done by the Holy Spirit which is not also done by the Father and by the Son; and nothing done by the Son which is not also done by the Father and by the Holy Spirit.[18]

[13] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 6.7 (*NPNF*[2] 7:35).

[14] E.g., Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity* 5.35, 38; 8.41 (*NPNF*[2] 9a:95–96, 97; 149).

[15] E.g., Hilary, *On the Trinity* 8.13 (*NPNF*[2] 9a:141).

[16] Hilary, *On the Trinity* 9.46 (*NPNF*[2] 9a:171); see also 7.21 (*NPNF*[2] 9a:126–27). Hilary would, of course, include the Holy Spirit in the unity of the Godhead's activities; see 2.1 (9a:51–52).

[17] Ambrose of Milan, *On the Holy Spirit* 3.19.146 (*NPNF*[2] 10:155); see also 1.1.25 (*NPNF*[2] 10:96–97).

More succinctly, Augustine summarized, "The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as they are indivisible, so work indivisibly."[19]

Although space does not permit more discussion here, the doctrine of inseparable operations, as articulated by the early fathers (especially Augustine), was fully embraced by many later theologians (e.g., Thomas Aquinas,[20] John Owen,[21] and Herman Bavinck[22]). As Kyle Claunch aptly summarizes, "The doctrine of inseparable operations has been a staple of orthodox trinitarian reflection for many centuries. Therefore, it is not wise to ignore it or dismiss it lightly."[23]

While dialoging between the East-versus-West and pro-Nicene paradigms is still fruitful, what I have presented above should be sufficient to demonstrate that the fourth-century Eastern and Western fathers spoke with one voice concerning the Trinity: the Godhead, though personally differentiated, is inseparable both in nature and in operation.[24] Hence, the

[18] Augustine of Hippo, *Letter* 11.2 (*NPNF*[1] 1:47); see also *Sermon* 52 (*NPNF*[2] 6:259–66); *Tractate* 20.3, 13 (*NPNF*[1] 7:132–33, 137).

[19] Augustine, *On the Trinity* 1.4.7 (*NPNF*[1] 3:20); see also 1.5.8; 4.21 (3:21; 3:85–86). In arguing against the East-versus-West paradigm, Claunch provides an extensive treatment of Augustine's formulation of inseparable operations and how it coheres with the essential unity of the Godhead ("What God Hath Done Together," 785–91). Tyler R. Wittman also extensively treats Augustine and the doctrine of inseparable operations ("The End of the Incarnation: John Owen, Trinitarian Agency and Christology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15.3 [July 2013]: 287–89).

[20] E.g., Thomas Aquinas, *St. John*, vol. 6 of *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels* (Oxford: James Park, 1874), commentary on John 5:19–20 (pp. 180–86).

[21] E.g., John Owen, *Pneumatologia*, vol. 3 of *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Gould (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), 93–94, 198.

[22] E.g., Herman Bavinck, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, vol. 3 of *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 215.

[23] Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together," 799. Adonis Vidu comes to the same conclusion: "The ancient pedigree of the *opera ad extra* rule … is undeniable" ("Trinitarian Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," *Journal of Analytic Theology* 4.1 [May 2016]: 106). See also Michel René Barnes, "One Nature, One Power: Consensus Doctrine in Pro-Nicene Polemic," in *Theologica et Philosophica, Critica et Philologica, Historica*, Studia Patristica 29 (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 205–23.

[24] As Johnson writes, "Against the East-West paradigm, it is important to recognize that Augustine and [the] Cappadocians share in common all the core

doctrine of inseparable operations possesses rich historical merit and, as such, can serve well for contemporary theological construction.[25] Such historicity, however, is but one strand of evidence supporting the fecundity of the inseparability rule.[26] In the next section, I consider another strand: the doctrine's methodological viability.

The Methodological Viability of Inseparable Operations: The Classical Trinitarian Framework

Though the doctrine of inseparable operations is ultimately derived from the biblical data, it is wrapped up with several theological categories that are indispensable to a classical (or Latin) trinitarian framework (e.g., unity of nature, distinction of persons, processions, missions). Further, as Fred Sanders correctly notes, "The task of the doctrine of the Trinity is to describe the connection between God [*in se*, or 'in himself'] and the economy of salvation."[27] In this section, therefore, I examine whether the more recent model for discourse concerning the Trinity, social trinitarianism,[28] offers a viable alternative for understanding intratrinitarian and

elements of pro-Nicene theology … (common power, common operations, common nature)" (*Rethinking the Trinity*, 54). Johnson goes on to say, "A case in point is inseparable operation. Augustine and the Cappadocians have virtually identical accounts of the inseparable operation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (54n18).

[25] The pro-Nicene consensus on the Trinity in general and inseparable operations in particular well suits ongoing efforts at "retrieval theology," or, broadly speaking, "resourcing contemporary systematic constructive theology by engaging historical theology" (Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals: Why We Need Our Past to Have a Future* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019], 45).

[26] This section has focused on the historical grounds for the doctrine of inseparable operations. For a detailed discussion of the doctrine's theological and biblical grounds, see Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, Theology for the People of God (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 277–81. My section here should supplement Allison and Köstenberger's sparse treatment (pp. 281–82) of the historicity of the inseparability principle.

[27] Fred Sanders, "The Trinity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. Kathryn Tanner, John Webster, and Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 35.

[28] Broadly speaking, social trinitarianism is any model that attributes to the Godhead three distinct centers of consciousness, intellect, and will. According to Karen Kilby, "Most basically, social theorists propose that Christians should not imagine God on the model of some individual person or thing which has three sides, aspects, dimensions or modes of being; God is instead to be thought of as

God-world relations. If the historic model of the Trinity—with which the doctrine of inseparable operations is intimately connected—does not stand the test of time, then it may be necessary to dispense with the attendant axiom as an irrelevant theological relic. But, as I explain, the social model evidences certain weaknesses that inhibit it from displacing the classical model as the preferred approach to trinitarian discourse. Hence, preserving the classical approach shows the inseparability principle to possess methodological viability and, thus, fruitfulness for ongoing theological endeavors.

As scholars widely recognize, the twentieth-century revival in trinitarianism began with Karl Barth's discussion on the Trinity in his *Church Dogmatics*. Such revival then progressed with the writings of Karl Rahner, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Robert Jenson, John Zizioulas, Catherine LaCugna, and others.[29] Rahner, who insisted on "the importance of the economy of salvation for Trinitarian reflection," and Zizioulas, who brought the "concepts of personhood and relationality to centre stage," are of particular importance regarding the shift of trinitarian discourse toward relationality.[30] In Stanley Grenz's estimation, Rahner is in ranks with Barth vis-à-vis the revival and recasting of trinitarian discourse because of "his articulation and consistent use of a methodological principle that informed the subsequent flow of trinitarian theology."[31] Rahner saw historic discussions on the doctrine of the Trinity as detached from salvation history,[32] so his guiding principle—known as "Rahner's

a collective, a group, or a society, bound together by the mutual love, accord, and self-giving of its members." Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 81 (2000): 433. Theologians who posit a so-called "relational" view of the Trinity may or may not affirm these characterizations. Consequently, in this section, I restrict my evaluation to a purely "social" understanding of the Trinity. For an example of a "relational" model, see Thomas H. McCall, "Relational Trinity: Creedal Perspective," in *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Jason S. Sexton, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 113–37.

[29] Though a robust treatment of the twentieth-century developments in trinitarianism is beyond the scope of this article, Grenz (*Rediscovering the Triune God*) provides a comprehensive survey of such developments, covering the key figures and their supporters, innovators, and critics.

[30] Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 9.

[31] Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*, 57.

[32] For his part, Rahner conceived of the economic Trinity (i.e., God's action in the world) as "a history of relations between Father and Son, in the unity of the Spirit, that takes places within the created order" (Holmes, *Quest for the Trinity*, 10).

Rule"—was that "the 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity."[33]

While Rahner "retained the classical belief that God's eternal being is ultimately independent of historical events,"[34] later theologians (i.e., Moltmann, Pannenberg, and Jenson) would draw out "the more thoroughgoing implication of Rahner's Rule, namely, the idea that God finds his identity in the interplay of the three members of the Trinity within the temporal events of the economy of salvation."[35] That being said, LaCugna's contribution to modern trinitarian discourse—that is, her social view of the Trinity—merits especial consideration, for she functions as a sort of nexus of twentieth-century trinitarian development. As Grenz details,

> A more thorough account of the trajectory in which she stands might suggest that LaCugna combines impulses from Zizioulas [i.e., "being as communion"] with Barth's focus on the pseudonymity significance of the divine self-disclosure in Christ, Rahner's linking of the immanent Trinity with the economic Trinity—which she revises and reformulates as *theologia* and *oikonomia*—and the interest in viewing the divine life through the history of the trinitarian persons evident in Pannenberg, Moltmann, and Jenson.[36]

LaCugna modified "Rahner's Rule" by suggesting that the only way to access *theologia* ("the mystery of God") is through *oikonomia* ("the mystery of salvation").[37] She did, however, appreciate and utilize Rahner's methodology, conceding,

> Rahner's theology nonetheless furnishes the basic methodological principle: Christian theology must always speak about God on the basis of God's self-communication in Christ and in the Spirit.… God comes to us through Jesus Christ in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, which suggests that God exists in differentiated personhood.[38]

[33] Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel, Milestones in Catholic Theology (1967; repr., New York: Crossroad, 1997), 22. LaCugna, one of Rahner's successors, clarifies "Rahner's Rule": "The identity of 'economic' and 'immanent' Trinity means that God truly and completely gives God's self to the creature without remainder, and what is given in the economy of salvation *is* God as such" (Introduction to *The Trinity*, by Rahner, xiv; emphasis original).

[34] Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*, 70.

[35] Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*, 71.

[36] Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*, 148.

[37] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 4, 13.

[38] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 13.

Since her conception of God is tied up with God's self-revelation in redemptive history, LaCugna avers, "The fundamental issue in trinitarian theology is not the inner workings of the 'immanent' Trinity, but *the question of how the trinitarian pattern of salvation history is to be correlated with the eternal being of God*."[39] Thus, for LaCugna, "*theologia* and *oikonomia* … are inseparable."[40]

Ultimately, LaCugna resists reflecting on the nature of God apart from salvation history—specifically, the incarnation. She stresses,

> We can only make true statements about God—particularly when the assertions are about the triune nature of God—only on the basis of the economy, corroborated by God's self-revelation in Christ and the Spirit. *Theological* statements are possible not because we have some independent insight into God, or can speak from the standpoint of God, but because God has freely revealed and communicated God's *self*, God's personal existence, God's infinite mystery.[41]

On this basis, LaCugna criticizes classical conceptions of the Trinity, arguing that the distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity results from a gap between *oikonomia* and *theologia*.[42] In her view, "the existence of such an intradivine realm is precisely what cannot be established on the basis of the economy, despite the fact that it has functioned within speculative theology ever since the late fourth century."[43]

In proffering such critiques, LaCugna reveals one of her undergirding presuppositions: "Theories about what God is apart from God's self-communication in salvation history remain unverifiable and ultimately untheological, since *theologia* is given only through *oikonomia*."[44] By situating *theologia* upon *oikonomia*, LaCugna conceives of God solely in terms of his constitutive relationship with creation,[45] as if all that God is he is toward creatures in time:

> Trinitarian theology is par excellence a theology of relationship: God to us, we to God, we to each other. The doctrine of the Trinity

[39] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 4 (emphasis original).

[40] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 4. For example, she argues that "the being of Jesus is inseparable from his person and his history" (6). While this point is true of Jesus of Nazareth, it is not, however, true of God the Son.

[41] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 3 (emphasis original).

[42] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 223.

[43] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 223.

[44] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 231.

[45] As opposed to conceiving of God in terms of his aseity, eternal subsisting relations, and the like.

> affirms that the "essence" of God is relational, other-ward, that God exists as diverse persons united in a communion of freedom, love, and knowledge. The insistence on the correspondence between *theologia* and *oikonomia* means that the focus of the doctrine of the Trinity is the communion between God and ourselves.[46]

To her credit, LaCugna places a heavy emphasis on the relationship between theology proper and soteriology, as one of her primary objectives is to demonstrate the practicality of the doctrine of the Trinity in everyday Christian experience.[47] Furthermore, she centers her trinitarianism on the Christ event, a move that should appeal to social and classical trinitarians alike. In doing so, however, LaCugna commits several missteps.

First, while God's triune nature is only explicitly revealed in the New Testament, LaCugna's focus on God's self-communication in Christ and the Spirit effectively ignores God's progressive revelation throughout the Old Testament. For someone whose proposal champions salvation history as the basis of accessing God's nature, neglecting a significant portion of that history undercuts—to a large degree—the credibility of her argument. Besides, that God progressively discloses himself to creatures in time does not mean that humankind can ever fully apprehend him. Consequently, we cannot know all that there is to know about God merely by looking at "the face of Jesus Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit,"[48] even though all that God is obtains in the persons and works of Christ and the Spirit.[49]

Second, that God's triune nature is only revealed through the economy of salvation does not eliminate the possibility of making theological statements about God *in se*, especially when Scripture itself—in both the Old and New Testaments—makes theological statements about God's nature independent of time (e.g., Isa 40:28; Col 1:15–19).[50] It is precisely because

[46] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 244.

[47] LaCugna, *God for Us*, foreword, 1, 4, 13; "Re-Conceiving the Trinity as the Mystery of Salvation," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 38.1 (February 1985): 1–2, 14.

[48] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 305.

[49] I.e., singular—though personally differentiated—divine nature; singular divine power-will-intellect that operates in personally differentiated modes.

[50] Also significant is that many New Testament passages quote Old Testament passages when discussing the nature of God, particularly the divinity of the Son (e.g., Acts 2:25–36; Heb 1:1–13), thereby hinting at some degree of disclosure of God's triune nature in the Old Testament, even if such disclosure may have been fuzzy. Furthermore, the early church fathers (e.g., Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*) frequently visited the writings of the prophets when

Scripture makes theological statements about the nature of God—including that of the three persons of the Godhead—that classical conceptions of trinitarianism arose in the first place. The early church fathers, as well as theologians throughout history, endeavored to account for Scripture's multifaceted witness concerning God's nature.[51] Therefore, we cannot simply ignore or reject centuries of reflection on God's essence just because God more clearly revealed his triune nature at the incarnation and beyond.

Third, as a consequence of her emphasis on soteriology (or *oikonomia*, "the mystery of salvation"), LaCugna's proposal is heavily anthropocentric. She avers, "God is *personal*, and … therefore the proper subject matter of the doctrine of the Trinity is the encounter between divine and human persons in the economy of redemption."[52] In LaCugna's view, because God has revealed himself (*theologia*) through the economy of salvation (*oikonomia*) as a God in relationship with human creatures, his essence is, as quoted above, that of "diverse persons united in a communion of freedom, love, and knowledge."[53] It is inappropriate, however, to equate what God is toward humankind in redemptive history (*pro nobis*) with what he is in himself (*in se*). God, including his nature, is independent of creation and history. On the other hand, God's acts in time are contingent; God is who he is, but out of love, he created and redeemed. Thus, while God's work in creation is consistent with his nature, we cannot simply dispense with distinguishing between God's inward and outward acts, and we cannot forget that God's inner life is the basis for his outer works, while his works—to greater and lesser degrees—express and point back to his essence. The mystery of God (*theologia*) forever exceeds that which God reveals in time and space, but that reality does not mean we should forsake "faith seeking understanding"—in this case, reasoning toward who God

supplying evidence of, for example, the three divine persons within the Godhead, the full divinity of the Son and the Spirit, and the unity of God's action in creation.

[51] Not to mention, via the economy of the created order, humankind possesses critical faculties—reflective, to a degree, of God's own mind—that allow us to make reasoned deductions—in accord with Scripture—concerning the nature of God outside of time. Indeed, the theologian's task is, and has always been, to cohere thoughtful reflection with Scripture's voice regarding God, his works, and his ways. As Stephen J. Wellum rightly notes, "Theology does not merely repeat Scripture; it seeks to 'understand' what Scripture says in terms of application, logical implications, metaphysical entailments, and so on" ("Retrieval, Christology, and *Sola Scriptura*," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 23.2 [Summer 2019]: 36).

[52] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 305 (emphasis original); see also p. 231.

[53] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 244.

is in himself. As Joseph Bracken aptly notes in his review of LaCugna's work, "This distinction [between God's *being* and God's *doing*] guarantees that the reality of God will not be absorbed into the reality of human history even when the latter is presented as the progressive self-revelation of the triune God."[54]

Funneling all contemplation about God's nature (*theologia*) through the lens of redemptive history (*oikonomia*) limits theological reflection to only that which can be apprehended through such a vector. Hence, LaCugna's proposal should be understood as a potential, though limited, vector that can offer certain insights into God-world relations and the practical implications of the Trinity in everyday Christian life. So, whereas LaCugna contends that "Trinitarian theology is the language of relationality *par excellence*,"[55] I argue that her construal of relationality, though a soteriological manner of pursuing trinitarian theology, is fraught with certain difficulties.[56]

In the end, LaCugna's social conception of the Trinity lacks persuasive power, thus preventing social trinitarianism from undermining or displacing classical trinitarianism. The classical model, therefore, remains the preferred framework for ongoing theological conversation and construction.[57] To summarize the classical model briefly, the Father is unbegotten

[54] Joseph A. Bracken, review of *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, by Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *Theological Studies* 53.3 (September 1992): 559. Relatedly, Letham writes, "The danger is that of importing modern concepts of personhood into our thinking on the Trinity. Once again, this is a mistake. We need to approach the matter from the other end. Personhood is to be understood (insofar as we can ever understand it) in terms of the way God is three. He is an eternal communion of three *hypostases* in undivided union. He creates human persons" (*The Holy Trinity*, 557, citing Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996], 160).

[55] LaCugna, "Re-Conceiving the Trinity," 13 (emphasis original); see also *God for Us*, foreword, 1, 244.

[56] LaCugna herself recognizes this reality: "The trinitarian model of God-in-relation, while not the equivalent of God's being, is nonetheless the appropriate framework for explicating the Christian's experience of salvation by God through Jesus in the Spirit" ("Re-Conceiving the Trinity," 14). However, her rejection of the distinction between God's inward and outward acts and her hesitance to discuss the nature of God apart from redemptive history should be avoided.

[57] I recognize that proffering negative arguments (i.e., rebutting contrary proposals) without presenting positive arguments (i.e., supporting my own proposal) does not automatically demonstrate the validity of my preferred position. However, taking classical trinitarianism as the long-abiding tenant, my critique of the social model of the Trinity, the theological newcomer, should be sufficient to show that the historic approach cannot be so easily evicted.

or unoriginate (paternity). The Son is eternally generated by the Father (filiation, or eternal generation). The Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from, or is eternally spirated (or breathed) by, the Father and the Son (procession, or passive spiration). Thus, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist as eternal subsisting relations.[58] As Gregg Allison and Andreas Köstenberger clarify, "It is not as though the relations *exist between* the three Persons (we may think of our relationship with our spouse or with one of our friends); rather, the Persons *are* the relations."[59] The subsisting relations reveal the irreversible intratrinitarian *taxis* (or order; Father → Son → Holy Spirit). Further, the *taxis* characterizes not only God's inner life (or inward acts) but also how God acts in the world. All inseparable activity of the triune God is accomplished *from* the Father, *through* the Son, and *by* the Spirit (Father → Son → Holy Spirit →→ creation).[60]

[58] For greater discussion on intratrinitarian relations, see Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 255–58; Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 78–102 (esp. 99–102); Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 409–11. For a graphical depiction of the double procession of the Holy Spirit, as well as a defense of the Latin *filioque* addition to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, see Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 237, 258–64. I defend the biblical basis for the double procession of the Holy Spirit in Teer, "'As the Father Has Sent Me, Even So I Am Sending You,'" 541 (esp. 541n21). Finally, for a recent treatment and defense of the *filioque* (from the perspective of the divine missions), see Adonis Vidu, "*Filioque* and the Order of the Divine Missions," in *Third Person of the Trinity*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 21–35.

[59] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 256 (emphasis original). Cf. Torrance, who more extensively explains,

> The relations between the divine Persons are not just modes of existence but hypostatic interrelations which belong intrinsically to what Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are coinherently in themselves and in their mutual objective relations with and for one another. These relations subsisting between them are just as substantial as what they are unchangeably in themselves and by themselves. Thus the Father is the Father precisely in his indivisible ontic relation to the Son and Spirit precisely in their indivisible ontic relations to the Father and to One Another. That is to say, the relations between the divine Persons belong to what they are as Persons—they are constitutive onto-relations (Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 157).

[60] The arrow (→) represents movement within the life of God (i.e., *ad intra*), while the double arrow (→→) represents the action of God toward the created order (i.e., *ad extra*). This rendering also appears in Teer, "The Divine Missions and the Mission of the Church," 538.

Though the Trinity is revealed in salvation history, the divine missions—of the Son and the Spirit—proceed from the eternal relations of origin; therefore, God's *being* must be understood as the metaphysical grounding for God's *doing*. In a similar manner, the Trinity's inseparable activity in creation proceeds from the Trinity's indivisible essence. In other words, the essential unity of the Godhead must be understood as the metaphysical grounding for operational unity of the Godhead.[61] Divine personally differentiated unity is the proper starting place for trinitarian theology and for all derivative theologies. Hence, trinitarian proposals suggesting otherwise cannot depose the classical approach. The doctrine of inseparable operations, as it is naturally entangled with this approach, therefore remains a viable basis for contemporary theological formulation. Such methodological viability furnishes a second strand of evidence that supports the continuing fecundity of the inseparability principle. In the next section, I consider the final strand: the doctrine's theological coherence.

The Theological Coherence of Inseparable Operations: Inseparable Operations and Classical Trinitarian Categories

In order to demonstrate the theological soundness of inseparable operations and, thus, the axiom's fruitfulness for contemporary theology, I must address two concerns: (1) The unity of the Godhead—in nature and in work—seems to undermine personal distinctions among the three persons in creation and redemption.[62] (2) Since the historic Christian tradition generally favors a Christocentric understanding of Scripture and theology, how can such an emphasis square with the inseparability principle? In other words, too much emphasis on one divine person (i.e., the Son)

[61] To say it another way, "It is the one identical essence which is the ontological ground of the doctrine of inseparable operations" (Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together," 797).

[62] This question is not arbitrary. Spence, in his discussion concerning John Owen's argument (in *Pneumatologia*, 67) that the Holy Spirit is a distinct divine person due to his "peculiar subsistence" in the Godhead, asks, "But does not an unqualified doctrine of the indivisibility of God's external activity … preclude such an argument? How can an undivided activity demonstrate distinct persons?" (*Incarnation and Inspiration*, 129–30). LaCugna articulates a similar critique: "Once it is assumed that the Trinity is present in every instance where Scripture refers to God, and once the axiom *opera ad extra* is in place, no longer, it seems, is there any need for the plurality of divine persons *in the economy*. At least it is no longer possible to single out any one person in relation to a particular activity" (*God for Us*, 99; emphasis original).

seems to undercut the one indivisible work of the triune God and diminish the personalizing properties of the other divine persons. I explore this latter concern with respect to the Holy Spirit in particular due to the coextensive nature of the divine missions (i.e., incarnation [Son] and indwelling [Spirit]).[63]

The solution to these apparent difficulties comes by cohering—or simultaneously affirming—the doctrine of inseparable operations and the related doctrine of distinct personal appropriations. This coherence comes into play with respect to one of the most common objections to inseparable operations: only the Son became incarnate, or the incarnation is a peculiar work of the Son, not a common operation of the Three. Kyle Claunch, Tyler Wittman, and Adonis Vidu all argue convincingly against this objection by demonstrating the congruity between inseparable operations and distinct personal appropriations, focusing primarily on John Owen's articulation of the two doctrines in accord with the Augustinian tradition.[64] Accordingly, I do not recapitulate their arguments; instead, I briefly summarize their conclusions and then utilize their solutions in service of my present research concern.

According to Wittman, "Owen explicitly argues [that] the Son alone became incarnate by appealing to the order of subsistence."[65] Indeed, Owen himself says, "But as to the manner of subsistence [in the divine essence], there is distinction, relation, and order between and among [the divine persons]; and hence there is no divine work but is distinctly assigned unto each person, and eminently unto one."[66] Relatedly, though concerning the language of "principle" and "subject," Claunch avers,

> Neither Augustine nor Owen makes this distinction explicit, but

[63] I explore how a Christocentric emphasis corresponds with the person of God the Father in Torey J. S. Teer, "Inseparable Operations, Trinitarian Missions and the Necessity of a Christological Pneumatology," *JTS* 72.1 (April 2021).

[64] Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together"; Wittman, "The End of the Incarnation"; Vidu, "Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation." Wittman says it best: "Far from innovating or weakening the received grammar of trinitarian theology, Owen is in basic continuity with the Augustinian tradition as it came through Aquinas and was articulated by Reformed Orthodoxy" ("The End of the Incarnation," 298).

[65] Wittman, "The End of the Incarnation," 297. Said another way, "[Owen] affirms the traditional use of appropriations to ascribe particular works distinctly to the Father, Son and Spirit. Such distinctions arise because each person acts in accordance with the order of their subsistence" (293).

[66] Owen, *Pneumatologia*, 93. Later, Owen explains, "The only singular immediate *act* of the person of the Son on the human nature was the assumption of it into *subsistence* with himself" (160; emphasis original).

> they utilize it in their discourse. It is the distinction between the *principle* of divine action and the *subject* of divine action. The principle of all divine action is the one undivided essence [*principium*, or "source or origin"]. The subject of divine action is either Father, Son, or Holy Spirit.… For Owen, the Son is the unique *subject* of the assumption of the human nature. It is by the observance of this distinction between the *principle* of divine action—the one divine essence—and the subject of divine action—one of the divine persons—that the coherence of the doctrines of inseparable operations and distinct personal appropriations is maintained.[67]

It is exactly the harmonization of inseparable operations and appropriations that confirms the theological integrity of the inseparability principle. I return to this point momentarily, but first I must take up the language of *terminus* in relation to the order of subsistence within the Godhead (i.e., the eternal processions) and the (temporal) missions of the Son and the Spirit.

Allison and Köstenberger offer a helpful analysis of these subjects: "If we conceptualize (1) the trinitarian processions as the inner life and eternal relations of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and (2) the trinitarian missions as the external activity and temporal works of the triune God, then we can consider (3) the trinitarian missions to be the trinitarian processions turned outside and in time."[68] In addition, the authors more concretely explain,

[67] Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together," 797–98. Concerning Owen's use of *terminus* language (in *Christologia*, vol. 1 of *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Gould [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965], 225), Wittman writes, "Owen's phrase 'term of assumption' immediately recalls Aquinas's language (*terminum assumptionis*) and is a clear affirmation of the *terminus operationis* principle: certain triune works *ad extra* terminate on one person. The Son's assumption of the human nature is the *terminus*, or end, of the undivided trinitarian act of the incarnation" ("The End of the Incarnation," 298). See also p. 295, where Wittman, vis-à-vis Aquinas (*Summa Theologica*, 3a.3.4), states that "this distinction between the divine nature as *principium* and the divine person as *terminus* enables Aquinas to uphold both the unity of the divine nature and the distinction of the divine persons in the incarnation." Vidu essentially follows Wittman's conclusions (Vidu, "Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," 118–19). However, Vidu offers a valuable clarification pertaining to the present discussion: "I am suggesting that the language of appropriation and of terminus are … interchangeable. An action is appropriated to one divine person if that action terminates in that person. Conversely, an action which is appropriated to a person (in view of an affinity between that person's *propria* and the created effect) is also said to terminate in that person" (115n18).

[68] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 275–76.

> The temporal missions of the Son and the Spirit express and are reflective of their eternal processions: There is an appropriateness to the incarnation and salvation as the particular mission of the Son as eternally generated by the Father. And there is an appropriateness to the outpouring and indwelling as the particular mission of the Holy Spirit as eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.[69]

In connecting the appropriations of various operations to one of the divine persons with the eternal relations of the Three, Allison and Köstenberger introduce the language of "termination" into their argument: "The notion of termination is that a work that is appropriated to one of the three Persons terminates in that Person in the sense of the goal or end of that work."[70] In doing so, they rely almost entirely on Vidu's extensive treatment of *terminus*.[71] In Vidu's own words,

> The terminus is the divine person at the far end of a divine agential chain.… In this sense of the notion, it is the Holy Spirit that seems to invariably serve as the terminus of divine actions, since he is the perfecting cause, in addition to the originating (or efficient) cause (Father) and "moulding" (or formal) cause (Son). As perfecting cause, the Spirit applies the agency of the three persons, and is thus in a sense, most proximal to its terminus.[72]

Writing on pneumatology, Allison and Köstenberger then advance their argument to an especial discussion of the three particular divine works that terminate in—or are appropriated to—the Holy Spirit: speaking (related to revelation); creating, recreating, and perfecting (related to creation and redemption); and filling with the presence of the triune God.[73] I return to these "peculiar" works of the Spirit shortly in relation to the second concern raised above.

Holding inseparable operations and distinct personal appropriations in congruity, the treatment above has served to demonstrate that a particular act appropriated to one person of the Godhead is "simultaneously the unique act of the one person and the common act of all three."[74] Consequently, the two above-mentioned concerns regarding the inseparability

[69] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 276–77; see also 282–83.

[70] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 282–83.

[71] Allison and Köstenberger (*The Holy Spirit*, 283) cite Vidu ("Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," 115n18).

[72] Vidu, "Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," 115.

[73] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 284.

[74] Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together," 797 (original emphasis removed).

principle are unsustainable. First, the unity of the Godhead—in nature and in work—does not undermine the distinctiveness of each person within the Godhead because "the distinct hypostatic identity of the three persons in the Godhead … entails the observable distinction between the actions of the three persons in the economy of salvation."[75] Thus, the language of, and distinction between, (eternal) processions and (temporal) missions is helpful indeed. As Matthew Levering writes, "The processions enable us to distinguish the persons without eviscerating the divine unity, while the missions add 'a specific relationship to the creature' without conflating the economy of salvation with the intratrinitarian life."[76]

[75] Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together," 790n39. Here, Claunch is summarizing Augustine's view on the relationship of the persons *ad intra* versus their actions *ad extra*, which he concludes is the same position appropriated by John Owen and, ultimately, the position that best aligns with historic orthodoxy. More comprehensively (and more relevant to my present argument), Claunch details,

> For Augustine, the distinct actions of divine persons in the world *reveal* the eternal intra-Trinitarian order of subsistence of the three divine persons.… Each action performed distinctively by each divine person is appropriate only to that person as a revelation of the eternal and irreversible *taxis* present in the Godhead.… When one divine person acts in the economy of salvation (e.g. the Son assuming a human nature), he acts by the one power of the one divine substance, shared equally by the three persons, making the act of the one person an act of all three. The act is appropriated to one person as distinct from the other two *ad extra* because there is a fixed order of subsistence *ad intra*, which God reveals by his actions in the world ("What God Hath Done Together," 791; emphasis original).

[76] Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: Love and Gift in the Trinity and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 169, quoting Bruce D. Marshall, "The Unity of the Triune God: Reviving an Ancient Question," *The Thomist* 74 (2010): 8. This point also rebuffs LaCugna's (mis)understanding of the relationship between *theologia* and *oikonomia*. Relatedly, Vidu instructs,

> While the common actions of the Trinity are "appropriated" to this or that divine person, the missions are proper and not so appropriated. A mission, Aquinas shows, is nothing but a relationship to a created term added to a procession. As Neil Ormerod puts it, "The inner relatedness of the divine persons becomes the basis whereby a contingent created reality or temporal effect can become a term for the procession." … The created effects are what they are precisely because of the inner-relationality of the Trinity, and thereby because of the unique personal identity of each of the persons.… There is a very real sense, then, in which the effects truly reveal the distinctiveness of the persons ("Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," 123; quotation from Neil Ormerod, "The Metaphysics of Holiness: Created Participation in the Divine Nature," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 79.1 [2014]: 68–82).

Second, a Christological emphasis vis-à-vis Scripture and theology does not conflict with inseparable operations because the one indivisible work of the triune God (creation-redemption-consummation) centers upon the Son, especially as seen in the divine missions.[77] While there are two temporal missions, the mission of the Son (reflective of his eternal generation by the Father) and the mission of the Spirit (reflective of his eternal spiration by the Father and the Son), due to the inseparable operations of the Trinity, the two missions are coextensive with each other and, thus, inextricably linked.[78] Here, Allison and Köstenberger's discussion of the divine works that terminate in the Holy Spirit comes into play. Concerning the Spirit's role in recreating (i.e., the application of salvation), "all of the benefits of Jesus Christ come to Christians and the church through the Holy Spirit, who unites us to Christ and his saving work."[79]

[77] Indeed, as Michael J. Svigel notes, "Orthodoxy continually points us to the person and work of Christ in his first and second coming as the central theme of the Bible, theology, Christian life, and all reality. [Furthermore,] Orthodoxy reminds us of the overarching biblical narrative of creation, redemption, and ultimate restoration effected by the harmonious work of the triune God: *from* the Father, *through* the Son, and *by* the Holy Spirit" (*RetroChristianity: Reclaiming the Forgotten Faith* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012], 93; emphasis original). See pp. 87–105 for a more in-depth survey of the historical Christocentricity of the Christian faith. See also Glenn R. Kreider and Michael J. Svigel, *A Practical Primer on Theological Method: Table Manners for Discussing God, His Works, and His Ways* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 76–81.

[78] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 275; Christopher R. J. Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, New Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 21; Stephen R. Holmes, "Trinitarian Action and Inseparable Operations: Some Historical and Dogmatic Reflections," in *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 71–74.

[79] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 290. Consistent with this point, the authors affirm

> the Holy Spirit's eternal relation of procession from the Father and the Son, expressed correspondingly in the mission of the Spirit (beginning with his outpouring on Pentecost) and characterized by temporal fulfillment (of the Father's will *centered on the gospel of the Son*). On this latter

Of course, the proclamation and consummation of the Son's work—that is, the gospel—is the very will of the Father (John 5:19; 6:38).

Furthermore, a Christological emphasis, in accord with the inseparability principle, does not detract from the distinct hypostatic identity of the other divine persons because all divine action takes place according to the *taxis* (Father → Son → Holy Spirit →→ creation). In particular, such an emphasis does not diminish the person and work of the Holy Spirit because the one work of the Godhead terminates and finds its completion in the Spirit. Simplistically speaking, the Father sends the Son, Christ himself accomplishes redemption, and the Holy Spirit applies the benefits of redemption to the body of Christ, the church, thus making it/them the temple of the Spirit.[80] As the perfecting cause of all divine works, the Holy Spirit has an essential—not diminished or insignificant—role in those works (see John 16:13–15).[81] In alignment with Allison and Köstenberger's treatment of the divine works that terminate in the Spirit, it is indeed through the continual agency of the Holy Spirit that "the triune God dwells in his people."[82] Hence, theology featuring the inseparability principle and the classical Christocentric emphasis immediately and continually acknowledges the Spirit's ongoing life-giving work in the world

point, Owen offered, "The Holy Ghost doth immediately work and effect whatever was to be done in reference unto the person of the Son or the sons of men, for the perfecting and accomplishment of the Father's counsel and the Son's work, in an especial application of both unto their especial effects and ends" (277n8; emphasis added; quotation from Owen, *Pneumatologia*, 159).

[80] Stephen Holmes summarizes this point by borrowing from "Basil's ordering": "The single work of salvation was initiated by the Father, carried forth by the mission—and the passion—of the Son, and is being brought to perfection by the mission of the Spirit. In saying this, however, we have to remain committed to the notion that this is one single activity, an inseparable operation" ("Trinitarian Action and Inseparable Operations," 74). For an example of "Basil's ordering" (or *taxis*), see Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 1.3 (*NPNF*[2] 8:3). For more on the Spirit as the perfector of all divine works, see Torey J. S. Teer, "The Perfector of All Divine Acts: Inseparable Operations, the Holy Spirit, and the Providence of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 178.707 (July–September 2020).

[81] Indeed, recalling Claunch's discussion of Augustine, Owen, and principle-subject language, while the undivided essence of the Godhead is the principle of all divine works, the Holy Spirit is the unique subject of all the works appropriated to him.

[82] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 292; cf. Michael S. Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God's Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 28; Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith (New York: Crossroad/Herder & Herder, 2015), 2:101.

and—especially—in the life of the church.

In summary, the doctrine of inseparable operations is theologically coherent and, as such, defensible against actual and potential concerns to the contrary. The axiom, in accord with the classical approach to trinitarianism, does not muddle the personal distinctions among the three divine persons in their united work. The indivisible activity of the Godhead is personally differentiated just as the indivisible essence of the Godhead is personally differentiated (recall eternal subsisting relations). Further, a Christ-centered understanding of Scripture and theology, in keeping with the historic Christian tradition, accords with the inseparability principle because every undivided act of the Trinity, recalling Gregory of Nyssa, "has its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son [the one upon whom all divine activity *centers*], and is perfected in the Holy Spirit."[83] So stands the third and final strand of evidence demonstrating the value of inseparable operations for ongoing theological endeavors.

Conclusion

Upon final evaluation, is the doctrine of the inseparable operations of the Trinity (*opera trinitis ad extra indivisa sunt*) an outdated relic irrelevant for contemporary pursuits in Christian theology? Far from it! The inseparability rule is a fecund theological tool that accords with classical trinitarian categories and emphases. Showing the doctrine to be so was the goal of this essay.

By first surveying the pro-Nicene theological consensus concerning inseparable operations and then critiquing LaCugna's social model of the Trinity, I validated the historical precedence of the axiom and preserved classical trinitarianism as the preferred framework for understanding intratrinitarian and God-world relations. And by utilizing contemporary arguments in support of inseparable operations, I confirmed that the axiom harmonizes with distinct personal appropriations and a Christocentric understanding of Scripture and theology. Hence, the inseparability principle possesses historical merit, methodological viability, and theological soundness.

This three-stranded evidentiary cord thus supports the ongoing fecundity of inseparable operations for theological construction. Consequently, it has relevance and explanatory power for making sense of a whole host of modern issues, such as the full divinity of both the Son and the Spirit, the Son and the Spirit's participation in all divine activity (especially creation), the incarnation of the Son alone, the agency of both the Son and the Spirit in the life of Christ, Jesus's cry of dereliction on the cross, the

[83] Gregory, *Not Three Gods* (*NPNF*[2] 5:334).

inhabitation of the Father and the Son in the Spirit's indwelling of believers, and the Spirit's activity in world religions. Though the tug-of-war over the viability of inseparable operations may continue, I hope this article has added to the persuasive power needed to tip the balance in favor of classical trinitarian categories.

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The Sonship of Christ in the Contexts of Mission: Chalcedonian Retrieval as Missiological Necessity among Muslims

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From its earliest days, Christianity is a faith that has demonstrated its ability to be articulated, believed, and practiced in a multitude of cultural contexts. Its Scriptures have been translated into a multitude of languages, and its manifestations have appeared in countless places and eras. The task of the Christian missionary, then, is the translation of the unchanging message of the gospel into the changing contexts of the world in a perennial dance requiring exegesis of both text and context. To avoid the imposition of extra-contextual interpretive pressure, some missionaries and global theologians encourage the development of contextual Christologies that prioritize concepts and terms relevant and native to the culture over biblical or creedal terminology. To the contrary, this article contends that the Chalcedonian articulation of the Sonship of the second person of the trinity has enduring cross-cultural relevance for contemporary Christian missiology.

Key Words: Chalcedon, Christology, contextualization, Divine Filial Terms, Insider Movement, missiology, Muslim Idiom Translation, retrieval

Stephen Bevans begins his influential book *Models of Contextual Theology* with a jarring claim. The first sentence of the first chapter reads, "There is no such thing as 'theology'; there is only *contextual* theology."[1] Bevans goes on to provide examples of this claim by listing different adjectives that precede various theological programs, such as *African* theology, *feminist* theology, and *liberation* theology. Bevans's book illustrates a common understanding among missionaries approaching new cultural contexts, languages, and peoples: the missionary task is successful when it results in the Christian message being expressed in the cultural forms

[1] Stephan Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2017), 3.

native to the context.[2]

As he presents various models of contextual theology, Bevans provides a broad representation of the contemporary discussion concerning the articulation and application of biblical theology in the process of contextualization. In the first chapter he concludes,

> *Contextualization* points to the fact that theology needs to interact and dialogue not only with traditional cultural value, but with social change, new ethnic identities, and the conflicts that are present as the contemporary phenomenon of globalization encounters the various peoples of the world.[3]

In other words, the aim of the contextualization process is to apply the biblical message within a cultural context.[4] Thus, missionaries often labor to excise extrabiblical forms and influences that attend the biblical message in order to remove any foreign imposition on contextual reception.

In practice, this desire to mitigate foreign imposition on embryonic indigenous theologies encourages missionaries to refrain from introducing contemporary theological forms and conclusions from the missionary's home culture. At times, however, this desire also breeds skepticism regarding the formative early years of Christian history. Having become suspicious of the impact of extrabiblical culture on early theological articulations of Christian orthodoxy, some missionaries dismiss the importance of creedal precision surrounding central doctrines, contending, "Even within Christianity there are many different understandings about Jesus and about salvation. There is no one voice within Christianity about the Trinity. Some believe in it and some don't."[5] From such a posture of skepticism, some missiologists develop a wariness to introduce classical orthodox doctrines regarding issues as central as the Sonship of Christ.

This article does not dispute the fact that the peoples of the world must learn to understand and apply biblical teaching within their own context. Cultural translatability is a hallmark of the Christian faith and

[2] See, e.g., Paul Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 11. Hiebert introduces his book with the assertion, "The church in each locale, as a community of faith, must define what it means to be Christian in its particular sociocultural and historical setting."

[3] Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 27 (emphasis original).

[4] See A. Scott Moreau, *Contextualization in World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012), 18–19.

[5] Jan Prenger, *Muslim Insider Christ Followers* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2017), 281. Cited here is an interviewee from Southeast Asia who is introduced as one who questions anyone's right to judge whether another group's theology is correct or not.

message.[6] Indeed, the missionary task *must* consider how the biblical message will appropriate the forms and language of a given culture in order to be understood and to belong uniquely therein.[7] What this article intends to demonstrate, however, is that imbalanced attention to the immediate cultural expression of the faith can lead to unwitting dismissal of the hard-wrought theological insights and accomplishments of the church throughout the ages to the degree that even biblical language is altered. In particular, this article contends that the Chalcedonian articulation of the Sonship of the second person of the trinity has cross-cultural relevance in contemporary Christian missiology. The test case for this thesis will be an investigation of Muslim Idiom Translations (MIT) of the Bible that remove Divine Filial Language (DFL)—references to God the Father and God the Son—in favor of terms that are less offensive to a Muslim audience.

Before considering the role that Chalcedonian Christology can play in contemporary contextualization discussions, we need to consider the idea of contextualization itself. Of particular interest are the various iterations of contextualization known as Insider Movements (IM). Following this overview, we will consider three broad missiological missteps that lead certain IM strategies to a willingness to remove the language of Son of God from Bible translations aimed at Muslim populations. Finally, then, we will consider how Chalcedonian Christology provides a corrective to all three missiological missteps—while demanding the retention of Divine Filial Language —as it articulates the biblical person and work of Jesus as the incarnate Son of God. First, then, let us address the missiological process of contextualization.

Contextual Christianity and the Insider Movement

That the cross-cultural communication of the biblical message will result in various culturally-shaped expressions of Christian faith and practice is hardly a new or controversial statement. Since 1974, the word contextualization has featured prominently within evangelical discussions

[6] Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001).

[7] Moreau, *Contextualization in World Missions*, 19, writes, "With thousands of ethnolinguistic groups, many with dialects and subcultural segments, the need to enable the Christian faith to be at home in each is a testimony to the need for contextualization."

about cross-cultural missions.[8] Drawing on Rev 7:9–10 and its eschatological vision of a multitude of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation worshipping around the throne, Byang Kato was perhaps the first evangelical to use the term when he said, "Since the Gospel message is inspired but the mode of its expression is not, contextualization of the modes of expression is not only right but necessary."[9] Contextualization has been widely acknowledged as a necessary and desirable aspect of missiology, though its particular applications are often debated.[10]

One debated aspect of contextualization that is particularly germane to the discussion of contextual Christology comes from the question of whether indigenous reflection on Scripture should develop its own theology from the ground up or build upon the theological conclusions of broader historical Christian orthodoxy.[11] Resisting the imposition of extra-cultural and extrabiblical material on a given context, some missiologists argue that extrabiblical theological resources—including the early creeds and councils—are unhelpful in fostering local, indigenous theologies because such creeds and councils are indelibly formed by the foreign cultural contexts in which they arose.[12] This sentiment characterizes some of the expressions of contextualization known as Insider Movements

[8] See, e.g., David Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1989); Gailyn Van Rheenen, ed., *Contextualization and Syncretism: Navigating Cultural Currents* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2006); Moreau, *Contextualization in World Missions*; Jackson Wu, *One Gospel for All Nations* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2015).

[9] As quoted in Moreau, *Contextualization in World Missions*, 19.

[10] Moreau, *Contextualization in World Missions*, 19, writes, "Contextualization is at the mixing point of gospel and culture. It is not surprising then that the literature on contextualization has exploded over the past two decades. The sheer volume of writing, thinking, and experimenting with and about contextualization demonstrates its importance in mission." See also note 7 for several books that summarize and categorize contextualization models.

[11] See notes 4 and 5 above. Prenger, *Muslim Insider Christ Followers*, provides multiple examples of the impulse to reject outside forms and influence on the task of doing theology within a specific cultural context. See also William Dyrness, *Insider Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016); Harley Talman and John Travis, eds., *Understanding Insider Movements* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2015); and Steven Bevans, *Essays in Contextual Theology* (New York: Brill, 2018), 47–59.

[12] See the inclusion of Andrew Walls, "The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture," in *Understanding Insider Movements*, ed. Harley Talman and John Travis (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2015), 305–15.

(IM). These IMs are at the center of our present investigation.[13]

In a recent effort to define the central theological and missiological approaches of those who advocate for various streams of Insider Movement contextualization, a compilation of articles was published under the title *Understanding Insider Movements*.[14] Included among its contributions is an article by Andrew Walls entitled "The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture." In this article, Walls presents a view of Christian history and theology that is representative of many of the IM advocates who likewise contributed to the volume. Walls invites his readers to imagine an observer of Christian history who visits the early church and hears their discussions about Jesus of Nazareth whom they describe as the "Son of Man," the "Messiah," and "the Suffering Servant." Skipping ahead chronologically, the visitor returns in AD 325 to encounter Christians preferring a different set of appellatives to refer to Jesus: "Son of God" and "Lord." Furthermore, the Christians of AD 325 are also occupied with extra-biblical language as they engage in an intense discussion over "whether the Son is *homo-ousios* with the Father or only *homoi-ousios* with him."[15]

Walls's parable continues to address later moments in history, but already his point is sufficiently clear: each iteration of Christian expression utilizes and produces language and theological reflection derived from its own particular time and questions. Walls goes on to conclude, "No group of Christians has therefore any right to impose in the name of Christ upon another group of Christians a set of assumptions about life determined by another time and place."[16] Walls's article, included in the *Understanding Insider Movements* volume, provides a glimpse into the posture that IM advocates often take toward the developments of the church throughout history. While few would dispute the importance of the creeds and councils as appropriate expressions of faith for their time and place, the idea that such creeds and councils are beneficial for faithful missionary encounter with new contexts is rejected.[17] From this posture towards church

[13] There is no singular movement that can be identified as "The Insider Movement." Rather, Insider Movement language describes a broad approach to contextualization that promotes the retention of cultural forms including non-Christian socio-religion forms and identity as vehicles for expressing genuine faith in Jesus.

[14] Talman and Travis, *Understanding Insider Movements*.

[15] Walls, "The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture," 305–7.

[16] Walls, "The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture," 309.

[17] Prenger, *Muslim Insider Christ Followers,* 119, states, "Those opposing IM seem to think of themselves as promoting the historical approach, and in that sense they are 'traditionalists' who promote traditional church doctrines and creeds."

history, IM strategies encourage fresh articulations of biblical truth in each new context rather than introducing the extrabiblical conclusions of ecumenical councils and creeds.

Central to the issue of contextualization among Muslims is the question of how to discuss and develop Christology. Muslims recognize Jesus as a prophet who is highly praised within the Qur'an and Islamic tradition, yet they adamantly reject both his divinity and his role as the Son of God.[18] Contemporary missiological discussions surrounding the presentation of Christ among Muslims exhibit a spectrum of opinions and positions. On one end of the spectrum, some missiologists advocate for recognizing that the mosaic of biblical imagery used to describe Jesus allows one to give initial preference to imagery that provides culturally appropriate entry-points into the discussion that will eventually include a robust biblical portrait of Christ. Timothy Tennent, for example, employs the analogy of a puzzle with many pieces that combine together to create the full biblical portrait of Jesus.[19] Though initial evangelistic preference might be given to explaining Jesus using less offensive biblical imagery, the process of doing Christology involves putting the rest of the biblical puzzle pieces together, including even the offensive aspects of a biblically holistic portrait of Christ.

On the other end of the spectrum, however, some IM advocates argue that the biblical portrait of Jesus as the Son of God is unacceptable and offensive to Muslim audiences and should therefore be jettisoned altogether in order to accommodate their sensibilities.[20] This sentiment manifests itself not only in shaping missionary strategy and practice, but also

[18] Ex. Qur'an 3:45. See also, John Kaltner and Younus Mirza, *The Bible and the Qur'an: Biblical Figures in Islamic Tradition* (London: T&T Clark, 2018), 76–83. For analysis of the Qur'anic Christ figure, see Matthew Bennett, "Christ in the Scripture of Islam: Remnantal Revelation or Irredeemable Imposter?," *STR* 11.1 (Spring 2020): 99–117.

[19] Timothy Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church Is Influencing the Way We Think about and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 107.

[20] See the suggestions regarding the removal of Divine Filial Language presented in the influential article by Rick Brown, "Part 1: Explaining the Biblical Term 'Son(s) of God' in Muslim Context," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 22.3 (2005): 91–96. Not all who argue for a change away from "Son of God" language do so out of a desire to avoid offense. Some have argued that the language of "Son of God" literally rendered in Arabic cannot help but convey a sense of sexual generation, and should be altered in order to better express the meaning within the context. See Rick Brown, Leith Gray, and Andrea Gray, "A New Look at Translating Familial Biblical Terms," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 28.3 (2011): 105–20.

in the publication of what are considered Muslim Idiom Translations (MIT) of Scripture.[21] Some of these MITs omit the divine references to God as Son and Father altogether.[22]

Some readers may be tempted to dismiss such MITs as anomalous expressions of extreme contextualization efforts. However, before coming to the conclusion that these MITs represent isolated streams of missiology, it is fruitful to inspect some of the broader missiological commitments that have allowed for these expressions of contextualization to result. By inspecting these commitments, the following section will prepare us to consider how retrieving Chalcedonian Christology for missiological purposes helps to foster indigenous expressions of Christology that also retain orthodoxy.

Inspecting Three Missiological Missteps that Lead to MITs

The production of Bible translations that remove references to the Son of God did not occur in a vacuum. Multiple factors have contributed to the decisions IM proponents made regarding the Christologies promoted within Islamic contexts. In order to discern the origins of MIT fruits, we must inspect the missiological roots. Specifically, the following section inspects three missteps that paved the way for MITs that remove Sonship language: contextually-informed theological method, dynamic equivalence translation theory, and missiological pragmatism.

Inspecting Theological Method: Christ from Above and Christ from Below

One aspect of contextualization discussions that requires inspection is the desire to see Christ described and understood in the cultural forms of the new context. Resulting from this desire, some theologians have adopted a two-tiered theological method of developing global Christology using the idea of a Christology "from above" and a Christology "from below."[23] This distinction separates the realities related to Christ's person

[21] See the assessment of such MITs by Adam Simnowitz, "Appendix: Do Muslim Idiom Translations Islamize the Bible? A Glimpse behind the Veil," in *Muslim Conversions to Christ*, ed. Ayman Ibrahim and Ant Greenham (New York: Peter Lang, 2018), 501–23.

[22] See Simnowitz, "Appendix," 510. Simnowitz demonstrates how two different MITs translate the reference to "the Son" in Heb 1:8 as "God's beloved" (*Injil Sharif*, 2001) and "the beloved prince" (*Al-Injil*, 2013).

[23] Millard Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 11.

and ontology ("above") from Christ's work and accomplishments in history ("below").[24] Timothy Tennent provides an example of this distinction in practice as he inspects various contextual Christologies around the globe.

As Tennent embraces this distinctive method of developing indigenous Christology, he reframes the discussion around elements that he believes to be missing from the conclusions of the Chalcedonian Creed (AD 451). Arguing that global Christological reflection should result in an ever-growing Christology that includes contextual imagery and elements, Tennent writes,

> The council of Chalcedon was looking at the Christological puzzle from the upper side, that is, from the divine perspective of God's initiative in becoming a man. They did not deliberate or discuss how the incarnation is understood from the perspective of, for example, fifth-century Persian Christians, who, at the time of this council, were being persecuted for their faith in Christ.[25]

While Tennent is quick to state that all christological proposals should be chastened by "the reflections that have stood the test of time and many generations of Christians," he goes on to list several contextual Christologies that supplement biblical Christology with extra-biblical imagery. Tennent comments, "[African Christologies] tend to focus more on Jesus' work than on his person in isolation."[26] In other words, the impulse to develop an ever-broadening contextual Christology "from below" encourages contextual theologians to develop portraits of a "Contextual Jesus" that draw on existing cultural categories to explain Jesus's biblical identity through his work.

Yet, as the following investigation of Chalcedon will demonstrate, Christological reflection on Christ's work cannot be separated from an articulation of his person. Both require the theologian to wrestle with the biblical language that informs the biblical picture of Christ's person and work as the incarnate Son of God. While Tennent himself has written convincingly and helpfully against many of the contextualization errors of IM advocates, his two-tiered approach to theological method represents one of the missiological missteps that can lead IM advocates to argue for contextual Christologies that utilize contextual categories at the expense of biblical language to express the person and work of Christ.[27]

[24] Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 113.

[25] Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 108.

[26] Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 113.

[27] Timothy Tennent, "Followers of Jesus (Isa) in Islamic Mosques," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 23.3 (Fall 2006): 101–15.

If Christology can be done "from below" and focused on Christ's work in forms that are contextually communicative and which meet contextual needs, then communicating the work of Christ can be supplemented with contextual terminology that is descriptive of Jesus's work apart from the biblical language. When such biblical language is contextually offensive—as in the case of Muslim aversion to Son of God language—the temptation arises to highlight the "Christology from below" to the neglect of the biblical language. This is precisely the path advocates of IM strategies and MITs take that omits Divine Filial Language from their translations.[28] As this article investigates the Chalcedonian contribution, more attention will be given to Tennent's two-tiered methodological proposal. For the present, however, it is important to inspect another aspect of contextualization discussions that has served to lay the foundation for MITs and IM strategies: receptor-oriented translation theories which defer to cultural preferences and linguistic forms.

Inspecting Translation Theory: Receptor Oriented Language

Between 2011 and 2012, the broader evangelical world became aware of the controversial trend of developing MITs within some Muslim-centered missions strategies and among key translation agencies.[29] Long before this controversy, however, Christian anthropologists such as Charles Kraft began teaching that "accurate translation[s] must produce the same *emotive* response in the reader of the target language as it did to the reader of the original language."[30] Pertinent to our purposes in this article, Kraft illustrates this impact with the specific example of removing the phrase "Son of God" from translations of Scripture read by Muslim audiences. Georges Houssney narrates an exchange with Kraft in which Kraft explained,

[28] For example, see Harley Talman, "Reflections on Religion," in *Understanding Insider Movements*, ed. Harley Talman and John Travis (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2015), 342–44, who argues that much Christianity defines who is in and who is out by way of a "checklist" of orthodoxy which "invariably become instruments of power." Thus, we should eschew the "checklist" mentality and instead be willing to embrace a more pliable "family resemblance" approach in which followers of Jesus might not check all of our boxes of orthodoxy—including Jesus's divinity and eternal Sonship.

[29] Georges Houssney, "Watching the Insider Movement Unfold," in *Muslim Conversions to Christ*, ed. Ayman Ibrahim and Ant Greenham (New York: Peter Lang, 2018), 402–7.

[30] C. Richard Shumaker, ed., *Conference on Media in Islamic Culture Report* (Clearwater, FL: International Christian Broadcasters, 1974), 33. As described by Houssney, "Watching the Insider Movement Unfold," 398 (emphasis original).

> Muslims object to the sonship of Christ and misunderstand it; therefore, we must not offend them, but rather give them a phrase that they can accept.… "sonship is an analogy, metaphor, it's an example, there's nothing sacred in either that term or that concept."[31]

Seen here in the transcript of this 1974 conference, Kraft proposed the removal of Divine Filial Language (DFL) in order to accommodate Muslim audiences. Much to Houssney's surprise, the idea was not rejected out of hand, but rather many people found Kraft's suggestions both appropriate for avoiding offense and pragmatically fruitful within their ministries.[32]

In the early 2000s, other missiologists working with Muslims continued to propagate Kraft's ideas for removing offensive phrases and terminology from the Bible. Among the most influential advocates was Rick Brown. Brown wrote an article in the *International Journal of Frontier Missions* in 2000 entitled "The 'Son of God': Understanding Jesus's Messianic Titles."[33] In this article Brown falsely contends that, in the Arabic language "the words for son and father have a biological meaning only. The terms are not used broadly or metaphorically for other interpersonal relationships, not even for a nephew, step-son, or an adopted son, and certainly not for the king's subjects nor for God's people."[34] Not only is this statement objectively false, but it also implies that other languages *do* regularly use son and father in ways that stretch beyond biological relationships.[35] Even more troubling, Kraft's comments regarding the biblical language used to reveal God to humanity imply that DFL is imprecise, does not

[31] Houssney, "Watching the Insider Movement Unfold," 399. The latter quotation is cited by Houssney as being drawn from Shumaker, *Conference on Media in Islamic Culture Report*, 68.

[32] Houssney, "Watching the Insider Movement Unfold," 399.

[33] Rick Brown, "The 'Son of God': Understanding Jesus's Messianic Titles," *IJFM* 17.1 (Spring 2000): 41–52.

[34] Brown, "The 'Son of God,'" 41.

[35] The statement is false because Arabic speakers do regularly refer to friends and younger men as "my son" [*ya ibni*] in idiomatic fashion despite the lack of biological relationship between the two parties. Furthermore, there are two words in Arabic that connote sonship. The standard rendering of the phrase "Son of God" that is used in the Van Dyck version of the Arabic Bible is *ibn Allah*. The other word for son is *walad* which is not used to refer to the second person of the Trinity and which does more closely relate to the process of being born, thus more closely indicating biological reproduction and the implication of prior sexual activity.

play a definitive role in describing and defining God, and can be exchanged without doing violence to biblical revelation.[36]

Inspecting Missiological Pragmatism: Avoiding Offense and Winning a Hearing

For many readers, the idea of removing biblical language from a translation is likely a shocking and untenable suggestion. However, if one is convinced that Christology from below is advantageous for producing new and culturally appropriate theological images, such a leap is not as dramatic as it may seem. Once one has determined that the task of missions is ultimately fulfilled when a people has begun speaking about Jesus in terminology that is native to their context, moving from adding imagery to subtracting biblical language is not so difficult.[37] If one encounters aspects of biblical teaching that either fail to connect with the context or actively offend them, it is not difficult to downplay or even remove those aspects that do not readily exhibit themselves in the cultural environment in which one is working.

If one is keen to see Muslims consider the gospel in their context, the tendency to remove barriers of offense provides pragmatic motivation for sidelining Sonship in the development of Muslim-sensitive Christology. While the motivations for such an approach may be admirable, the biblical-theological argument is untenable. The following section intends to demonstrate how the task of retrieving Chalcedonian Christology addresses the three areas of investigation above.

The Need for Chalcedonian Retrieval

The preceding section sufficiently demonstrated the role that cultural context often plays in the task of doing theology globally. Such a focus on the local context may prove to generate or manufacture a more immediately favorable response to the message that is presented. However, as in the case of MITs that remove DFL, it does so at the expense of presenting the entire biblical portrait of Christ. It is precisely at this juncture that being grounded in church history and historical theology can provide a corrective to this historically uprooted missiological trajectory while also allowing the biblical Christ to take root in local soil.

[36] Shumaker, *Conference on Media in Islamic Culture Report*, 68.

[37] See Donald McGavaran, *The Bridges of God* (New York: Friendship, 1955), 14–15. McGavaran writes, "Positively, a people is discipled when its individuals feel united around Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour … the full understanding of Christ is not the all-important factor, which is simply that He be recognized by the community as their sole spiritual Sovereign."

Mere Christology: The Incarnate Son in the Context(s) of Chalcedon

As we have mentioned briefly thus far, some missions practitioners view patristic theology as a contextually-contained set of theological judgments that are helpful to a point, but not necessary for cross-cultural engagement. We will primarily address Tennent's argument more fully below, because it is subtly problematic on its own and also opens the door to what we perceive as the clearer Christological errors of some IM advocates and the removal of DFL in MITs. In particular, we will show that Tennent's argument for an expanding "Christological puzzle" as it relates to creedal Christological formulations is both historically and theologically thin.

First, as was mentioned above, Tennent insinuates that those involved in the Chalcedonian Council were not concerned with their Persian brothers and sisters who were being persecuted. Of course, this assertion is an assertion from silence—we cannot argue that they were unconcerned with Persian persecution simply because they were focused on various concerns related to Christological heresy. More pointedly, to assume that the council's attendees were not concerned about any ideas or events outside of the council's main discussion is quite the accusation given that over 500 bishops from across the West and East convened for the council. The council did not directly address these persecution issues because this was not its intent, and making this point about Chalcedon does nothing to advance Tennent's argument about the *Christological* conclusions and intentions of the council.

Second and more importantly for our purposes, Tennent asserts that the councils such as Nicaea (AD 325) and Chalcedon "did more to declare which pieces were *not* true pieces of the puzzle and should be discarded, than to provide a final, definitive statement of christology that would silence all future discussions."[38] This claim is demonstrably false. Tennent admits that these councils sought to rule out the theological conclusions of Arius, Nestorius, and Eutyches; however, this admission undermines his point because it highlights the councils' method of bringing together bishops from across global contexts *to make unified statements that addressed multiple contextual-theological concerns*. Chalcedon, in its own words, is bookended by a desire to continue the *scriptural* and *ecclesial* consensus handed down to the early church as a response to these various heresies from across multiple centuries and global contexts:

> We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach people to confess one and the same Son … as the prophets from

[38] Tennent, *Theology in the Context of Christianity*, 107 (emphasis original).

> the beginning have declared concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.

The creeds in general and Chalcedon in particular were certainly responding to specific contextual events concerning various disparate theologies, but they were able to identify and correct these theologies with the same singular conclusion by virtue of an established general "pro-Nicene" consensus that developed particularly by the time of the Council of Constantinople (AD 381).[39] Put another way, the fact that Chalcedon sought to address a wide range of disparate theologies from across Christendom shows that the council's intentions and perspective were more far reaching and ambitious than Tennent depicts. In fact, the emperor Marcian, who oversaw the proceedings, hoped that its "judgments may be observed forever," and the bishops lauded that their conclusions were "unerring," "contained everything," and "dictated by the Holy Spirit."[40] Rather than accusing Chalcedon of attempting to utilize culturally-bound language and categories to satisfy culturally-determined concerns, the Council of Chalcedon attempted to wrestle with the biblical portrait of the incarnate Son of God in order to establish a mere Christology that could be articulated and affirmed throughout the world regardless of culture and language.

While the Protestant may quibble with the idea of Spirit-inspired creeds, the larger point is that the patristic theologians did not leave their conclusions in contextually-situated moments, but rather sought to establish fundamental, biblically-faithful, and timeless criteria for the Church catholic (universal) on how to talk about Christ, so that these creedal judgments would serve Christians as a theological anchor moving forward. Indeed, if their conclusions are rooted in biblical language and deductions, then any affirmation of divine revelation would render them timeless even

[39] Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 236–40, identifies three "central principles" of pro-Nicene theology: "1. a clear version of the person and nature distinction, entailing the principle that whatever is predicated of the divine nature is predicated of the three persons equally and understood to be one (this distinction may or may not be articulated via a consistent terminology); 2. clear expression that the eternal generation of the Son occurs within the unitary and incomprehensible divine nature; 3. clear expression of the doctrine that the persons work inseparably." Mark S. Smith, *The Idea of Nicaea in the Early Church and Councils, AD 431–451* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 200–201 notes that Chalcedon was both viewed as a "second Nicaea" and "was itself a distinct conciliar moment in an ongoing narrative of orthodoxy."

[40] Smith, *The Idea of Nicaea*, 201; cf. *ACO* II.1.2., 124 and 140–41.

if certain contexts demand different starting points.

Retrieving Patristic Christology

Not only does Tennent overlook the breadth of cultural representation at Chalcedon, but he argues that the Christological task is best conceived of as an ever-expanding project. He uses phrases such as "indigenous African Christology" to discuss the need for a contextually-situated "contribution" to the "Christological puzzle" by modern Africans who are separated by time and space from earlier Christological formulations.[41] Tennent defends the necessity of such a unique contribution of indigenous theologies by noting that the "genuine and helpful insights" of the eyewitnesses of Christ himself recorded in Scripture are important, but "even those Christological reflections that stand the test of Scripture and time cannot be used to declare a moratorium on Christological reflection."[42]

One of the chief ways he arrives at this conclusion is by noting that the creeds, for example, are more concerned with the *person* of Christ than the *work* of Christ[43] and, further, "even if we accept, as the *sensus communis* has, that every single piece Chalcedon placed into Christological puzzle was a perfect fit," creeds are still unable to address every complexity that could arise in contextual situations.[44] So, "A complete Christology (if it is even possible) must surely be the work of many generations of faithful Christians, not merely the work of a particular council."[45] Even if we grant certain propositional phrases about Christ, it seems that Tennent then sees the experiential *work* of Christ as multivalent and not static.

Chalcedonian Contribution: Text-Controlled Theological Method

Space does not allow us to address all the issues raised above in relation to divine revelation, the closed canon of Scripture, and appeals to subjective experience.[46] Instead, we want to show that these concerns were met by the logic and argumentation given by patristic theologians

[41] Tennent, *Theology in the Context of Christianity*, 109.

[42] Tennent, *Theology in the Context of Christianity*, 111.

[43] Tennent, *Theology in the Context of Christianity*, 107.

[44] Tennent, *Theology in the Context of Christianity*, 108.

[45] Tennent, *Theology in the Context of Christianity*, 108.

[46] In fairness to Tennent, his chapter on Bibliology discusses the issues of canonicity such that it is clear that he values a closed, well-defined canon of Scripture; cf. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of Christianity*, 53–75. However, his proposal of an ever-expanding Christological puzzle leaves the door of discussion regarding a closed canon suspiciously and problematically ajar.

and to affirm more objectively Tennent's own contention: "every generation must learn to recognize the heresies of its day as well as the previously rejected heresies that, from time to time, get represented for fresh consideration."[47] Yes and amen. However, we assert that seeking to expand Christological definitions based on unique indigenous reflections can breed disastrous results, ranging from violence to the biblical text itself to encouraging modified Bible translations that are palatable to certain contexts. Instead, missions work should retrieve patristic Christology as an objective way to "recognize the heresies of its day" in order to bring their pagan theologies back to the fundamental scriptural deductions. The patristic theologians, hundreds of years after John wrote his Gospel, zeroed in on Sonship language precisely because they viewed the biblical presentation of the Son as paramount to his eternal identity. While language could have been changed to fit their contexts—for example, they could have changed the language to fit Greek philosophies about Zeus's sons—they were rigorously biblical. Thus, regardless of context, they could not ignore the clear theological implications for the Christ's sonship, including but not limited to his eternal generation, his ability to give us the Father's inheritance as the firstborn, and the work of adoption as sons through the Son.

Given that these creedal affirmations were drawn from centuries of varying contextual engagement with heretical Christologies, the incalculable number of heresies encountered on the mission field until Jesus returns will almost certainly be boiled down to the same basic denials of Scripture's portrayal of the Son's person and work—items addressed pointedly and succinctly in the biblical text and summarized in the creeds. The first few centuries of Christological reflection show that almost immediately early Christians drew on similar Christological principles regardless of their opponents, drawing these opponents back to scriptural truths. Two examples from church history must suffice as a way forward.

Chalcedonian Contribution: Language, Culture, and Translation

A brief background to Chalcedon starts with the earliest reflections of theologians in the second century through the fifth century. Indeed, the Son as the *Logos* (λόγος) of God (John 1) was a central point of debate in the early church. This *logos* idea had roots in Greek thought (wisdom, learning, philosophy, divine insight), but it was also related to the idea of God's word or wisdom in the OT. Though swaths of biblical texts were

[47] Tennent, *Theology in the Context of Christianity*, 108. He includes "heresies" such as materialism in his discussion, but we want to focus more specifically on his Christological formulations.

used in patristic theological formulations, John 1 alone provided unalterable Sonship language that filled up creedal affirmations. He is God and is with God; light from light; incarnate; et al. Two examples leading up to Chalcedon must suffice as we consider whether Chalcedon was an isolated theological-contextual incident or a larger "mere" Christology built on biblical and traditional language of Sonship.

Second-century theologian Justin Martyr, perhaps the first great apologist in the early church, wrote treatises against both Greeks and Jews with respect to this idea. In his *Apologies*, Justin notably used Stoic and Platonic ideas to build an apologetic for Christ from John 1: the same *logos* the Greeks ("pagans") spoke of appeared in the person of Jesus Christ ("the Word"). Further, he noted, Greek heroes such as Mercury ("the announcing word of God"), Jupiter's sons ("who suffered"), and Perseus ("born of a virgin") resemble Jesus in certain ways, but "as we have already proved … He is their superior."[48] In this way, Justin elevates Jesus higher than the Greek philosophies by personifying the *Logos* and painting him as the true and better *Logos* over and against their mythological heroes. Put another way, he did not fold his Christology into an "indigenous" Greek philosophy, but rather brought their native terms and understanding back to the unique relationship between the Father and Son as displayed in Scripture:

> No proper name has been bestowed upon God, the Father of all, since He is unbegotten.… But His Son, who alone is properly called Son, the Word, who was with Him [God the Father] and was begotten before all things, when in the beginning He [God, the Father] created and arranged all things through him [the Son].[49]

In his engagement with a Jewish man named Trypho, Justin asserted that Israel's Scriptures are "not yours, but ours"[50] because, "If your ears were not so dull, or your hearts so hardened, you would see that the words refer to our Jesus."[51] As many of the other apologists, Justin saw that Israel's God was always closely tied to his *Logos*, so Scripture's confession of Jesus the Son as the Word shows that he is inseparable from the Father as light from the sun.[52]

[48] *1 Apol.* 22.
[49] *2 Apol.* 6.
[50] *Dial.* 29.
[51] *Dial.* 33.
[52] *Dial.* 128–29. Of course, we want to be careful to note that Justin was by no means a "pro-Nicene" theologian, given that he lived long before such a person could exist, but he nonetheless talked about Jesus's unique status as the Son and Word as the linchpin for arguments in various contextual and philosophical contexts.

As Athanasius sought to solidify the Nicene Creed in the fourth century as a universally-accepted statement across Christendom, he used *homoousios* (the Father and Son share the same substance/essence) as a central term and labeled various groups as "Arians" to describe their theologies, even if they were neither disciples of Arius nor agreed with Arius on every theological jot and tittle.[53] This helped him bring together varying contexts to a central affirmation about the Sonship of Christ by showing how these different heresies made a similar mistake theologically and exegetically. As G. L. Prestige notes, *hypostasis* was sometimes used interchangeably with *ousia* during the fourth century, depending on whether one was in the West or East.[54] For example, the Western church often used *hypostasis* "as a literal representation of the Latin [term] substantia."[55] These terms were used differently depending on the context, and we see this divide in *Tomas Ad Antiochenos*, written after the proceedings of the Council of Alexandria (362). This letter describes the distinctions among the presiding bishops, some of whom preferred to describe God as three *hypostases* (persons). Given that this language was also preferred by "Arians," the group assured Athanasius that they did not intend to say that there are three Gods or three sources but rather one Godhead and one source, in alignment with the Nicene confession of *homoousios*. On the other side, some spoke of one *hypostasis*, but they explained that they did not teach the Son and Spirit as merely names or unsubstantial qualities of the Father, but rather they were using *hypostasis* and *ousia* interchangeably.[56] Athanasius appears to have orchestrated a compromise between the two parties: "And all, by God's grace, and after the above

[53] See, e.g., his elevation of Nicene formulations over the "Arian" conspiracies at other council proceedings in *Syn.* 14.3. For useful discussion on Athanasius's *homoousios* polemic against Arius, Aetius, et al., see Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 140–44. Smith, *The Idea of Nicaea*, 21, notes in particular Athanasius's motivation to use Nicaea as a battleground was likely due in part to his personal disdain for the way he was treated by the councils at Antioch (AD 341) and Sirmium (AD 351).

[54] G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1964; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 188. This led to the Nicene Creed using "one hypostasis" language. We note here that the so-called West/East divide can be wrongly exaggerated in these discussions, and we will attempt to avoid this tendency throughout the discussion.

[55] Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 188.

[56] Prestige, God in Patristic Thought, 181–84, provides a helpful summary of this interaction. For a complementary summary, see R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 639–45.

explanations, agree together that the faith confessed by the fathers at Nicaea is better than the said phrases, and that for the future they would prefer to be content to use its language."[57]

In short, Athanasius recognized that various contexts might start at different points depending on their particular contextual concerns, but ultimately was an ardent defender of Nicaea's scriptural conclusions and thus did not compromise on the core affirmations of the biblical data about the Son's unique relationship to the Father to mere contextuality; instead, he encouraged them to remain committed to a common core even as they worked out these issues in various contexts. As the aforementioned consensus emerged around the Council of Constantinople, the patristic theologians were already using Nicaea as a rallying point for Christological reflection, even as they encountered new heresies in the subsequent decades. The Chalcedonian creed, then, is built on this centuries-long commitment to the Sonship of Christ as the core, unchangeable biblical deduction.

Chalcedonian Contribution: The Person and Work of the Incarnate Son

Further, these patristic theologians did not recognize Tennent's distinction between the *person* and *work* of Christ as the Son. They viewed the Son's person and work as ontologically inseparable and reciprocal, located foundationally in the hypostatic union. Athanasius, for example, saw Arius's assertion that the Son is a creature and eternally begotten from the Father as a *worship* issue related to who Christ is *and* the work he had done. For example, if Christ is a creature, he is not divine and lacks the power to save; if he does not become incarnate, he lacks the ability to transfer salvation to mankind. As such, we should worship him as the Creator who has saved us.[58] The Sonship of Christ is not something that can be removed without doing violence to biblical Christology and soteriology. If Christ is not the eternal Son of the Father—as the biblical text affirms in myriad ways and the Christian tradition summarized in the creeds—he is not worthy of worship or able to save mankind from their sins. His Sonship is directly tied to his eternal relationship with the Father and thus implies that he is of the same nature. More than a mere ancestor, he is the unique, only-begotten Son who shares in all his Father has, which he gives to mankind in salvation. Thus, when one's contextual concerns lead to retranslating biblical texts to remove sonship language, for instance, it is not merely the words that are changed, but overarching biblical-theological

[57] *Tom.* 6.

[58] See, e.g., *Con. Ar.* 2.20–51.

themes related to salvation itself. Another Son, a soteriologically impotent Son who can be crafted and molded by context without regard to the ontological and economic implications, would be unworthy of global missionary effort.

Conclusion: The Role of Retrieval in Modern Missiology

As we have tried to demonstrate by retrieving Chalcedonian Christology, Christ's ontological equality with the Father as the eternally begotten Son is the *telos* of all Christological reflection because it is rooted in the most fundamental truths of Scripture. Abandoning, ignoring, or eclipsing the Sonship of Christ as formulated by the Chalcedonian council skews biblical language about Christ's immutable person and work, threatens to leave would-be converts in various contexts in their pagan religions covered by a "Christian" veneer, and ultimately wrongly assumes that the patristic period's reflection on Scripture has nothing definitive to say to the global church.

Despite the apparent deference to the global church, advocates for MITs often ignore the voices of national churches that protest against their methods. Those who advocate for removing DFL often argue from the conviction that local believers should be determining theological articulation rather than believers far removed from their context by time, geography, and culture. Yet such advocates face some of the strongest opposition to their approach from national churches where they are promoting their strategy. For instance, throughout the summer in 2020, various Egyptian churches and ministries such as the Bible Society of Egypt made public statements denouncing MITs as destructive and deviant.[59] In fact, those who advocate for such IM and MIT practices often ignore the considerable contextual insight of local Christians, neglecting to consider the enduring presence of Chalcedon-affirming Christian communities in Arab lands whose lives and ministries among their Muslim neighbors have not led them to hesitate to affirm or to abandon the biblical imagery of Sonship.[60] With Sidney Griffith, then, we would be wise to conclude that,

[59] See the multiple statements compiled and translated by Adam Simnowitz, "Arabic-speaking Christians Condemn Muslim Idiom Translations & Liberal Commentaries Produced By Western Missions Agencies," *biblicalmissiology.org,* September 21, 2020, https://biblicalmissiology.org/2020/09/21/ arabic-speaking-christians-condemn-muslim-idiom-translations-liberal-commentaries-produced-by-western-missions-agencies/.

[60] In regard to the presence of a variety of Christian communities—including

"Now is the time for Westerners to consider the lessons to be learned from the experience of the Christians who have lived in the world of Islam for centuries."[61] Unfortunately, however, under the guise of advocating for indigenous theological freedom, MIT proponents often ignore the insightful voices of local indigenous believers in favor of their own interpretations of the culture and their audience.

Missions is unavoidably a forward-looking endeavor. It requires savvy navigation of new environments, discerning assessment of alternative worldviews, and an ability to communicate meaningfully cross-culturally. Most who are involved in mission work are motivated to embrace the task due to a deep compassion for lost people to encounter and embrace Jesus. The chance to see someone understand, trust, and follow Jesus in a cultural context that is far different than one's own is in and of itself a testimony to the transcultural and timeless truth of the biblical gospel.

However, it is precisely the transcultural and timeless aspect of the truth of the gospel that requires a forward-looking missionary to recognize the historical roots and articulations of the message. That this message can be communicated, believed, and applied in various cultures does not divorce the message from the ways that it has been understood throughout time as prior saints have sought to articulate the central truths of biblical teaching. Furthermore, the labors of those saints were aimed at articulating timeless statements derived from the whole of the biblical text and in response to improper ways to read and understand it. Thus, even though the times, languages, and cultures today might be foreign to the patristic era, the likelihood that someone in an atheistic or pagan religion might make the same exegetical and interpretive mistakes as those that prompted the councils and creeds is almost certain. The time-tested answers that are represented in the creeds, councils, and patristic theologians, then, still have transcultural relevance today, in part because they

Chalcedon-affirming Melkites—in the Hijaz at the onset of Islamic emergence, see Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 8–9. See also the work of Michael Philip Penn, *When Christians First Met Muslims* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015); Garth Fowden, *Before and After Muhammad* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2014), 185–88. And in regards to the rich and lengthy Arabic-speaking Christian traditions of engaging Islam, see Sidney Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 177, who writes, "Later Arabophone Christian writers and thinkers up to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Egypt, collected, fine-tuned, and synthesized the apologetic and theological discourse of earlier Christian authors. After their time, and up to the twentieth century, for all practical purposes, the Arabic idiom of Christians under Muslim tule in the Middle East remained constant, but not frozen."

[61] Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 179.

themselves were birthed out of centuries of cross-cultural, global contexts. More than that, they represent basic affirmations that exceed contextual boundaries.

When missionaries today dabble with the idea of developing new cultural Christologies derived more from cultural forms than from biblical reflection and historical rootedness, they begin to tread on the slippery slope that leads to the heresies of yesterday. While the application of biblical teaching will doubtlessly look different in different environments, core Christian doctrine has been well established and agreed upon by Christians from the far east, middle east, and near east who gathered throughout the first six centuries of the church from around the Roman Empire and beyond to consider the importance of clear articulation of biblical Christology.

The urgent desire to see fruitful communication and contextual application of the gospel notwithstanding, missiology cannot content itself to remain singularly focused on a forward-looking posture. Our argument throughout has been that we must not sacrifice the missiological importance of historical theology on the altar of urgent concern with present pragmatism. Following Tennent, some missionaries long to see indigenous Christologies emerge that will allow cultures to possess their own articulations of the person and work of Christ. On the other hand, missiologists such as Brown are willing to jettison biblical language in preference to less offensive imagery in order to see a greater response among their people. Both of these options appear to be motivated by good desires and pragmatic means of reaching those desires. But if we listen to the patristics on these issues, we recognize that the person and work of the incarnate Son cannot be separated from biblical categories and presentations without doing violence to Christ's ability to truly save.

Though the patristic theologians and creeds cited in this essay lived long before today's missiology, their warnings are vital to contemporary missionaries as they seek to present the timeless and transcultural message of Christ to which the Bible bears witness. Such historical rootedness allows present ministry to avoid the long-term dangers that the creeds and councils warn against. Pragmatism and cultural retention—though born of good motives—cannot be allowed to alter the essential importance of the biblical categories and helpful terminology that have been used throughout the history of the church to reflect the work of salvation that the Bible connects intimately with the nature of the Person who accomplished it. To neglect the great symphony of voices throughout the ages who have passed along the same message is to introduce discord into the melody played by the church catholic throughout the ages.

While we are sympathetic to the desire to be contextually-sensitive to

theological, ecclesiological, or cultural barriers that arise in evangelistic scenarios, we should not confuse evangelism with Christology. Put another way, evangelistic efforts that seek to graft in indigenous imagery, as Tennant suggests, might be a starting point, but we must lead them eventually to the true Son of Scripture rather than preferring cultural norms to biblical language. To this point, John Behr emphasizes the symphonic effect of the patristic voices as he writes,

> At the beginning of the third book of *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus lists the succession of teachers in Rome, all of whom, he claims, have consistently taught the same, this is not cast in terms of maintaining, statically, an original deposit of teachings separate from the Scriptures, as those following in Lessing's wake would do, but that in their preaching, bound up as this is with the interpretation of Scripture, these figures were all part of the same symphony, with all the diachronic and synchronic diversity that this entails. This symphony is continuously unfolding and, moreover, it is public, in contrast to those who, from time to time, prefer to play their own tunes in private.[62]

Though the missionary task will inevitably introduce new instruments into the symphony, it is important to recognize that the music played on each instrument is the same tune. That tune is set by the biblical text, not the cultural context. Missions is inevitably forward looking, but it should never be blind to its past.

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[62] John Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 10.

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An Ecclesiological Mission: The Basis for William Carey's Threefold Mission Strategy

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William Carey serves as a historical example as to why missionaries must have a solid ecclesiological framework before stepping foot on foreign soil. If one of the missionary's primary tasks—or one might argue the primary task—is to plant churches, then he should know what he believes about the church. Before being sent, Carey showed three aspects of his ecclesiological beliefs in his pastoral oversight of two local churches and as an advocate for the fulfillment of the Great Commission through the cooperation of local churches: he believed the church was (1) missional, (2) logocentric, and (3) didactic. While his beliefs are evident in his groundbreaking missiological work, An Enquiry*, much can also be gleaned from Carey's journal, selected letters, numerous biographies, and other related works. In the following article, in order to defend my position, I will note the transition of Carey as pastor to Carey as both missionary, pastor (still), and indigenous church planter. After introducing Carey as a pastor, I will focus on each subsection of Carey's threefold mission strategy—(1) evangelism, (2) translation, and (3) education—and how each component is based on Carey's ecclesiological framework noted above. Carey believed the church was functionally missional and didactic, which led to his immediate focus on evangelism and education. He also believed the church was ontologically logocentric, which led to his ongoing translation of Scripture for the native people.*

Key Words: church history, church planting, ecclesiology, missions, missions history, mission strategy, William Carey

In October of 1783, William Carey was baptized by John Ryland Jr., his friend and future partner in the ministry. Shortly thereafter, Ryland commented on this event; to him, Carey's baptism was "merely the baptism of a poor journeyman shoemaker, and the service attracted no special attention."[1] Ryland could not have been more wrong. In 1793, William Carey, along with Dr. John Thomas, sailed for India never to return again. As for Carey's purpose in this foreign land, he elaborated more than

[1] John Ryland Jr., in John Taylor, comp., *Biographical and Literary Notices of William Carey, D. D.* (Northampton: Taylor and Son, 1886), 107.

thirty-five years after arriving, four years before his death:

> The spread of the Gospel in India was the first object of the [Baptist Missionary] Society and it has been the first and last with us, to that object Bro. Marshman, Bro. Ward, and myself have uniformly devoted all our time, our strength, and our income, except a pittance scarcely sufficient for our necessary expences [sic] can be called a reserve.[2]

Though Carey faced seven years of fruitless labor upon his arrival in India, he and the rest of the Serampore Trio—Joshua Marshman and William Ward—are estimated to have eventually had more than 500 converts in 1813 and as many as 1,266 converts at the end of 1832.[3] Moreover, some scholars estimate that the Trio helped translate the Bible into forty or more languages.[4] By 1818, it is reported that Carey and company had "established 100 native schools with more than 10,000 scholars,"[5] and in 1852, because of the Trio's educational emphasis, "[Mission] schools [in India] still contained four times as many pupils as government ones."[6] In every sense of the word, William Carey was most certainly a faithful *missionary*, as God had called him to be.

Yet, lest some may forget, *Carey was also a faithful pastor*. Essential to his work as a missionary was his prior and ongoing experience as shepherd of various local congregations. What is more, Carey's ecclesiological beliefs held supreme weight as he determined the strategy he and others would employ to make Christ known among India's lost masses.

Consequently, William Carey's basic threefold strategy for mission—(1) evangelism, (2) translation, and (3) education[7]—serves as a testament

[2] William Carey to Steadman, June 29, 1830, in Terry G. Carter, *The Journal and Selected Letters of William Carey* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2000), 229.

[3] Kanti Prasanna Sen Gupta, *The Christian Missionaries in Bengal 1793–1833* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1971), 140–41.

[4] See John Brown Myers, ed., *The Centenary Celebration of the Baptist Missionary Society 1892–1893* (Holborn: The Baptist Missionary Society, 1893), 225; G. Winfred Hervey, *The Story of Baptist Missions in Foreign Lands, From the Time of Carey to the Present Date* (St. Louis: C. R. Barns Publishing Co., 1892), 41; William Carey to an unknown recipient, Feb 7, 1819, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 165.

[5] J. T. K. Daniel, ed., *Bicentenary Volume: William Carey's Arrival in India 1793–1993, Serampore College 1818–1993* (West Bengal, India: Serampore College, 1993), 74.

[6] E. Daniel Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India, 1793–1837: The History of Serampore and Its Missions* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 136.

[7] As for proof for this, in one of the earliest works on the Serampore Trio, J.

of his ecclesiological beliefs, primarily developed prior to his departure for India from England, where he had served as a pastor for almost eight years at two churches. In direct relation to this threefold strategy, Carey believed the church was (1) missional, (2) logocentric,[8] and (3) didactic. In these three subsections, one can see both strengths and weaknesses in Carey's strategy that missionaries can learn from today.

Before moving on, it is essential to address the nature of studying a missionary's theology. Many scholars have forthrightly stated that William Carey was no theologian.[9] To some degree, they are right. Carey never wrote a theological treatise; he most certainly never wrote an ecclesiological work. However, he did care about theology, which is clear in his writing on other topics.[10] Therefore, this study consists of an examination of

C. Marshman writes, "In the original constitution of the Society, the three objects to which its attention and its funds were to be directed were, the preaching of the gospel, the translation of the Scriptures, and the establishment of schools" (John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Labours of Carey, Marshman, and Ward: The Serampore Missionaries* [London: Strahan and Company, 1873], 250). Latourette writes, "At Serampore a printing press was set up, preaching to non-Christians was undertaken, and a school was opened for the children of Europeans" (Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity, Volume VI: The Great Century in Northern Africa and Asia, A.D. 1800–A.D. 1914* [New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1944], 106). For other affirmations of this threefold strategy, see Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 1991), 173; Terry G. Carter, "A Fresh Look at Missions Through the Correspondence of William Carey," a paper presented for the Evangelical Theological Society, November 1999, 17; Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 130.

[8] The nomenclature of "logocentric" is borrowed from Gregg Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 103, 110–17.

[9] Carter writes, "Carey was a missionary, not a theologian" (Terry G. Carter, "The Calvinism of William Carey and Its Effect on His Mission Work," in *William Carey: Theologian-Linguist-Social Reformer*, ed. Thomas Schirrmacher [Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2013], 32). He continues, "Perhaps Carey did not want to muddle the mission goal with … theological discussions" (29). Nicholls states that Carey was left "no time for theological reflection," and that "[his] gifts lay in linguistics and administration and not in theological formulations" (Bruce Nicholls, "The Theology of William Carey," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 17.3 [1993]: 369).

[10] In *An Enquiry*, Carey writes that missionaries should be "of undoubted orthodoxy in their sentiments" (William Carey, "An Enquiry into the Obligations

Carey's words—indirectly spoken—concerning the church. While Carey never directly addressed the doctrine of the church, he did set forth basic ecclesiological principles in which he believed. Throughout this article, the reader will see how important the local church was to Carey and, as well, how important the task of church planting was to his strategy.

William Carey: The Pastor Turned Missionary-Pastor-Church Planter

For the sake of space, even a succinct biography of Carey's life before his work in the pastorate will not be provided. Other works provide a sufficient presentation of this part of his life.[11] Rather, I will focus on Carey's two pastorates, the first at Moulton (1785–1789) and the second at Harvey Lane, Leicester (1789–1793). After detailing these first two pastorates, I will note Carey's love for pastoral ministry and his congregants, his view of the church's importance, and the "turn" toward missions, though Carey never truly let go of pastoral ministry, as evidenced in his ongoing pastoral work and the priority of church planting in his strategy.

Carey's pastoral ministry at Moulton began on a trial basis in 1785. Interestingly, Carey's trial sermon did not go well. George notes the reaction of Carey's hearers: "Their response was that of the doubtful Athenians to the Apostle Paul, 'We will hear thee again of this matter' (Acts 17:32)."[12] The church resolved to allow Carey to pastor and preach for their congregation "for sometime before us, in order that further trial may be made of [Carey's] ministerial Gifts."[13] As the historical account shows, Carey did sufficiently prove himself as a pastor. This progression is somewhat unsurprising, as the Olney church book reported of Carey: "He is occasionally engaged with acceptance in various places in speaking the word. He bears a very good moral character. He is desirous of being sent

of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens," in *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, by Daniel Webber [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005], 92–93). One writer even states that Carey "built his mission work on … Baptist ecclesiology" (See Tom Hicks, "The Glorious Impact of Calvinism upon Local Baptist Churches," in *Whomever He Wills: A Surprising Display of Sovereign Mercy*, ed. Matthew Barrett and Thomas J. Nettles [Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2012], 379).

[11] For some examples, see George, *Faithful Witness*, 1–34; Marshman, *Life and Labours*, 1–10; Mary Drewery, *William Carey: A Biography* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 7–24; Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792–1992* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 6–9.

[12] George, *Faithful Witness*, 17.

[13] F. Deaville Walker, *William Carey: Missionary Pioneer and Statesman* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1960), 47.

out from some reputable [and] orderly church of Christ, into the work of the Ministry."[14] Thus, not long after his ministry at Moulton began, the church book stated that:

> [It] has pleased God, since our present Minister came among us, to awaken a considerable Number of Persons to a serious Concern for the Salvation of their Souls; and to incline many others to attend upon the Preaching of the Gospel; so that for two Years past we have not had Room sufficient to contain them, and we have Reason to believe that Numbers more would attend if we could accommodate them when they come.[15]

Carey's ministry led to his ordination at the Moulton church in August of 1787. At his ordination, Carey reported that he was required to present his confession of faith and answer "the usual questions" of the church.[16] Following this, "Brother Ryland prayed the ordination prayer, with laying on of hands." Carey was, thus, officially ordained as a pastor.

Carey's pastorate at Moulton was a rather difficult one. He was poorly paid, so much so that, "Sometimes the Careys ate meatless meals for weeks at a time."[17] Not to mention, the congregants proved difficult to pastor. Carey's sister wrote, "Mr. Sutcliff said once to us, that the difficulties he met there would have discouraged the spirits of almost any man besides him; but he set his shoulder to the work, and steadily persevered till it was accomplished, and soon had the pleasure to reap the fruits of his steady perseverance."[18] There were many instances at the church wherein Carey had to enforce church discipline.[19] Nonetheless, he still wrote favorably of them: "Poor Moulton people, destitute and forlorn. I still love that people much, and hope God will provide for them."[20] More significantly, Brian Stanley notes that it was during this pastorate that Carey's "distinctive and exceptionally informed global vision took shape."[21] However, it would take its fullest shape at his next pastorate, from which Carey was sent to India.

Two years after his formal ordination at Moulton, Carey was invited

[14] Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices*, 1.

[15] Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices*, 3–4.

[16] William Carey, "Ordinations in 1791—Rev. William Carey," *The Baptist Annual Register* (1790–1793): 519.

[17] George, *Faithful Witness*, 19.

[18] Mary Carey, in Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey, D.D.: Late Missionary to Bengal; Professor of Oriental Languages in the College of Fort William, Calcutta* (Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1836), 23.

[19] George, *Faithful Witness*, 20.

[20] William Carey, in George, *Faithful Witness*, 20.

[21] Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 8.

to pastor the Baptist church at Harvey Lane, Leicester. The minutes for the Moulton church book note that the congregation was actively in prayer—every Monday—for their pastor, for they knew the invitation had been given.[22] Carey was torn over this potential move, for even with the insurmountable difficulties at Moulton, he loved the people very much. He eventually made the decision for his family to move to Leicester, where he would pastor yet another difficult congregation. Still, he deeply loved his flock.

Issues of church discipline seemed to be even more serious at his second church. Carey worked diligently in writing a church covenant to which his congregants could agree.[23] The creation of this covenant signaled "a radical proposal."[24] Carey basically had the church start over, dissolving the church relationship already established, requiring any member who wanted to remain to sign the new covenantal charter. Though this was hard for Carey, it resulted in the betterment of his church. Supposedly, the church eventually grew so much that Carey had to answer accusations of "stealing sheep" from other churches. He bluntly responded: "I would rather win to Christ the poorest scavengers in Leicester than draw off to 'Harvey Lane' the richest members of your flock."[25] Andrew Fuller wrote of Carey's ministry there: "His zeal and unremitted labour in preaching the Word, not only in Leicester, but in the villages near it, endeared him to the friends of religion."[26] Carey, almost twenty years after leaving this church, wrote to the church's new pastor, Robert Hall:

> You are, I find, pastor of the church at Leicester, a place I always think of with pleasure, and a people whose best concerns I feel a deep interest. Every account, therefore, which respects that people, will be highly gratifying to me, and calls up some of the tenderest feelings of my heart.[27]

He never forgot these people whom he loved dearly. The church, likewise, wrote of him as "our former worthy pastor … whom we resigned to the

[22] Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices*, 3.

[23] S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey: D.D.* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1923), 59.

[24] George, *Faithful Witness*, 27.

[25] S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 62.

[26] Andrew Fuller, in Marshman, *Life and Labours*, 10; Eustace Carey, *Memoir*, 48.

[27] William Carey to Robert Hall, Apr 9, 1812, in Eustace Carey, *Memoir*, 355.

mission in Hindostan in Asia."[28]

Carey loved pastoral ministry, and as much as he loved the nations and wanted them to hear the gospel, his love for the nations made it no less difficult for him to leave his people behind. Not long after his initial arrival in India, Carey wrote home: "My sincerest Love to all the Ministers and Congregations of the Lord Jesus especially your friends of whom I rejoice to hear."[29] One of the reasons for Carey's early experiences of loneliness in India was that he missed his local church and wanted so desperately to "taste the sweets of Social religion which [he had] given up."[30] He "sorely" felt "the Loss of those Publick [sic] opportunities which [he had] enjoyed in England."[31] Unfortunately, most Sabbath days were dreadful times for Carey, for they were the days he most remembered the fellowship he so enjoyed in England.

Surely, the local church was important to Carey, not only in England but also in India. This truth is set over and against the view—of some—that Carey and the rest of the Serampore Trio did not put enough focus on planting churches. Richard Hibbert writes, "William Carey and the many non-denominational missionary societies arising from his example … saw mission primarily as the conversion of individuals, and thus they attached little importance to outward and organizational forms of church life."[32] From even a cursory perusal of Carey's writing, almost nothing

[28] Myers, *The Centenary Celebration*, 120. Andrew Fuller could, thus, say, "[Neither] was [Carey] unhappy with his people, nor they with him" (Andrew Fuller, in Eustace Carey, *Memoir*, 49).

[29] William Carey to Ryland, Dec 26, 1793, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 145.

[30] William Carey's Journal, Jan 13, 1794, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 8.

[31] William Carey's Journal, Mar 23, 1794, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 20.

[32] Richard Yates Hibbert, "The Place of Church Planting in Mission: Towards a Theological Framework," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 33.4 (2009): 318. Hibbert also states that this "is not to say that church planting was entirely missing from the agenda of those early Protestant missionaries" (319). Rather, he says, "The felt need to establish churches for the majority of missionaries … grew out of the immediate question of what to do with converts rather than as part of a deliberate focus" (319). However, Hibbert fails to address the fact that before a church can be planted, individuals must be converted, which is likely why there was so great a focus on reaching individuals for Christ; converts were needed for the establishment of an indigenous church. Hesselgrave also seems to imply that Carey and others "were not always clear as to their objectives," focusing on too many things, instead of evangelism and church planting specifically (David Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000], 25).

could be further from the truth.

Carey wanted to plant churches.[33] Upon his arrival in India, Carey's desire was to "furnish a Congregation immediately," and that "God [would] grant … [that it] not only be large but effectual."[34] Stanley notes that, "The first 'gathered' church in Bengal was constituted by Carey and Dr. John Thomas at Mudnabati in 1795."[35] Three years into his mission, Carey stated that their model of mission stations[36] was only to suffice until "God had so blessed us to raise up Churches in other parts where it would be proper for missionaries to reside near them."[37] Upon his move to

[33] Carey once summarized his missional purpose: "May I but be useful in laying the foundation of the Church of Christ in India, I desire no greater reward, and can receive no higher honour" (John Brown Myers, *William Carey: The Shoemaker Who Became "The Father and Founder of Modern Missions"* [New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1887], 160). Brian Stanley writes, "[There] was no doubt in the minds of the first BMS missionaries that their calling was to establish gathered churches of baptized believers which would be capable of self-sustaining life" ("Planting Self-governing Churches: British Baptist Ecclesiology in the Missionary Context," *Baptist Quarterly* 34 [1992]: 379).

[34] William Carey's Journal, June 28, 1794, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 35.

[35] Stanley, "Planting Self-governing Churches," 126. The missionaries, only then, took the Lord's Supper. From the church book of Leicester, one finds the following on this event: "[We] were informed that a small church was formed at Mudnabatty; and [that Carey] wished a dismission from us to it, that he might become a member, and also have an opportunity of becoming its pastor" (Myers, *The Centenary Celebration*, 120). Moreover, the church was happy to hear of "the planting of a gospel church in Asia."

[36] Marshman writes that the Serampore Trio stated "that the planting of the gospel in any heathen country required three distinct agencies—the formation of *missionary stations*, where 'the standard of the cross shall be erected, and the gospel preached to the people, and from whence *ultimately spring churches*;' the translation of the Scriptures; and the instruction of the youth in the truths of the Bible, and the literature suited to the wants of the country" (*Life and Labours*, 256 [emphasis added]). Though the church was essential, "Carey desired a missions structure that would … ensure the … spread of the Gospel in India and the neighboring countries. He initially envisioned a central mission station with sub-stations that would report to and draw support from the main base" (Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 136).

[37] William Carey to Society, Dec 28, 1796, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 138.

Serampore with Ward and Marshman, "Carey was given the most prominent building in the city for the church in which he preached for the next thirty-four years."[38] The baptism of their first convert took place within the context of a church: "Sunday, December 28, 1800. After our English service, at which I preached on baptism, we went to the riverside, immediately opposite our gate when the Governor, a number of Europeans and Portuguese, and many Hindus and Mohammedans attended."[39] They sang a hymn together and baptized two men: Felix Carey (William Carey's son) and Krishna Pal, a local Hindu.

Furthermore, in Carey's many later letters to his son, Jabez, he regularly encouraged him—more than anything else—to plant churches. Not only did he implore Jabez to "form [converts] into Gospel churches," but he also told him to "baptize and administer the Lord's Supper according to [Jabez's] own discretion when there is proper occasion for it."[40] Two years after this, he continued his correspondence: "Labour … to do your utmost to communicate the saving knowledge of the Gospel to all the Malays and to collect them into churches of the living God formed on the Scripture model."[41] Likewise, at the end of that year, Carey wrote: "Collect a church of true believers as soon as God gives you proper materials and nourish that church in the words of faith and sound holiness."[42]

In summary, though Carey made a primary move from pastor to missionary, he never truly gave up pastoral responsibilities, even assuming the pastorate of local missionary churches in India, as he consistently labored to plant indigenous ones. As well, the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), which was co-founded by Pastor Carey and other pastors, is the organization that sent him *to preach the gospel for conversions and to establish biblical churches*.[43] And so, in June of 1793, William Carey—among several others—left his English homeland for the shores of India, to which he

[38] George Ella, "William Carey Using God's Means to Convert the People of India," in *William Carey: Theologian-Linguist-Social Reformer*, ed. Thomas Schirrmacher (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2013), 62. Nicholls writes, "It is significant that with the arrival of new missionaries in Serampore early in the year 1800, Carey and his colleagues immediately constituted themselves as the local Baptist Church and elected Carey as pastor" ("Theology of William Carey," 372–73).

[39] William Carey, in George, *Faithful Witness*, 131.

[40] William Carey to Jabez, Mar 31, 1814, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 131.

[41] William Carey to Jabez, Feb 7, 1816, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 253.

[42] William Carey to Jabez, Nov 23, 1816, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 190.

[43] Hicks, "The Glorious Impact," 382.

would arrive in November of that same year. In India, Carey would labor for some forty years to *evangelize* India's masses, *translate* Scripture into their vernacular, and *educate* them for the primary purpose of discipling converts so the indigenous church could spread; and it was Carey's view of the church as missional, logocentric, and didactic that moved him to implement such a strategy.

The Missional Church and Strategic Evangelism

In a more functional than ontological sense, William Carey believed the church was missional. By "functional," it is meant that Carey at least thought it was a major responsibility and role of the local church to participate in missions, namely toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission as stated in Matt 28:18–20. However, one cannot deduce from the material available if Carey believed the church was ontologically missional, and, thus, the reason the church was to participate in missions.

Daniel Webber writes, "William Carey is rightly credited with putting world mission at the heart of the church's concern for a fallen world."[44] This reality is perhaps no better examined than in the account of Carey's words at a local, associational gathering of Baptist ministers. At this meeting, Carey proposed for discussion "whether the command given to the apostles to teach all nations was not binding on all succeeding ministers to the end of the world, seeing that the accompanying promise was of equal extent."[45] At this point in the life of English Particular Baptists, many pastors and theologians taught that with the cessation of the apostolic office, so the responsibility of the Great Commission had ceased as binding upon the church, since it was a commandment given directly to the apostles. Unsurprisingly, then, it is typically reported that the "gruff old Calvinist, John Ryland, Sr., rebuked Carey."[46] Ryland is often said to have responded: "Young man, sit down. You're an enthusiast. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without consulting you or me."[47] This remark—if it happened—appears to be of a hyper-Calvinist

[44] Daniel Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), ix.

[45] H. Leon McBeth, "The Legacy of the Baptist Missionary Society," *Baptist History and Heritage* 27.3 (1992): 5–6.

[46] McBeth, "The Legacy of the Baptist Missionary Society," 5–6.

[47] John Ryland Sr., in McBeth, "The Legacy of the Baptist Missionary Society," 6. This same quote can also be found in S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 50; Drewery, *William Carey*, 31; Timothy George, "William Carey (1761–1834)," in

nature, but there is reason to believe that Ryland did not say this. Thomas Nettles argues that Ryland's argument was likely more focused on the necessity of a "latter-day glory" or a new Pentecost-like event that should precede any furtherance of the Great Commission.[48] Either way, Carey used his missiological treatise, *An Enquiry*, to prove the Great Commission was binding upon the local church; that is, local churches were responsible to "make disciples of all nations." So, churches had to send their members away.

In his work *An Enquiry*, there is much evidence that Carey believed the church was missional, for this book is a treatise that calls the church to own the task of fulfilling the Great Commission given to all of God's people—not solely the apostles. It was the church who had to take responsibility for the "heathens" far away who had never heard of God and would never hear of him until some were sent and went. Carey primarily deals with this matter in the first section. Stanley notes that, in this section, Carey says the church's "failure to take the gospel to the world was … comparable to the inability of natural man to believe in Christ … [in that

The British Particular Baptists 1638–1910, vol. 2, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2000), 149; J. Herbert Kane, *A Global View of Christian Missions: From Pentecost to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 85; Marshman, *Life and Labours*, 8. Brian Stanley believes there is a small chance this statement from Ryland Sr. did not happen, saying, "[T]here must be some doubt about its authenticity" (*The History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 7). This is because, "Our knowledge of this celebrated episode is solely dependent on one first-hand source, J. W. Morris's life of Fuller, published in 1816" (6). What is more, even William Carey, himself, "subsequently questioned [Morris's recollection of the event]" (7). However, at an earlier date than the above event, Carey "recalled the incident," and so, Eustace Carey, in his biography of William Carey, "[accepted] its authenticity" (7).

[48] Nettles writes, "[T]he content of the rebuke concerned not the duty of calling sinners to repentance and faith, but the means by which the conversions of the latter days would be initiated" (Thomas J. Nettles, "Baptist and the Great Commission," in *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions*, ed. Martin I. Klauber and Scott M. Manetsch [Nashville: B&H, 2008], 91). For Nettles's full argument, see pp. 89–95. Ryland's son, John Ryland Jr., "gave no credence to the anecdote of his father's gruff response to young Carey" (90). Perhaps his father's comment was "that nothing could be done before another Pentecost, when an effusion of miraculous gifts, including the gift of tongues, would give effect to the commission of Christ as at first; and that he [Carey] was a most miserable enthusiast for asking such a question" (J. W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* [Boston: Lincoln and Edmands, 1830], 84–85).

it] should be attributed, not to natural circumstances beyond human control, but to a culpable refusal on the part of the human will."[49] In *An Enquiry*, Carey wrote the following thesis: "I shall enquire whether the commission given by our Lord to his disciples be not still binding on us [i.e., the church] … the duty of Christians in general in this matter."[50] Carey believed ministers had a "commission" to sufficiently call Christians "to venture all, and, like the primitive Christians, go everywhere preaching the gospel."[51] He believed "Christians are a body whose truest interest lies in the exaltation of the Messiah's kingdom."[52] In one section, Carey statistically details the great need for the gospel in the world and writes, "All these things are loud calls to Christians, and *especially to ministers*, to exert themselves to the utmost in their several spheres of action, and to try to enlarge them as much as possible."[53] *An Enquiry* had a great effect upon its readers, as it later led to the establishment of the BMS.

Carey also believed the church was to be missional both near and far. Evangelistic activity did not begin once Carey was overseas. George reports that in many places surrounding Harvey Lane (the location of his second pastorate), Carey "conducted regular preaching missions and witnessed many conversions," for his concern "for the unevangelized heathen in distant lands did not slacken his zeal to share the good news of Jesus Christ with sinners at home."[54] The missional responsibility of the church was an essential doctrine for Carey, for he believed "that local churches are founded and expanded only [through] preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and God's sovereign salvation of sinners."[55] As noted earlier, Fuller stated that Carey regularly preached "not only in Leicester, but in the villages near it, wherever he could have access." He also preached this truth *to* and prayed for its reality *before* his own congregations, hoping they would take ownership for the lost around them.[56] As their primary

[49] Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 12.

[50] Carey, "An Enquiry," 21.

[51] Carey, "An Enquiry," 26.

[52] Carey, "An Enquiry," 97.

[53] Carey, "An Enquiry," 87 (emphasis added).

[54] George, *Faithful Witness*, 28.

[55] Hicks, "The Glorious Impact," 379.

[56] Webber writes, "[Carey] preached about [missions] to his little flock and echoes of the same concern were to be found in his public prayers" (*William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 15). George notes that, "Slowly, steadily Carey was rousing his congregation, his family, his fellow ministers to the urgency that he felt like a fire burning within his bones" (*Faithful Witness*, 22). George likewise says,

example, Carey preached and prayed so that his congregants would preach and pray too.

Last, it is important to remember that the BMS was established with pastors at the helm, and the establishment of this very society is often noted as the beginning of the modern missions era. Along with *An Enquiry*, Carey's "deathless sermon"[57] on Isa 54:2–3 was foundational to the establishment of the BMS; it was preached "to seventeen pastors of the Northamptonshire Association of Baptist churches on the 31st May 1792," for Carey knew pastors needed to own the church's missional responsibility.[58] Carey "at once urged that the ministers present resolve to form a missionary society."[59] Thus, from the future minutes of the BMS' first meeting, one reads the following: "That the *Revs*. John Ryland, Reynold Hogg, William Carey, John Sutcliff, and Andrew Fuller be appointed a Committee, three of whom shall be empowered to act in carrying into effect the purposes of this society."[60] The modern missions era had officially begun.

Understandably, then, the first subsection of Carey's strategy—and the most important of the three—was evangelism. From the outset, Carey made evangelism a part of his everyday life. Less than a year into his work, he writes, "O how long will it be till I shall know so much of the Language of the Country as to preach Christ crucified to them; but bless God I make some progress."[61] He soon after accounts for his weekly work: "I preach every day to the Natives, and twice on the Lord's Day constantly, besides other itinerant labors, and I try to speak of Jesus Christ and him

"Carey was increasingly preoccupied with the urgency of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with those who had never heard his name or received his gospel. This was the constant theme of his sermons, conversations, and even his efforts to teach the village school children their elementary lessons" ("William Carey," 145). On the subject of prayer, Eustace Carey writes, "I have been often told by his sisters, and by the deacon of his church at Leicester, that for several years he never engaged in prayer, to the best of their remembrance, without interceding for the conversion of the heathen, and for the abolition of the slave-trade" (*Memoir*, 33).

[57] Carey's two sermon points were: (1) Expect great things [from God]; and (2) Attempt great things [for God]. For a detailed account of this sermon, see S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 79–86. Andrew Fuller said of it: "The discourse was very animated and impressive" (Carey, *Memoir*, 50).

[58] Nicholls, "Theology of William Carey," 370.

[59] Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 20.

[60] Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 33 (emphasis added).

[61] William Carey's Journal, Mar 29, 1794, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 21.

crucified, and of him alone."[62] Carey does this in the midst of seven years of fruitless labor, trusting God would one day bring fruit as only he could.

The Serampore Trio eventually created[63] the Serampore Form of Agreement (SFA) of 1805, as a document to be "read publicly three times a year."[64] This document served as a way of renewing their missional vows to one another; in some ways, it was their mission's covenant, stating clearly what they—*as missionaries*—were to do. A few of the eleven principles set forth in this document show the importance of evangelism. For example, they were to: (1) set an infinite value on men's souls; (3) abstain from whatever deepens India's prejudice against the gospel; and (5) preach "Christ crucified" as the grand means of conversions.[65]

As for his method, Carey regularly speaks of "preaching" to gathered "congregations." While this may—at face value—seem like an ecclesiological context, it is not. These "congregations" were often gathered in the middle of town, and by "preaching," Carey meant that he would share the gospel with this crowd of people, as much as they would convene and listen.[66] That is, by "preaching," Carey means "evangelism." In this methodology, the missionaries were able to reach a greater number of people at one time than if they had focused solely on individual conversations. The purpose of this evangelism, though, was to lead to explicit ecclesiological contexts, namely indigenous churches. In *An Enquiry*, Carey wrote that the mission was to serve the "increase of the church" through "the

[62] William Carey to Sisters, Apr 10, 1796, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 85. For other accounts, see William Carey, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*: 11 (Journal, Jan 23, 1794); 21 (Journal, Mar 29, 1794); 55 (Journal, Mar 1, 1795); 57 (Journal, Mar 23 and 29, 1795); 58 (Journal, Apr 13 and 19, 1795, and May 9, 1795).

[63] Though each signee had a hand in its creation, William Ward actually wrote the document.

[64] George, *Faithful Witness*, 123.

[65] George, *Faithful Witness*, 123. Moreover, the Trio believed, "The doctrine of Christ's expiatory death and all-sufficient merits has been, and must ever remain, the grand means of conversion. This doctrine and others immediately connected with it have constantly nourished and sanctified the Church" (Myers, *William Carey*, 66–67).

[66] For example, see William Carey, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 58 (Journal, May 9, 1795); 152 (Letter to Sutcliffe, Aug 18, 1812). Terry Carter writes that, "Early on, Carey traveled to the rural areas and gathered congregations wherever possible" (129). Oussoren writes, "Of course the preaching of the Word is not the preaching from the Pulpit. It should be done in a very tactful way. By means of missionary conversation" (A. H. Oussoren, *William Carey: Especially His Missionary Principles* [Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatschappik N.V., 1945], 266).

spread of the gospel."[67] Carey wrote in 1803 that he baptized three natives, bringing their overall number up to twenty-five, and each of these converts brought the "whole number of church members [to] thirty-nine."[68] As stated previously, Carey wanted churches to be planted. So, he prioritized evangelism, for it was through evangelistic efforts that local churches in India could be planted and, thus, grow.

In spite of his great emphasis on evangelism, Carey's evangelistic methodology was not without flaws. Foremost, Carey's personal evangelistic method was heavily polemical, and space does not begin to allow a full presentation of the evidence. By "polemical," it is meant that rather than focusing solely on presenting the gospel to Indians, Carey spent a great deal of his time arguing against the natives' religion, hoping to prove the foolishness of their ways so they might, more readily, come to Christ.[69] Carter describes Carey's method as one of "dialogue and argumentation."[70] Carey believed he was merely using "fair argument and persuasion" in his evangelism, but history shows otherwise.[71] In a letter written to his father and mother before he ever went to India, he shows his attitude toward the lost: "How *stupid* are those who neglect [Christian doctrines]!"[72] Carey "found it easy to confound [the natives'] arguments—but their Hearts still remain[ed] the same."[73] He once "spent the Evening in a long Dispute with [his] friendly Host … [and] argued that [he] was no more uncharitable than the Bible." He felt "pleasure in being Valiant for the truth."[74] He even notes that, one day, he taught the natives for

[67] Carey, "An Enquiry," 88.

[68] William Carey, in Hervey, *The Story of Baptist Missions*, 18.

[69] For more on the polemical model and other approaches to adherents of various world religions, see Martin Accad, "Christian Attitudes toward Islam and Muslims: A Kerygmatic Approach," in *Toward Respectful Understanding and Witness Among Muslims*, ed. Evelyne A. Reisacher (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2012). Accad summarizes the polemical model as "seek and destroy" (33). See also Sam Schlorff's discussion of the "imperial model" in *Missiological Models in Ministry to Muslims* (Upper Darby, PA: Middle East Resources, 2006), 10–11.

[70] Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 144.

[71] William Carey, in Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries*, 184.

[72] William Carey to his father and mother, Mar 3, 1787, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 248 (emphasis added).

[73] William Carey to Ryland, Dec 26, 1793, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 144.

[74] William Carey's Journal, Apr 7, 1794, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 22–23.

nearly an hour, telling them that "all [their religious activities are] … disgusting to [God] and contrary to his will."[75] Though Carey shared the gospel in all this, his polemic came at a cost; he had no converts for his first seven years, and as much as God is sovereign over the salvation of the lost, Carey's method was likely a stumbling block to the Indians.[76] William Ward once noted that "Carey was more successful in keeping the attention of his audience when he switched from attacking Hinduism or Islam to relating the story of the death and resurrection of Christ."[77] Thankfully, as noted in the SFA, the Trio eventually moved away from the polemical method. They agreed: "[Let] us be continually fearful lest one unguarded word, or one unnecessary display of the difference betwixt us, in manners, etc., should set the natives at a greater distance from us."[78]

A few other flaws are worth briefly noting. First, Carey and others regularly required European Christians to accompany native converts on evangelistic journeys, displaying an ongoing worry for the evangelistic methodology of their native converts, which was against their hope for an indigenous mission and church.[79] Second, Carey had little direct involvement with evangelism later in his life, primarily because of his almost singular focus on translating the Bible, which will be further documented

[75] William Carey to Ryland, Aug 17, 1800, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 148.

[76] For more on Carey's polemical method, see Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries*, 37–38, 93, 183–84; Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 44–46.

[77] Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries*, 37.

[78] William Carey, Joshua Marshman, William Ward, et al., "The Serampore Form of Agreement," *Baptist Quarterly* 12.5 (1947): 131.

[79] On this, the SFA reads: "At least for the present, Indian evangelists would be 'under the eye of an [sic] European brother'" (Stanley, "Planting Self-governing Churches," 381). The SFA also stated that a "missionary of the district" would "constantly superintend their affairs, give them advice in cases of order and discipline, and correct any errors into which they may fall" (Carey, Marshman, Ward, et al., "Serampore Form of Agreement," 135). Carey even once wrote that, "Compared with Europeans … [Indians] are a larger sort of children" (William Carey, in S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 237). Moreover, even with their "good gifts for making known the Gospel," Carey thought it "desirable" for natives to be "under the eye of a European" (William Carey to Fuller, Dec 10, 1805, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 139). Carey believed natives were "far below Europeans in religious knowledge … energy of mind, and … other … requirements" (William Carey to Pearce, Jan 15, 1812, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 176).

in the next section.[80] Third, some question the sincerity of many of the Trio's converts, noting that they often did not perform their due diligence.[81]

The Logocentric Church and Strategic Translation

Unlike the missional function of the church, Carey believed the church was ontologically logocentric: centered on the Word of God.[82] In its very nature, the local church is to be centered on the Bible. In one way, Carey's view of the church as functionally missional came as a result of his view that the church is ontologically logocentric.[83] The Word of God was so

[80] This was so severe, that in an 1822 letter to his father, Carey noted: "It is more I think, *than 12 years* that I have been laboring here, but alas not one brought to the truth through my instrumentality" (William Carey, in Sen Gupta, *Christian Missionaries in Bengal*, 165 [emphasis added]).

[81] For example, when William Moore examined a church planted in north Bengal, "[He] had found the 'converts had been admitted too soon' and six months later doubted whether the one or two that remained in 'that neighbourhood [sic] had a grain of sincerity in them'" (Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries*, 43). Speaking of the BMS and the London Missionary Society, Sen Gupta believes that "those Indians who embraced Christianity did so primarily for material gains rather than for spiritual regeneration" (Sen Gupta, *Christian Missionaries in Bengal*, 150).

[82] Gregg Allison's reference to the "logocentric" church has a double meaning (see Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 110–17). He refers to both the *Christ-centeredness* of the church and the *Word-centeredness* of the church. For the sake of this essay, by "logocentric," I am referring only to the latter meaning, which Allison defines as the church "centered on Scripture, the inspired Word" (112). He continues: "Specifically, canonical Scripture is inspired, sufficient, necessary, truthful (or inerrant), clear, authoritative, and productive." Moreover, he writes, "With God as its divine author, Scripture as the Word of God possesses divine authority to command what Christians are to believe, do, and be, and to prohibit what they are to avoid.… The church is to be centered on this inspired, sufficient, necessary, truthful, clear, authoritative, and productive Word of God" (114).

[83] One might think that—for Baptists—the functional missionality of the church comes by way of ontological missionality. However, Toivo Pilli writes on this: "[B]aptists have frequently emphasised [sic] the importance of mission from functional rather than ontological perspective. With a little exaggeration: for us, Baptists, mission is often important because we do it, not because it defines us as a church or because we derive the missional meaning from the movement of the Trinity" (Toivo Pilli, "Where Do We Go from Here? Some Challenges for European Baptistic Ecclesiology," *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 15.2 [2015]: 11–12).

essential to all that Carey did and believed regarding the church;[84] because he believed the Bible set forth a clear, missional mandate, he believed churches needed to follow it.

At an early age, Carey became very interested in languages other than English. Not long after this interest took root, Carey discovered the intricacies and beauty of the Bible's original languages. A great portion of his life would be given to study of the Bible in both Greek and Hebrew, as Carey would later translate the Bible into at least thirty-six different languages.[85] This fact alone behooves current readers to consider just how much time Carey spent in the Word of God. He found the utmost pleasure "in drawing near to God; and a peculiar sweetness in His Holy Word." He found the Bible "more [and] more to be a very precious treasure."[86] Certainly, the Bible was a dear friend of his, in times where he had almost no other companion.[87]

Carey thought the Bible was essential for the well-being of a local church and the well-being of mankind. He once warned his son, Jabez, to not associate with National Churches overseas because they were "unknown in the word of God," and this sad reality meant they were not true churches.[88] During his second pastorate, he wrote to his sister, Mary: "[We] have a more sure word of prophecy whereunto we do well that we take heed," showing his dependence on 2 Pet 1:19–21.[89] Carey once communicated his idea for pastoral ministry in this way: "The Word of God! What need to pray much and study closely, to give ourselves wholly to those great things, that we may not speak falsely of God. The word of

[84] Before leaving for India, Carey clearly communicated this: "Consider that the Bible is our rule and if we would fetch our evidence from that we should do well" (William Carey to Mary Carey, Dec 14, 1789, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 265).

[85] Though some estimate he translated the Bible into forty languages (which is possible), the more likely number is thirty-five or thirty-six. John Taylor notes these translations in great detail (*Biographical and Literary Notices*, 89). Stanley also says Carey was only responsible for translating the Bible into six languages fully and another twenty-nine partially (*History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, 38, 49). See also Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 39.

[86] William Carey's Journal, Aug 27, 1794, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 39.

[87] He writes after his first year gone, a year fraught with suffering: "Well I have God, and his Word is sure" (William Carey's Journal, Apr 19, 1794, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 26).

[88] William Carey to Jabez, Nov 23, 1816, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 190.

[89] William Carey to Mary Carey, Dec 14, 1789, Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 265.

truth!"[90] In *An Enquiry*, Carey writes of the great travesty of the unreached; in many countries, inhabitants had "no written language," and "consequently no Bible."[91]

Carey's becoming a dissenter Baptist is owed to his study of God's Word. Furthermore, because of the biblical teaching of believer's baptism, Carey decided to be baptized in October of 1783 and baptized his wife four years later. He also moved away from the Particular Baptist leaning toward hyper-Calvinism "because he believed so strongly in the Word [and] that's what it showed him."[92] Instead, he embraced a warm, evangelical, and biblical Calvinism.

As well, Carey exemplified his adherence to Scripture in his method of preaching. In both England and India, his sermons were filled with the Bible. As already mentioned, Carey's "deathless sermon" in 1792 shows that he "followed the expository model of the Baptist preachers of Northamptonshire," for that sermon was an exposition of Isa 54:2–3.[93] Carey's messages are often noted as a distribution and communication of "only the Word," for the Word was "the fountain of eternal truth, and the Message of Salvation to men."[94] John Ryland Jr. said after "twice hearing [Carey preach]" one year, he "had a … deep sense of [the] truth."[95] Eustace Carey says William Carey's study of the Bible was so intensive that he "never *wrote* a sermon in his life. He had gone through the sacred books so often, and with so much critical attention, and in so many languages, that there was scarcely a passage with … which he was not familiar."[96]

Carey's dependence on God's Word—especially as it pertained to the local church—led to an almost singular focus on translating it for those without it. He was "convinced that the availability of the Scriptures would pave the way for a strong and indigenous church."[97] He, Marshman, and Ward, per the SFA, agreed "to labour [sic] incessantly in biblical translation."[98] Carey's strategy consisted of working with locals to produce as readable a translation as possible. His ultimate goal was to provide a book for common people to use. Though he used locals, translations were fully dependent on his examination. He once wrote, "There is not a sentence,

[90] William Carey, in Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices*, 2.

[91] Carey, "An Enquiry," 85.

[92] George, *Faithful Witness*, 137.

[93] Nicholls, "Theology of William Carey," 370.

[94] For examples, see Oussoren, *William Carey*, 198–201, 204–5, 244–46, 265–67.

[95] John Ryland Jr., in S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 47.

[96] Eustace Carey, in Drewery, *William Carey*, 139.

[97] Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 39.

[98] George, *Faithful Witness*, 123.

or a word, in these six versions which I do not compare with several versions; I translate the New Testament immediately from the Greek, and every sentence of the Old Testament is constantly compared with the Hebrew."[99] Every translation went through his hands, save the Burman and Chinese Bibles. His belief in translation was so strong that he knew some "would become Christians," not just because of the opportunities it provided for a more thorough evangelism, but also by the natives "merely … reading the Bible."[100] That is, Carey believed the Bible to be so sufficient that if more natives could simply read its words in their own language, they might come to see, understand, and thus believe in the gospel for salvation.

Because Carey held to the logocentricity of the church so adamantly, it is surprising to find the many weaknesses of Carey's translations. His shortcomings are twofold. First, his translations were poor and only satisfactory for a short amount of time. Both he and others attest to this. Relatedly, it is one thing to assess the worth of completing so many poor translations of the Bible and another to assess Carey's own belief that his translations did not have to be perfect. Second, Carey devoted so much time to translations—again, translations that did not prove useful in the long run—that he, later in life, spent little to no time actually evangelizing.

Carey went against his notion that his commitment was to "providing the people with the best text of Scripture possible,"[101] in that he explicitly stated, "It would be the height of folly to say that any of our translations are perfect."[102] He noted that they do "the best [they] can," yet his translations knowingly included "mistakes" in need of rectification and "inaccuracies" in need of correction.[103] Likely, Carey's main problem became his desire to "translate the Bible into as many languages of the common people as possible so that all might hear and believe the gospel."[104] Yet, this position purports that one needs an inaccurate and misleading translation of the Bible to actually believe. Would it have not been better to

[99] William Carey to his father, May 4, 1808, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 160.

[100] Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries*, 82. On at least one occasion, Carey notes that this "impossibility" actually happened (William Carey to Fuller, Mar 25, 1813, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 163).

[101] Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 77.

[102] William Carey to an unknown recipient, Feb 7, 1819, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 165.

[103] William Carey to Ryland, Mar 30, 1819, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 166.

[104] Nicholls, "Theology of William Carey," 371.

focus on accurately preaching the gospel while working on less translations that were more accurate? Potts notes that one of Carey's translations was so bad that, "'A little leaven leaventh the whole lump' … became 'A little crocodile crocodilith the whole lump.'"[105] Some scholars have stated that Carey's translations were "too literal," and so, he never truly "achieved a 'readable translation in Bengali of the New Testament.'"[106] While one can ponder the possibility of Carey's ministry if he had done otherwise, one cannot neglect that—even with his many but poor translations—he deserves "the right to be described as a great man," for he at least provided "tools … for later scholars to reap a harvest for God."[107] Carey knew that his translations were only a start, and his ultimate hope was that scholars following him would produce better work; and they did.

Secondly, Carey spent so much time translating Scripture that he spent hardly any time evangelizing. He once spoke of "doing so little," his main excuse being that "translation leaves us not Time."[108] Translating Scripture literally took all of his time, time that could have been spent doing what one might call true missionary work. Even so, Carey's work in translation was done "to reap a harvest for God."[109] Though it was not direct evangelism, it was directly affecting this cause; this is why translation was of the utmost importance. Though evangelism was a priority, if it was to be successful, it had to be joined to God's Word. Carey believed that—among the Serampore Trio—he had both the desire and the gifts for such a needed task.

The Didactic Church and Strategic Education

The local church is "didactic" in the sense that its mature members—while being discipled and sanctified themselves—must seek to teach other members for the sake of their discipleship and sanctification. Like the missional functionality of the church, the church as didactic is based on the ontological logocentricity of the church.[110] Because Carey believed God's Word was central to the church, he believed the church—pastors

[105] Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries*, 84. For more translation issues, see pp. 82–89.

[106] Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries*, 86–87.

[107] Drewery, *William Carey*, 156–57, 202.

[108] William Carey to Burls, Feb 22, 1814, in Carter*, Journal and Selected Letters*, 153.

[109] Drewery, *William Carey*, 202.

[110] For example, Carey agreed with Luther, who wrote: "'The Scripture cannot be understood without the language,' Luther had argued, 'and the languages can be learned only in school'" (George, *Faithful Witness*, 143). The church was to educate, so that the Scriptures could be upheld within it.

especially—needed to teach well, for this is what God commanded in the Great Commission. Furthermore, since Carey believed the local church was responsible for the Great Commission, he concluded that the church was responsible for "teaching [Christians] to observe all … [Christ] commanded."

Carey's belief in the didactic church is seen not only in his ministry in India, but also in his pastoral work at both Moulton and Leicester. Early into his short stint at the Moulton church, Carey noted to John Sutcliff that his desire was to "settle the church upon evangelical principles."[111] How was he to do such a thing? A little over a year after writing of this desire, Carey deals with the teaching responsibility of local churches:

> Paul informs us that a bishop should be "*apt to teach*." *Teaching* in the pulpit, though one great part of his work, yet is not all. He should keep up the *character of a teacher*, an overlooker, at all times; and in the chimney corner, as well as the pulpit.… May we [as pastors] reprove, rebuke, exhort, be diligent, in season and out of season, always abounding in the work of the Lord.[112]

Writing to his father in 1790, Carey noted that his regular schedule included teaching a lecture for one year's time on the book of Revelation every Wednesday night.[113] Six months later, Carey wrote to his father again: "Several young people appear under concern of soul; and at a village about three miles off, an amazing alteration has taken place; and hence I opened a lecture there about nine months since; several have been converted, in all probability."[114] Moreover, to solve the numerous, disciplinary problems of the church at Leicester, Carey resolved to make a "new covenantal charter."[115] That is, his pastoral solution was leading his church into a more confessional understanding of the Christian faith. For Carey, the teaching of sound doctrine was essential for a pastor if that pastor's desire was to faithfully shepherd the flock.

Carey's belief in the didactic church did not change once he moved to India. If anything, he realized even more the need for the church to advocate sound teaching. Not even two years into his ministry there, Carey noted that, "One Lord's Day [twenty-six] persons came to [his] house for

[111] William Carey to Sutcliff, Dec 30, 1785, in Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices*, 36.

[112] William Carey to Mr. J. Stranger, Feb 13, 1787, in Taylor, *Biographical and Literary Notices*, 81–82 (emphasis added).

[113] William Carey to his father, Nov 12, 1790, in Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 17.

[114] William Carey to his father, May 5, 1791, in Eustace Carey, *Memoir*, 39.

[115] George, *Faithful Witness*, 28.

instruction in the things of God."[116] The missionaries' teaching ministry was expedited once Ward and Marshman arrived. They soon established a "Caste class," of which Carey once said: "I must say that the knowledge which [the natives] had acquired in a little time, very far surpassed my expectations."[117] Carey notes, "[We] have a Lecture at Church at eight o'clock on Wednesday evenings by Bros Brown or Buchanan, both of whom are evangelical clergymen."[118] In 1806, Carey made sure to preach in Bengali every evening at five o'clock.[119] Though the Trio would establish many schools for the sake of education, Carey believed education was a responsibility of the local church. He once wrote to Fuller: "I trust the Lord to raise up in this church as sufficient here of spiritual gifts, to convey the knowledge of the truth through this, and perhaps some of the neighboring countries."[120] Writing to Jabez, Carey made sure he knew the importance of teaching. He told his son to consider himself a "spiritual instructor of the people," looking to "introduce among them sound doctrine and genuine piety."[121] He wanted his son to "instruct them in the great thing … [the] Gospel."[122] Jabez was implored to "teach the people publickly [sic] and from house to house holding out to them the free tidings of Salvation through the Redeemer's blood and teaching them to observe all things which he has commanded them."[123] A true churchman, Carey believed he—as a *pastor-missionary-church planter*—was to make sure the natives were being well taught to follow Christian doctrine.

In terms of strategy, though education took place in the context of the local church, the Trio thought it wise to establish formal schools throughout India. They were so diligent in this, that by 1818, "[Several] thousand were regularly attending classes and services."[124] According to Carey,

[116] William Carey's Journal, Mar 18, 1795, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 145.

[117] William Carey to Ryland, June 29–30, 1802, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 167.

[118] William Carey to his father, Dec 1, 1802, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 87.

[119] William Carey to Ryland, June 12, 1806, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 89.

[120] William Carey to Fuller, Mar 27, 1809, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 174.

[121] William Carey to Jabez, Jan 24, 1814, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 131.

[122] William Carey to Jabez, Mar 31, 1814, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 135.

[123] William Carey to Jabez, Nov 23, 1816, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 190.

[124] Webber, *William Carey and the Missionary Vision*, 39.

these "classes" consisted of three sub-classes: one for teaching Bengali reading and writing; one for teaching English, writing, and arithmetic; and one for teaching Science, for disputing against Hinduism, and explaining the principles of Christianity.[125] Though their system of education was holistic, their primary educational purpose was never detached from their main work, evangelism. Carey considered schools "as one of the most effectual means of spreading the light of the Gospel through[out] the world."[126] Schools, like Serampore College, were eventually established for the sake of not only teaching lost Indians the gospel, but also training saved Indians to preach the gospel to their own people, thus creating an indigenous ministry. This purpose is stated most clearly in the SFA. In the eighth principle of this document, the Trio states: "The establishment of native free schools is also an object highly important to the future conquests of the gospel,"[127] for if the gospel was to spread liberally, it was to come through "forming our native brethren to usefulness, fostering every kind of genius, and cherishing every gift and grace in them."[128]

There is perhaps no better case study for the verification of this than Krishna Pal, the Trio's first convert. In 1803, Carey wrote of Krishna: "[We] derive increasing pleasure from [Krishna]; he appears to make solid advances in the knowledge of the gospel; and making it known to his perishing fellow countrymen seems [to be] his beloved employment."[129] Krishna, for more than twenty years, devoted himself to a life of

> faithfully [warning his fellow countrymen] that if they [continued] to sin, they would go to hell, where the mercy of God would never reach them: but he showed them how the mercy of God was united with justice in the death of Christ, and entreated them to be reconciled to God.[130]

If any weakness must be pointed out in Carey's educational strategy, it is its Westernized nature. In *An Enquiry*, Carey made his understanding of the "heathen" clear. He believed they were "without government, without laws, and without arts, and sciences."[131] So, he thought Christians

[125] William Carey to Fuller, Nov 1800, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 167.

[126] William Carey to Jabez, Jan 12, 1815, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 167.

[127] Carey, Marshman, Ward, et al., "The Serampore Form of Agreement," 136.

[128] SFA, in Myers, *William Carey: The Shoemaker*, 68.

[129] William Carey, in *The First Hindoo Convert: A Memoir of Krishna Pal* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1852), 47.

[130] *The First Hindoo Convert*, 57.

[131] Carey, "An Enquiry," 24.

should "exert [themselves] to introduce among them the sentiments of men, and of Christians." Carey thought the "heathen" not only needed spiritual transformation, but that he also needed civilization—the civilization he and other Westerners already had. Melody Maxwell purports that "many nineteenth-century missionaries conflated the goals of Christianisation [sic] and 'civilisation' [sic] in their ministries."[132] As David Bosch notes, many missionaries "confused their middle-class ideals and values with the tenets of Christianity."[133]

Others have more supportively stated that Carey and others did not import Western culture on the native Indians. Tucker says Carey "had a respect for the Indian culture, and he never tried to import Western substitutes as so many missionaries who came after him would seek to do."[134] William Ward once wrote that he, Marshman, and Carey "carefully [avoided] whatever might Anglicise [sic] … students and converts," though his defense was that their primary educational purpose was "to make India evangelise [sic] herself."[135] It should also be noted that the education imparted by the Trio was mainly done in the vernacular language of each school's attendees.

Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that William Carey is still remembered—even among today's Indians—as one who modernized India, namely through education.[136] Though this may have been a form of "Western imperialism," the reality is that this label "significantly overestimates the power and reach of the missions movement to influence overseas societies, and accords to the missionary project an interest in colonial

[132] Melody Maxwell, "Baptists and Modern Missions: Historical Movement and Contemporary Reflections," *Baptist Theologies* 10.1 (2018): 26.

[133] David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 301. Bosch believes Carey bracketed together the "spread of the gospel" and "civilization" (303). Relatedly, Ferris suggests the need for great care that missionaries do not impose a Westernized education. See Robert Ferris, "Leadership Development in Missions Settings," in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, 2nd ed., ed. John Mark Terry (Nashville: B&H, 2015).

[134] Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 130.

[135] Ward, in Marina Ngursangzeli Behera, "William Carey and Early 19th Century Society in Bengal," *Bangladore Theological Forum* 39.2 (2007): 45.

[136] See Ashish K. Massey and June Hedlund, "William Carey and the Making of Modern India," *Indian Church History Review* 27.1 (1993): 7–18; Vishal and Ruth Mangalwadi, "Who (Really) Was William Carey," in *Perspectives of the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph Winter (Pasadena: William Carey, 2009).

dominion that both missionaries and imperial officials discredited."[137] Not to mention, this educational focus—among other things—brought "benefits [to India] lasting into the twenty-first century." What is more, many Indians speak favorably of Carey's innovations. These "correlations demonstrate the lasting positive impact of the modern missionary movement, although contemporary observers should not discount its negative legacy of cultural insensitivity and paternalism."[138] All in all, though Carey and others could have been more diligent in creating an indigenous educational format, the Westernized educational format they implemented was—nevertheless—for the overall welfare of the Indian natives.

Conclusion

Again, William Carey's threefold strategy for mission—(1) evangelism, (2) translation, and (3) education—was implemented in India as a result of Carey's basic ecclesiological framework, which can be succinctly summarized as a belief that the church is (1) missional, (2) logocentric, and (3) didactic. His work, though flawed, should not soon be forgotten by the church, for as Hervey observes:

> [Carey helped produce] 212,000 copies of the Sacred Scriptures, in forty different languages—the vernacular tongues of about 330,000,000 … immortal souls, of whom more than 100,000,000 were British subjects. He lived till he had seen expended upon the grand object for which the first small offering at Kettering (of £13:2:6) was presented, a sum a little short of $500,000.[139]

Christians, today, owe much to William Carey, for he helped the Protestant church see its responsibility to evangelize the world's lost masses, using the biblical text and teaching them as they were converted and progressively sanctified into the image of Christ.

In a more applicational sense, from the work of this essay—especially the mentioned strengths and weaknesses of Carey's theology and methodology—modern missionaries can be served in two ways. First, they should remember that ecclesiological beliefs are essential to missiological practice, for theology informs missiological method and strategy (or lack thereof). Second, even if one's missiological practices come from ecclesiological beliefs, missionaries should continuously weigh their methods

[137] Kelly R. Elliot, "'Chosen Race': Baptist Missions and Mission Churches in the East and West Indies, 1795–1875" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2010), 222.

[138] Maxwell, "Baptists and Modern Missions," 27 (thought influenced by J. Dudley Woodberry).

[139] Hervey, *The Story of Baptist Missions*, 41.

against the litmus test of Scripture and remain ever careful of the ethnocentricity that may potentially exist in their own worldviews. Finally, in all of the church's missional labors, the desire is simple: as Carey himself wrote in his last journal entry: "O Lord send now Prosperity."[140]

[140] William Carey's Journal, June 14, 1795, in Carter, *Journal and Selected Letters*, 59.

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A Missiology of Hope: Reading Lesslie Newbigin in a Post-Pandemic World

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The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a crisis of despair that must be addressed by those who present the gospel of hope. This essay is an exploration and application of select, under-examined facets of the writing and ministry of the twentieth-century missiologist Lesslie Newbigin. The goal is to excavate deep reservoirs of hope that pastors, missionaries, and missiologists can use as they minister in the emerging post-pandemic society. Preliminary suggestions are made concerning telling the cruciform story, embracing holistic mission, and learning hope from the margins. As a result of engaging with Newbigin's writings (inspired by his missional context in India) and his urban ministry (in Britain), the reader will be equipped with the initial building blocks of a post-pandemic missiology of hope.

Key Words: Coronavirus, COVID, cruciform, holistic, hope, missiology, Newbigin, pandemic

Introduction: An Epidemic of Despair

2020 was the curveball that Americans did not see coming. First, a global pandemic shattered the illusion that science could guarantee one's health. Then, the death of George Floyd and the resulting urban unrest demolished the myth that the government could keep one safe. The economic uncertainty that resulted from Coronavirus shutdowns chipped away at the American lifestyle of travel, leisure, and retirement. These events unfolded in a presidential election year, as a bitterly divided electorate prepared to select its next leader. In the background, the death toll kept rising. At the time of publication, more than 500,000 Americans have been lost, nearly 30,000 of them in New York City.

The multiple crises that have unfolded during the pandemic have affected American society in countless ways. One of the most notable is the onset of an epidemic of despair. One survey in the early Fall of 2020 discovered that 72 percent of Americans believe that the country is headed

in the "wrong direction."[1] Given the intense polarization of American society, this polling data reveals a remarkable bipartisan consensus. People are despondent and unsure that the country will rebound.

Americans are struggling with mental health issues.[2] One study conducted at the beginning of the pandemic presents an interesting paradox. Although most Americans stated that they were at least somewhat hopeful about the future, they also stated that they were grappling with anxiety, insomnia, depression, and loneliness. Nearly 20 percent of respondents even acknowledged a "physical reaction" brought about by thinking about COVID-19.[3] Apparently, Americans are trying to be hopeful but struggling with despair.

Public health experts are concerned that the Coronavirus will lead to a rise in suicides.[4] These suicides could even constitute a "global psychological pandemic" since "we can anticipate the rippling effect of this virus on worldwide suicide events."[5] The relevant factors that could contribute to a potential spike in suicides include isolation and trauma. Notably, researchers are concerned that "uncertainty, feelings of hopelessness, and a sense of worthlessness may increase suicide rates."[6] The Centers for Disease Control has even linked "substance abuse" and "suicidal ideation" with COVID-19.[7]

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[1] AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, "The Public Outlook Remains Gloomy," https://apnorc.org/?post_type=project&p=2710.

[2] Rebecca Tan, "In an era of quarantine, crisis hotlines face growing – and urgent – demand," https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/crisis-hotline-quarantine-coronavirus-mental-health/2020/03/23/632e2d7c-6abe-11ea-9923-57073adce27c_story.html.

[3] Pew Research Center, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/03/30/people-financially-affected-by-covid-19-outbreak-are-experiencing-more-psychological-distress-than-others/ft_2020-03-30_coviddistress_01/.

[4] Rebecca Clay, "COVID-19 and Suicide," *Monitor on Psychology* 51.4 (2020), https://www.apa.org/monitor/2020/06/covid-suicide. Some experts suggest that up to 75,000 people could ultimately die from pandemic-related substance abuse and suicide (https://wellbeingtrust.org/areas-of-focus/policy-and-advocacy/reports/projected-deaths-of-despair-during-covid-19/).

[5] Vikram Thakur and Anu Jain, "COVID 2019-suicides: A Global Psychological Pandemic," *BBI* 88 (August 2020): 952–53.

[6] Alexandra Brewis and Amber Wutich, "New Study Highlights COVID-19 Suicide Risk," https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/diagnosis-human/2020 06/new-study-highlights-covid-19-suicide-risk.

[7] Mark É. Czeisler, Rashon I. Lane, Emiko Petrosky, Joshua F. Wiley, Aleta Christensen, Rashid Njai, et al., "Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic—United States, June 24–30, 2020," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 69.32 (Aug 14, 2020): 1049–57.

Americans have been collectively traumatized in 2020. They have experienced a devastating pandemic, economic hardship, racial injustice, and urban unrest. Amid the epidemic of despair, Christians have an opportunity to tell the story that infuses them with hope (1 Pet 3:15).[8] Pastors and missiologists must reflect upon present circumstances and retool their approaches so that they can more effectively present the hope of the gospel. This essay is an introductory exploration, a first step in building a missiology of hope for a post-pandemic world.[9] In particular, this article attempts to reexamine the work of Lesslie Newbigin and to bring it into conversation with a post-pandemic United States of America.

Reintroducing Lesslie Newbigin

Lesslie Newbigin (1909–1998) was one of the most distinguished Christians of the twentieth century. While not as popular as the American icons Billy Graham and Martin Luther King Jr., Newbigin deserves to be placed alongside the leading figures of the modern Christian era. His global influence upon Christianity (especially in the field of missiology) is still felt today. Some readers might be unfamiliar with Newbigin. Before exploring how his work can infuse a post-pandemic missiology with hope, it is important to briefly reexamine his life and ministry.[10]

Lesslie Newbigin and his wife Helen were missionaries of the Church of Scotland. Dispatched to India, they served there for nearly four decades (although not continuously). While there, Newbigin ministered in both rural and urban settings. He engaged in administrative tasks, relief

[8] This is not meant to imply that "spiritual" solutions are all that is needed for those suffering from mental health issues. Instead, this article is advocating for a renewed focus on hope as Christians engage the post-pandemic world. This will be an important contextual step for those who seek to minister amidst the epidemic of despair.

[9] See also Jerry Ireland and Michelle Raven, *Practicing Hope: Missions and Global Crises* (Littleton, CO: William Carey, 2020), for an insightful (and prophetic) pre-pandemic compendium of essays on practicing hope amid global crises.

[10] For biographical information on Newbigin, see Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Updated Autobiography* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009); and Geoffrey Wainwright, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Theological Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). For theological analyses of his ministry, see George Hunsberger, *Bearing the Witness of the Spirit: Lesslie Newbigin's Theology of Cultural Plurality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Scott Sunquist and Amos Yong, *The Gospel and Pluralism Today: Reassessing Lesslie Newbigin in the 21st Century* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015); and Michael Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation: Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018).

work, and camp ministry. Newbigin taught high school English and enthusiastically proclaimed the gospel through street preaching. Over the course of his ministry, Newbigin dialogued with his Hindu neighbors. Most notably, he shared leadership of a weekly study of John's Gospel and the Svetasvara Upanishad. His sustained missionary engagement with Hinduism eventually resulted in Newbigin's insightful commentary on the Fourth Gospel.[11]

Newbigin participated in national efforts to unite various Protestant denominations. This resulted in the Church of South India, in which Newbigin was appointed a Bishop.[12] He would go on to take a leading role on the world scene as he served in various official capacities, first with the International Missionary Council and then with the World Council of Churches. Newbigin's impact upon missionary theology and the later missional church movement can hardly be overstated. He was a prolific speaker and writer, delivering lectures and penning essays that would chart a new course for the missionary Church.[13]

Perhaps ironically, Lesslie Newbigin is most famous (in the Western world, at least) for how he spent his "retirement." Newbigin refused to settle down when he returned from nearly four decades of ministry in India. Upon his return, he observed his native Britain with new eyes. Newbigin became convinced that the West (which traditionally sent missionaries to other parts of the world) was itself a significant mission field. He dedicated his retirement years to fostering a fresh missionary encounter between the gospel and Western culture. This led to seminal works such as *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* and *The Gospel*

[11] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

[12] Newbigin's commitment to the unity of the Church is expressed narratively in Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda*, 79–92, and theologically in Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (New York: Friendship Press, 1954).

[13] Newbigin's missional perspective can be discerned through numerous works, two of which are worth noting here. In Lesslie Newbigin, *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), he set forth a series of essays on diverse topics in missions. These topics demonstrate Newbigin's breadth of understanding. He treated questions of secularization, pastoral evangelism, and urban ministry, all with a firm foundation in Scripture and with a dose of perspective gained through decades of missionary work. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), serves as Newbigin's more mature missiological meditations.

in a Pluralist Society.[14] Newbigin's sustained missional engagement with Western culture led him into a confrontation with Enlightenment epistemology and Western idolatry.[15] Over twenty years after his passing, various iterations of the Gospel and Our Culture Network have emerged throughout the Western world as missional scholars attempt to advance Newbigin's vision of a fresh missionary encounter between the gospel and Western culture.[16]

The remainder of this essay will explore how select aspects of Newbigin's work can inform a post-pandemic missiology of hope. Three elements of Newbigin's ministry will be utilized as key building blocks in this missiological endeavor. The first two are books by Newbigin, entitled *Journey into Joy* and *The Good Shepherd: Meditations on Christian Ministry.* The third source is Newbigin's season of multicultural ministry in urban Birmingham, UK. These elements of Newbigin's lifework have been intentionally selected because they have been somewhat neglected, especially when compared to Newbigin's more prominent books and ministries. This essay will excavate vital reservoirs of hope from each of these lesser-known sources, thereby enabling present-day readers of Newbigin to construct a post-pandemic missiology of hope.[17]

Journey into Joy

In 1971 Lesslie Newbigin delivered a series of six lectures at the Christian Medical College in Vellore. These "talks," as Newbigin called them,

[14] See Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) and Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

[15] See Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); and Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth and Authority in Modernity* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

[16] The website of the American expression of The Gospel and Our Culture Network declares, "The Gospel and Our Culture Network exists to give careful attention to the interaction between culture, gospel and church. It arises from the conviction that genuine renewal in the life and witness of the church comes only with a fresh encounter of the gospel within our culture. The network focuses its activities, therefore, on the cultural research, theological reflection and church renewal necessary for the recovery of the church's missionary identity" (www.gocn.org). The Network has sponsored two different series of books: *The Gospel and Our Culture* series and the *Missiological Engagements* series.

[17] The three sources of Newbigin's life will be examined in chronological order. *Journey into Joy* was published in 1972, *The Good Shepherd* was published in 1977, and Newbigin's ministry in Birmingham unfolded during the 1980s.

were given to Christian workers in an Indian context. Coming three decades after his arrival in India, these lectures constitute Newbigin's seasoned perspective as a veteran missionary. The lectures were transcribed and became the little book *Journey into Joy.*[18]

In Newbigin's introductory "invitation," he described the "ferment" of that era. Newbigin narrated student protests and the specter of civil unrest in America. He described the unease experienced by many as India transitioned into a "modern" society. He referenced the 1968 Paris Revolution and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The Scottish missionary to India had developed a keen eye for global events. He knew how uncertain were the times in which his listeners lived. They were times that were both disorienting and terrifying. So, with a deep commitment to the story of Scripture, Newbigin invited his listeners to embark upon a quest with him. He called it a journey into joy.

Newbigin structured his lectures inductively, building towards his conclusion. His goal, however, was clear from the outset. His remarks were an attempt to provide a "compass adjustment" for the Church.[19] He memorably remarked, "As I grow older, I am less inclined to be dogmatic about many things. But there are a few things about which I am sure. I am sure about Jesus Christ."[20] Whether or not they realized it, this word of wisdom was exactly what these young, aspiring healthcare professionals needed. Newbigin centered his "talks" around several important themes, including "Jesus Christ," "New Life in the Spirit," and "Hope for the World." Readers of Newbigin's later work will note the early expression of ideas he returned to for another twenty-seven years.

For Newbigin, the journey into joy begins and ends with Jesus. It is in Jesus, he believed, that people discover hope. Because Newbigin thought that there was an unrealized purpose for existence, he maintained that "hope becomes a central part of human life and not just delusion, as so much of the world's religion has taught."[21] The humble missionary believed that the story of Scripture answers the perennial question of purpose. He believed that it does so by redirecting our hope to the One who entered history.[22]

Crucially, it was the crucifixion of Jesus that provides humanity with a reservoir of hope. Newbigin noted that "the story of the resurrection is not told in the New Testament as the story of a victory which wipes out

[18] Lesslie Newbigin, *Journey into Joy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972).

[19] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy,* 12–13.

[20] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy*, 13.

[21] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy*, 35.

[22] To employ a later Newbigin phrase, Christ was the clue to history. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 103–15.

the defeat of the cross … there is great emphasis laid on the fact that the risen Lord is the crucified one."[23] Newbigin emphasized that the cross must not be viewed as a temporary obstacle on the way to an empty tomb. Instead, it was the centerpiece of redemption. He argued, "The cross, in other words, is not put before us as defeat overruled by God; on the contrary, the cross is put before us as a victory which was acknowledged and ratified by God."[24] This crucicentric approach will be returned to later in this essay.

In his discussion of the Third Person of the Trinity, Newbigin opined that "Life in the Spirit means hope."[25] He grounded his thinking in Paul's discussion of hope in Romans chapter eight. He notes that the Spirit is an *arrabōn* ("deposit" or "down payment"). For Newbigin, this means that we ought to be "both happy for what we have received and also hopeful for what is still to come."[26] He understood that the Holy Spirit whets the appetite for the messianic feast that awaits the Redeemed.

Newbigin devoted an entire lecture to the theme of "Hope for the World."[27] He noted that, in Tamil, the word "hope" means "I think."[28] However, he argues, "Hope in the Bible is an eager and patient waiting for something which is good, and something which is sure because God has promised it."[29] Once again, Newbigin anchored his argumentation in the narrative arc of the Bible, turning to Abraham, Jesus, and the New Jerusalem. His words could have been written during the Coronavirus pandemic: "the world as it is, is not the ground of our hope and cannot be.… Hope is grounded in what God intends and what he has promised. And in the strength of that promise men can dare to say No to the world as it is."[30]

Newbigin's embrace of the scriptural story meant that he could assert, in the aftermath of the tumult of the 1960s, "that death has no longer the last word."[31] For those who doubted, Newbigin pointed to a blood-

[23] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy,* 45.

[24] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy,* 46.

[25] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy,* 77.

[26] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy,* 78.

[27] In connecting missiology, eschatology, and hope, Newbigin would have found a contemporary conversation partner in N. T. Wright. See N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008); and N. T. Wright, *History and Eschatology: Jesus and the Promise of Natural Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019).

[28] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy,* 81. Tamil was an Indian language in which Newbigin preached and wrote.

[29] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy,* 82.

[30] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy,* 83.

[31] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy,* 88.

stained cross. In his lectures, Newbigin sought to direct his listeners upon their pilgrimage to the Holy City. It was at once a backward-looking venture (looking back to the cross) and a forward-looking quest (looking forward to the New Jerusalem). Newbigin believed that the narrative of the Bible ought to shape our affections and infuse us with purpose. This purpose can only be found as Christians live in the "the time between the times" and look ahead with hope for all that God has promised. In words fitting for present-day American society, Newbigin poignantly asserted, "The world is in pain, and we ourselves are in pain. But it is not a meaningless pain. It is the pain of childbirth. A new creation, a new world is coming to birth, a world which will be the world of God's redeemed and free children."[32]

The Good Shepherd

The Good Shepherd: Meditations on Christian Ministry originated as a series of Saturday morning pastoral training sessions. Newbigin met with the clergy of the newly formed Church of South India. He celebrated communion with them, shared a meditation from Scripture, ate breakfast with his fellow pastors, and then participated in a group discussion of the issues facing leaders in the Church of South India.[33] All but one of the "meditations" transcribed in this little volume were originally delivered in the context of the regular clergy breakfast. This book by Newbigin presents a chance to explore his reflections upon what it means to be a pastor in the modern world. Although some of the material is dated, there is much that is still relevant for contemporary pastors.

It is crucial to take note of the context in which Newbigin and his colleagues ministered. Doing so will enable the reader to appreciate the emphases of *The Good Shepherd*. Newbigin's listeners at the breakfasts were clergy who ministered in Madras.[34] This place of three million people was a modern industrial Indian city. It was characterized by immigration and poverty. Newbigin noted that many immigrants to Madras made a home in the slums, "living in crowded clumps of unventilated huts, without water, light or sanitation—but with an unbeaten determination to come up in the world."[35]

[32] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy*, 93.

[33] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd: Meditations on Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 9.

[34] Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd*, 10, recalled that fifty-six ordained men and an unspecified number of women were present for these breakfasts. The pastors in attendance were responsible for at least 110 churches in Madras.

[35] Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd*, 9.

The clergy that Newbigin trained at these Saturday breakfasts led congregations that ministered to a wide range of the residents of Madras: "from the dwellers in the slums and on the pavements to the men and women who hold positions of highest leadership in government, business and the professions."[36] Newbigin equipped clergy to minister in this challenging context. His message of hope speaks directly to those who minister in a post-pandemic American society.

In addition to accentuating the cross (as he did in *Journey into Joy*), three relevant themes emerge as Newbigin touched on the Christian message of hope. First, he addressed hope within a eucharistic setting. The clergy breakfasts commenced with communion. In that context, Newbigin shared his pastoral reflections. Oftentimes, those reflections touched on the Lord's Table itself. For instance, he declared, "The action of the Eucharist is the most simple and profound form of testimony to what God has done for the world in Jesus Christ."[37] Newbigin understood that communion, properly interpreted, gives hope. It is a reenactment of the gospel story, one which is saturated in hope. In fact, he believed that coming to The Table binds Christians to their missionary task: "What is given to us here is indeed the food and drink of eternal life. But to take it means that we are committed to being part of his body broken for the world, and to being poured out with his blood for the life of the world."[38] Coming to the Lord's Table replenishes one's reservoir of hope, and prepares one to engage a world without hope.

Second, Newbigin addressed evangelism and social action, stating his firm commitment to each. In one reflection he described the unique feature of Christian social work: "We are out to convert people, not just to feed them."[39] Later in the same sermon, he recalled a time before his conversion when he worked among unemployed miners in Wales. He noted that, "They needed more than food and games and education. They needed hope."[40] Some might use Newbigin's words to downplay involvement in the life of the world.

However, *The Good Shepherd* includes other meditations that address the relation of gospel proclamation and gospel demonstration. In one reflection, Newbigin noted, "If … the Church is truly faithful, then the Church's presence in any situation will be itself good news. The real presence of the people of God in a village, in a slum, in a situation of conflict

[36] Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd*, 10.
[37] Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd*, 31.
[38] Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd*, 99.
[39] Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd*, 93.
[40] Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd*, 94.

or of despair, will be itself good news, and a source of hope."[41] In another sermon he asserted that Christians ought to be committed "to doing the will of God for justice among men here and now."[42] Newbigin believed that gospel proclamation and gospel demonstration were both essential. Both provide hope, yet in different ways. As Newbigin argued, acts of Christian charity and justice provide hope in the moment and point beyond themselves to an eternal hope. Christian proclamation of the gospel makes explicit that eternal hope, anchoring it in the crucified and resurrected Lord.

Third, Newbigin (unsurprisingly) spoke on the theme of hope when he addressed the topic of Advent. In a reflection on "Future and Advent" he spoke eloquently of the Christian eschatological hope: "The task of the Church … and the task of the leader in the Church, is to make this other world credible; to make it possible for men to believe that this world as it is, is not the last word; to keep constantly alight in men's hearts the flame of hope and faith in the possibility of a different kind of world."[43]

Once again, it is apparent that Newbigin was committed to the story of Scripture, one which culminates in a Holy City on a New Earth. He understood that many would be so weighed down by the struggles of life that they would be unable to see this coming reality. He argued, "We are here to proclaim the reality and the imminence of a wholly other world, a world in which different powers rule and different standards operate. We are here to make it possible for ordinary men and women really to believe this, and therefore to live in hope and readiness."[44] Newbigin pointed forward (as he did in *Journey into Joy*) to the eschatological kingdom of God. Newbigin understood that this vision of the Eternal City provides contemporary Christians with a deep reservoir of hope.

The Winson Green Pastorate

Thus far, this essay has examined two literary sources for hope, drawing upon two of Lesslie Newbigin's lesser known works inspired by his Indian context. This section will add a final, biographical resource for hope by investigating an under-examined season of ministry during Newbigin's "retirement" in Britain. It is fascinating to observe that in both of Newbigin's missional contexts (India and Britain), he emphasized hope. Indeed, Newbigin's multicultural ministry in urban Britain (in the twilight

[41] Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd*, 62.
[42] Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd*, 109.
[43] Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd*, 132.
[44] Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd*, 133.

of his career, no less) provides us with one of the deepest possible reservoirs of hope for a post-pandemic missiology.

"There is a famine of hope."[45] With these words, Newbigin described the contextual setting for his Winson Green pastorate in urban Birmingham. He noted that the area was once bounded by the Winson Green prison, an insane asylum, a railway, and a factory. Now, the area was impoverished (at least by British standards). He declared, "The commodity in shortest supply is hope."[46] Newbigin became the pastor of this church of about twenty members and served for eight years in an area popularly known as "Merry Hell."[47] Newbigin insisted on leading a bicultural pastoral team (he recruited an Indian presbyter) to serve in this multicultural urban context.[48]

Newbigin acknowledged that his urban pastorate was challenging and that it did not bear much visible fruit.[49] Yet, he refused to be discouraged. He asserted, "It is enough to know that Jesus reigns and shall reign, to be privileged to share this assurance with our neighbors, and to be able to do and say the small deeds and words that make it possible for others to believe."[50] How did Newbigin minister in such a way that he maintained his own grasp on hope while simultaneously offering it to those in the grip of despair?

Newbigin balanced an involvement with the affairs of the neighborhood with the proclamation of eternal hope. He believed that "what the gospel offers is not just hope for the individual but hope for the world. Concretely I think this means that the congregation must be so deeply and intimately involved in the secular concerns of the neighborhood that it becomes clear to all that no one and nothing is outside the range of God's love in Jesus."[51] Newbigin immersed himself in the community by engaging in children's ministry and pastoral visitation.[52] In response to a nearby race riot, he hosted a forum in the church between the local police

[45] Newbigin, *A Word in Season*, 41.

[46] Newbigin, *A Word in Season*, 40.

[47] Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda*, 235.

[48] Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda*, 243–44. According to Wainwright, *Lesslie Newbigin*, 59, both the community and the church were made up of Indians, West-Indians, and Anglo-Saxons.

[49] Newbigin, *A Word in Season,* 47, declared that "I certainly cannot tell any story of 'success' in terms of numbers. I guess that this is the experience of many working in such areas. The church remains small and vulnerable."

[50] Newbigin, *A Word in Season*, 47.

[51] Newbigin, *A Word in Season*, 43.

[52] Wainwright, *Lesslie Newbigin*, 58–59.

and members of the community.[53] Newbigin engaged in an extensive debate about the proper method for religious education in Birmingham.

Even though Newbigin engaged in the local matters of his neighborhood, he did not naively think he could provide hope solely through his community involvement. In a poignant passage about his urban pastorate, he noted that "the hope of which the Church is called to be the bearer of in the midst of a famine of hope is a radically otherworldly hope."[54] Once again, Newbigin's commitment to the story of Scripture drove him to embrace a hope that is "already, but not yet." He believed there was hope for today's struggles, but that ultimate hope awaited the second advent.

Implications for a Missiology of Hope in a Post-Pandemic World

Thus far, this essay has engaged in a descriptive project. Two literary sources and one (primarily) biographical source from Lesslie Newbigin have been excavated with the goal of discovering reservoirs of hope. Now, it must be asked: how does this retrieval enable contemporary Christian leaders to develop a post-pandemic missiology of hope for American society? Three initial suggestions will be offered (these suggestions are by no means exhaustive). First, contemporary Christians should tell the cruciform story. Second, Christians should embrace holistic mission. Third, Christians should learn hope from the margins. In what follows, these suggestions will be briefly explored.

Tell the Cruciform Story

It has been noted repeatedly that Newbigin embraced the Story of Scripture and found in its narrative arc a basis for hope. This can be seen in his discussion of Israel and especially in his eschatological reflections on the destiny of the Redeemed. However, for Newbigin, the story had a form: it was cross-shaped. Newbigin maintained a clear focus upon the cross of Christ as the centerpiece of the narrative, one that is uniquely capable of providing humans with hope.

At the beginning of *Journey into Joy*, Newbigin recalled how he came to faith. He was serving in South Wales among unemployed miners "who had been rotting in unemployment and misery for a decade."[55] He related what happened in the third person: "One night, overwhelmed by the sense of defeat and of the power of evil in the world, there was given to him a vision of the cross of Jesus Christ as the one and only reality great enough to span the distance between heaven and hell … the one reality

[53] Wainwright, *Lesslie Newbigin*, 148.

[54] Newbigin, *A Word in Season*, 44.

[55] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy*, 13.

that could make sense of the human situation."[56] This vision of the cross guided and sustained Newbigin through decades of life and ministry.

Newbigin understood the implications of the cross for the suffering Christian. He recognized that Christians must not rush past the cross to arrive at the empty tomb. The power of Easter morning lies in its relation to the darkness of Good Friday. As Newbigin noted, the resurrected Lord still carries the scars of the cross in his body. He is forever the Crucified Lord.[57]

Many suffer from a loss of hope in the aftermath of the Coronavirus pandemic. This despair might be the result of bereavement, economic hardship, or the mental stress of prolonged isolation. For all those who suffer, the old, rugged cross stands as a beacon of hope. It is a central paradox of Christianity that the symbol of a violent Empire could be transformed into a source of hope. When a person looks to the cross, they see that God became human, that he paid for humanity's sins, and that he defeated evil. The Place of the Skull becomes, ironically, a place of hope for all who suffer. The first step in constructing a post-pandemic missiology of hope is to tell the story of Scripture, emphasizing its cruciform shape.

Practice Holistic Mission

Missionaries and pastors sometimes grapple with the relationship of evangelism and social action. Sometimes Christians wonder if they should limit their focus to gospel proclamation, or if they should also emphasize the societal dimensions of the Christian faith. As noted in this essay, Newbigin was a fervent proponent of both evangelism and social action. He engaged in direct evangelistic work throughout his career, from Madras to Birmingham. In *The Good Shepherd* he emphasized the priority of evangelism (although without expressing it in these terms). Yet, Newbigin also taught the clergy in Madras that they should be involved in social work. Therefore, it is not surprising that he led his tiny congregation in Winson Green to engage on issues of racial justice.

Newbigin saw mission holistically, as directed to the entire person. He was aware that his neighbors, whether slum-dwellers in Madras or immigrants in Winson Green, were whole people: body and soul. He understood that ministry to a human being requires a holistic approach. That is why Newbigin believed that churches should be "involved in the wider life of the community … sharing its burdens and sorrows."[58] Like many

[56] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy*, 13–14.
[57] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy*, 45–46.
[58] Newbigin, *A Word in Season*, 46.

before him, and many after him, Newbigin sought to articulate the relationship between evangelism and social action in the mission of the Church. Newbigin was determined to do both. His was a holistic mission.

The Coronavirus pandemic has wreaked havoc on the United States. Throughout this tumultuous season, many churches have embraced a holistic approach to mission. They might not have always articulated a theological rationale for their praxis. Yet they acted to serve their neighbors, because like Newbigin, they believed that churches must be involved in the wider life of the community, sharing its burdens and sorrows. New York City was, for a time, the global epicenter of the pandemic, and nearly 30,000 people have died there from COVID-19. In this time of crisis, churches mobilized to serve those who were medically or financially vulnerable. Southern Baptists were heavily involved in these relief efforts.[59]

Uncertainty abounds about what shape the post-pandemic world will take. Many are wondering, "What will the new normal look like?" While specific answers might be elusive, general claims can be made. The post-pandemic world will probably not look like a dystopian novel. However, it could feature greater levels of poverty, sickness, distrust, and mental health disorders. Societal norms might shift for an entire generation, as people who lived through the pandemic grapple with life on the other side of a modern-day plague.

Christian leaders who operate in this emerging post-pandemic world will have a challenge before them. They must freshly contextualize the gospel for people who have been suddenly traumatized and dramatically changed by the Coronavirus. In this new normal, holistic outreach will be an invaluable approach to Christian mission. There will be opportunities to provide economic relief (ministries could participate in job creation programs), emotional relief (Christian counselors should be prepared to minister to their newly traumatized neighbors), and medical relief (churches could offer complimentary health screenings and partner with pharmacies to provide flu shots). Churches should become full participants in community rebuilding efforts that "seek the peace of the city" (Jer 29:7). Doing so will provide credibility for those who minister to a

[59] See "Pastor Patrick Thompson forms Community Coronavirus Relief Organization in New York," https://video.foxnews.com/v/6148915603001#sp=show-clips; Tess Schoonhoven, "Brooklyn Grocery Ministry Meets Needs of Hurting, Minority Community," https://www.baptistpress. com/resource-library/news/brooklyn-grocery-ministry-meets-needs-of-hurting -minority-community/; and Brandon Elrod, "Southern Baptist Church Plants, Send Relief Persist in Outreach to New York City," https://www.sendrelief.org/news/southern-baptist-church-plants-send-relief-persist-in-outreach-to-new-york-city/.

suddenly distrustful, despairing populace.

At the height of New York City's grim struggle against the virus, this writer had the surreal experience of standing on a street corner with a team of about fifteen volunteers who gave away 3,000 facemasks in less than an hour. People eagerly accepted these gifts because of the medical security that they symbolized. This moment offers clarity to those who wish to minister in the new normal. To share the gospel with others, many leaders will need to embrace a holistic approach to mission that combines proclamation and demonstration.[60]

In the emergent world after COVID-19, Americans will need to learn to hope again. What better place for them to learn hope than in the community that dances to the cadence of the gospel? The Church is a band of misfits, people drawn together by their shared commitment to a cross-shaped story. When local churches embrace holistic mission, they will discover new opportunities to explain the reason for the hope that they possess (1 Pet 3:15).

Learn Hope from the Margins

Evangelicals will suddenly find themselves in the position of having to articulate a message of hope to a despairing society. Evangelicals should learn from, and build upon, the work of those Christians on the margins who have already been forced to keep hope alive. In choosing to learn from marginalized Christian communities, contemporary missiologists will be following in the footsteps of Lesslie Newbigin, who argued that Western Christians should "listen to the witness of Christians from other cultures."[61]

Newbigin did not live up to the caricature of the condescending twentieth-century British missionary. Instead, he was humble and always a student. He viewed the Church of South India as an equal to the Church of Scotland. When he returned to Britain and began his challenging urban pastorate, Newbigin knew that he would need help from someone who did not look like him. Newbigin recalled, "I had suggested to the Birmingham District Council of the URC that we should seek the help of the Church of North India in finding a Punjabi-speaking pastor to work with me in this ministry."[62] The result was the recruitment of the Reverend

[60] This approach, highlighted by the slogan "Meet the need first," was already employed by the Graffiti Network of churches in New York City prior to the pandemic (https://www.upsidedownlife.org/our-goal).

[61] Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 22.

[62] Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda*, 244.

Hakkim Singh Rahi, who served alongside Newbigin for six years.[63] Newbigin embraced his new "colleague," whom he described as an ardent evangelist. As a result of Rahi's evangelistic skill, Newbigin was able to participate in a "memorable baptism in the Edgbaston Reservoir."[64]

Newbigin continually engaged the conceptual frameworks of Christians who hailed from cultures other than his own. He gratefully related an anecdote of his time as a colleague of Orlando Costas.[65] Costas was a prominent Latin American theologian who would go on to emphasize missiology from "the outside."[66] Newbigin also repeatedly shared the paradigm shifting question of the Indonesian General Simatoupong: "Can the West be converted?"[67] This question, said Newbigin, "reverberated in my mind.… I am a pastor, along with an Indian colleague, of an inner-city congregation in Birmingham … faced with a kind of paganism … resistant to the gospel.… So the question becomes a burning one: Can the West be converted?" Because Newbigin believed that Western Christians needed to learn from the witness of non-Western Christians, he did not hesitate to glean from these Latin American and Asian Christians.

Those who seek to build a missiology of hope for a post-pandemic world should draw upon the deep reservoirs of hope that have been established by marginalized Christian communities. Perhaps American Christians can learn about hope in the face of government overreach from the many networks of underground Chinese house churches. Perhaps American Christians can learn about hope amid tragedy from Asian leaders who have weathered natural disaster and civil war. Perhaps American Christians can learn about hope from long-suffering African-American churches, whose very survival has been threatened by terrorists' bombs and the hangman's noose.[68]

A post-pandemic missiology of hope for American society must draw upon the wisdom of those who have already been forced to follow Jesus into the darkness of Good Friday and to sit with him in the awful silence of Holy Saturday. These pioneers can articulate the hope of Easter in ways that will no doubt resonate with a post-pandemic American society.

[63] Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda*, 244.

[64] Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda*, 244.

[65] Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda*, 245–46.

[66] Orlando Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1982). Costas's missiology emphasized the insights of those on the margins of Christianity.

[67] Newbigin, *A Word in Season*, 66–67.

[68] Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020).

Choosing to Hope in a Twilight World: A Missiological Epilogue

America is suffering from a crisis of confidence, a sudden descent into despair. One day, the threat of the Coronavirus will pass, but the malaise may not vanish so quickly. This essay has been an attempt to imagine what ministry will look like on the other side of the pandemic. Selected writings and ministry experiences of Lesslie Newbigin have been examined and used as building blocks for a post-pandemic missiology of hope. Three initial proposals have been made: post-pandemic churches should tell the cruciform story, embrace holistic mission, and learn hope from the margins.

When the world emerges from the darkness of this moment, it ought to find the Church standing ready to offer hope. As Newbigin declared, "In a twilight world where people are lost and asking their way, a few people marching together in one direction with the light of hope and expectation on their faces will surely prompt others to ask: 'Where are you going?'"[69] In his magisterial eighth chapter of Romans, Paul addressed the central theme of Christian hope. He stated that Christians operate out of a "hope that the creation itself will also be set free" (Rom 8:20–21). Paul understood that "if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience" (Rom 8:25). These verses contain the kernel of a post-pandemic missiology of hope. Because of what Jesus has done, is doing, and will do, Christians are the people of hope who invite their neighbors to join them on a journey of hope.

[69] Newbigin, *Journey into Joy*, 79.

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Book Reviews

John Barton. *A History of the Bible: The Story of the World's Most Influential Book*. New York: Viking Press, 2019. xxii + 613 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0525428770. $20.00.

John Barton is the Oriel and Laing Emeritus Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford University in England. He is an established Old Testament theologian, interpreter, and Hebrew textual critic and is best known for his works *Reading the Old Testament* and *Holy Writings, Sacred Texts*.

His book, *A History of the Bible*, seeks to "tell the story of the Bible from its remote beginnings in folklore and myth to its reception and interpretation in the present day. It describes the Bible's genesis, transmission, and dissemination, and shows how it has been read and used from antiquity to the present" (p. 1). Given this statement, the first two parts of the book focus on the content and history contained within the Old and New Testaments, respectively. These parts also include the history of how each biblical book came into being.

Part 3 of this work focuses on the Bible as a text and covers how it moved from esteemed writings to revered Scripture. The final portion of the book is devoted to how Jews and Christians have read the Old Testament throughout history, and how Christians have read the New Testament. The primary audience of this book, though not explicitly stated, would be introductory level students. Most of the content of the book should already be known to scholars in biblical studies.

The work in its entirety is an excellent introduction to the study of the Bible. Any reader completing this volume will be aware of most of the major issues related to biblical studies. The breadth of the work, from historical, textual, and theological perspectives, makes it an invaluable source for beginners. Perhaps the greatest strength of this book is Barton's inclusion of reading traditions alongside the biblical material. This is not normally covered in a survey of Old or New Testaments.

Despite these positives, the book provides incomplete data for some claims. Two examples will suffice to illustrate this—one major and one minor. The first item relates to the establishment of the New Testament (especially the Gospels) as Scripture on par with the Old Testament. Barton turns to Irenaeus as the major source for his conclusions on this. He states, "But for our present purposes a much more interesting fact about

Irenaeus' treatment of the Gospels is that he does not regard them as Scripture, as he does the Old Testament, but as historical sources for the life and teaching of Jesus" (p. 241). He goes on to suggest that the Gospels record Jesus's sayings, which for Irenaeus is authoritative, but they are not Scripture.

Barton is not a patristics scholar and his analysis of Irenaeus is incomplete. First, it appears he is relying primarily on secondary literature in his approach to Irenaeus. He references the standard passages of Irenaeus that other scholars cite (i.e., *Haer.* 1.8.1; 1.10.1; 3.1.1; 3.4.1). The secondary literature, however, largely ignores *Haer.* 4.32.1 where Irenaeus argues that there are two testaments that are authored by God. To demonstrate this, Irenaeus, after quoting from Gen 1:3, says, "as we read in the Gospel, 'All things were made by Him; and without him was nothing made'" (John 1:3). He then goes on to quote Paul and refers to all these quotations as Scripture. It is difficult from reading this paragraph to conclude that the Gospels (and even the writings of Paul) are not seen on par with the Old Testament. Note too, that the quotation from John 1:3 comes from John's theological comments about the Word. It does not come from Jesus's life and teaching, which would be contrary to what Barton suggests in his book.

The second, minor issue, is where Barton discusses the various orders of the ancient Jewish canon lists. The Talmud lists the order of the major prophets as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah. Barton states, "There is no known manuscript that actually follows the Talmudic order" (p. 234). However, there are two manuscripts, available online, that follow the order listed in the Talmud: one from Toledo, Spain dated 1280,[1] and the *Cervera* manuscript, which is from the fourteenth century.[2] Another manuscript, *B. 31 inf.*, which is found in the *Fontes Ambrosiani*, also mentions this ordering.[3] Unfortunately, similar statements occur throughout the text with no evidential backing. When referencing manuscript evidence, such absolute statements give a false impression of the textual history of the canon.

These problems aside, Barton's work is an easily accessible introduction to the Bible. Students who read it will gain a good overview of issues

[1] "Hebrew Bible 1280," *World Digital Library*, 1280, https://www.wdl.org/en/item/17841/.

[2] "Cervera Bible," *World Digital Library*, 1391, https://www.wdl.org/en/item/14158/.

[3] *Fontes Ambrosiani in Lucem Editi Cura Et Studio Bybliothecae Ambrosianae Moderante Iohanne Galbiati*, vol. 5 of *Codices Hebraici Bybliothecae Ambrosianae* (Florence: Leonem S. Olschki Bibliopolam, 1929), 4.

related to this crucial field of study.

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Benjamin J. Noonan. *Advances in the Study of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic: New Insights for Reading the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020. 336 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0310596011. $38.99.

Zondervan Publishing has produced a significant array of Hebrew language resources including an introductory grammar by Pratico and Van Pelt (now in its third edition), vocabulary cards and guides, a *Graded Reader*, a guide to Hebrew discourse analysis, and other learning helps. In this new book by Benjamin Noonan, they have published a unique work that aims at "providing an accessible introduction to the world of Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Aramaic scholarship" (p. 279).

Noonan earned a PhD from Hebrew Union College and is Associate Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Columbia International University. He has written *Non-Semitic Loanwords in the Hebrew Bible: A Lexicon of Language Contact* and has co-edited (with Hélène Dallaire and Jennifer E. Noonan) *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?: A Grammatical Tribute to Professor Stephen A. Kaufman*.

In the book reviewed here, Noonan seeks to survey the field of Hebrew and Aramaic language studies, and he regularly reminds readers of the applicability of his subject to exegesis. As I read this work though, my conception of its audience grew: Obviously, the information Noonan provides will be helpful to teachers of Hebrew and Aramaic and to students of those subjects. However, why wouldn't a pastor or Bible teacher want to know the state of the study of the Old Testament languages? Teaching the Bible well requires translating well. But translating well requires an understanding of the way languages work. Noonan helps us make progress in that understanding.

As an example, he offers a chapter on linguistics. That discipline can be complex, with its own technical vocabulary. Noonan defines terms and introduces the field, thereby helping readers to grow in "linguistic sensitivity" (p. 29). Discourse analysis also has specialized vocabulary and multiple approaches, and Noonan defines this discipline, surveys a variety of views, and shows its relevance to exegesis. In addition, the Hebrew verbal system and word order have been discussed widely in recent decades. Exactly what is being written, and what is the evidence for the various views? Noonan helps the reader by addressing those questions.

Anyone who uses commentaries on Old Testament books knows that

the date of a book's authorship is always an issue addressed by commentators and relevant to exposition. One criterion used to date the writing of an ancient document is the language used in that document. Is the language "late" or "early"? In the past, a common assumption has been that the presence of Aramaisms and Persian loan words means that a text should be dated late. More recent scholars, however, have been demonstrating that the issue of dating a text is more complex than once thought. By reviewing recent discussions, Noonan teaches readers the importance of considering realities such as dialectical variation, grammaticalization, the linguistic range of individual authors, and consistency of distribution of linguistic features, to name a few.

Noonan's final chapter is titled "Teaching and Learning the Languages of the Hebrew Bible." The chapter addresses recent developments in pedagogy, so non-teachers may think this chapter is not applicable to them. However, portions of this chapter may deliver some of the most helpful information in the book. Here the author provides references to numerous resources for beginning and continuing the study of Hebrew and Aramaic, including books and helpful online sites. What resources are available, and how are they different from one another? Readers will find answers to such questions here.

A strength of Noonan's work is his effort to supply explanatory illustrations from the Hebrew Bible and other sources. He also provides numerous resources for further study in multiple fields related to the study of Hebrew. A weakness is that footnotes do not include the dates of those resources. This is likely the publisher's decision, and it is mystifying in a work with a major purpose of showing the development of a discipline through time. Beyond this weakness, however, Noonan has fulfilled his goal, providing "a better understanding of what the key issues are in Hebrew and Aramaic scholarship and why they matter" (p. 25).

Advances in the Study of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic will serve as an excellent resource and should be used broadly. It will be helpful to Hebrew scholars and to every expositor of the Old Testament.

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Pamela Barmash, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Law*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 595 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0199392667. $150.00.

Over the last several decades Oxford University Press has produced numerous handbooks, encyclopedias, and guidebooks on various aca-

demic and popular subjects. The purpose of handbooks like this one, edited by Pamela Barmash, is to provide a state-of-the-art analysis of important fields of study. The field of biblical law is wide ranging, much discussed, hermeneutically challenging, and theologically crucial for all who take the Bible seriously. Thus, this volume will be a valuable guide for many readers.

The handbook is arranged into six parts and thirty-three chapters, each chapter addressing a different issue relevant to the study of biblical law. The subjects are broad and significant. For example, what are the similarities between the legal codes in the Pentateuch and those in the legal corpuses of other ancient Near Eastern cultures? What is the origin and meaning of such similarities? How does biblical law relate to social justice, and what is the meaning of the Pentateuch's ritual and purity laws? Authors in this handbook also examine well-explored but still relevant questions like the origin of the Pentateuch's present form and the relationship between the Law and the prophets. The discovery of ancient Near Eastern covenants over the last few centuries has led to the examination of those covenants and comparisons with biblical covenants. This volume supplies an exploration of that question and an update on recent research.

In the concluding section, Part 6, the authors offer analyses of the relationship between biblical law and later rabbinic law and Christianity. Christians will be especially interested in chapters examining the way Jesus interpreted the law, the apostle Paul and the covenant, and social justice in early Christianity. Also, what texts are normative for Jews: the Pentateuch or rabbinic law, and if the latter what texts are most authoritative? Anyone interested in religious studies would benefit from chapters addressing such subjects in the final section.

To produce this volume, Barmash assembled a team of expert writers who are widely published in their respective disciplines. They demonstrate the maturity of their thought by their approaches to their respective subjects. Barmash selected a few scholars who could also be described as theologically conservative. The authors interact with a wide range of scholarly literature, which results in two benefits. First, readers can see perspectives on each subject differing from those of the authors. Second, readers are exposed to multiple major resources related to each topic. One hallmark of this volume is the extent to which it provides references to resources for further study. Scholars will recognize many of the volumes and will likely discover even more. Beginning readers interested in more introductory books on the various topics could also benefit from this book by using its extensive bibliographies to find resources most appropriate for them. An exception here is the essay by James Crenshaw, who

does not interact with recent scholarship in his essay on "Law in the Wisdom Tradition."

One issue faced by those who study biblical law is the extent to which civil laws were actually enforced in Israelite society and the extent to which ritual laws were followed in Israelite worship. The laws require certain behaviors, but biblical narratives contain sparse information about the enactment of the laws. Scholars in this volume explore that question but are appropriately careful to stay within the boundaries of what can be known from the evidence.

At some points, the depth of the essays is limited by the scope of this project. For example, in the essay titled "Women, Children, Slaves, and Foreigners," only three to four pages are devoted to each of those subjects, surely because of page count parameters. Also, most of the authors assume the standard source-critical model of the authorship of the Pentateuch, so at times they attempt to trace the development of laws from one source to another. Early source critics also dated the Law later than the writing prophets. However, in the essay on "The Law and the Prophets" Stephen Cook refreshingly argues that the Law preceded the prophets, though he does not date it to the time of Moses.

The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Law will serve as a valuable resource for anyone studying the meaning and application of Pentateuchal laws. The breadth of this handbook is unmatched, so it can provide both information and direction for further study.

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Heinrich von Siebenthal. *Ancient Greek Grammar for the Study of the New Testament.* Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019. 740 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1789975888. $67.95.

Ancient Greek Grammar for the Study of the New Testament (*AGG*) is a new reference grammar based on the revised edition of Heinrich von Siebenthal's German work, *Griechische Grammatik zum Neuen Testament* (Giessen: Brunnen; Basel: Immanuel, 2011). It was written with the goal of providing an accurate and accessible reference tool for the study of the NT that combines the best of both traditional and linguistic approaches. While much of it is a direct translation from the 2011 German edition, it has been revised and updated for an English-speaking audience.

The book is organized logically from smallest to largest text structures (phonology and orthography, morphology, syntax, and "textgrammar"). The first part introduces the phonology and orthography of ancient Greek. A version of Erasmian pronunciation is recommended, though

Classical, Modern, and a reconstructed first-century pronunciation are also listed. Von Siebenthal focuses on historic phonological changes and their impact on the spelling of Greek words. The second part is on morphology, which begins with an excellent introduction to word structures and covers the morphology of each of the various word classes.

The third and longest part is on syntax. The first section (the longest part of the entire book at about 250 pp.) addresses the syntax of individual sentence elements (the article, nouns, verbs, etc.). The second section discusses how individual constituents come together to form whole sentences. The third section is a description of sentence and clause types (e.g., independent versus dependent clauses, conditional sentences, etc.). A brief concluding section addresses stylistic and rhetorical features.

The fourth part of the book deals with "textgrammar" and focuses on ancient Greek language use above the sentence level. Von Siebenthal calls his approach to textgrammar an "integrated text model." He focuses on textual coherence as it relates to text structure, which he views as two-sided: there is a "grammatical side" (i.e., syntax) and a "content side" (i.e., semantics) with the "functional sentence perspective" (i.e., pragmatics) serving as a bridge between the two.

It is noteworthy that deponency among Greek verbs is presumed and only addressed in a passing comment. A footnote acknowledging the debate surrounding deponency with a bibliography for follow-up would have been helpful at this point. Regarding verbal aspect, the author recognizes three aspects (durative, aorist, and resultative) and one tense (future; cf. p. 89). He distinguishes between the future tense as non-aspectual (p. 334) and the aorist aspect as "unspecified" (p. 310), a distinction that not all will find persuasive. His overall approach is very helpful though as he encourages readers to consider both lexical meaning and contextual factors when interpreting verbal aspect (p. 317).

Three features set this book apart from other reference grammars. First, *AGG* is written from a linguistic perspective, which adds to the level of rigor and makes it unique among reference grammars. The beauty of this book is that it manages to remain accessible to its intended audience, which consists of exegetes and NT students rather than linguists. Second, it is based on ancient Greek in general and not specifically on NT Koine Greek (though it is written with the study of the NT in mind). Third, while many of the older reference grammars address phonology, morphology, and syntax, *AGG* adds the level of textgrammar, which is an essential level of textual analysis. In addition, the phonology and morphology sections are more clearly explained and illustrated than some older reference grammars such as BDF or A. T. Robertson.

The greatest drawback with this volume is the formatting. Among

other things, the combination of extensive outlining, a completely left-justified text (no paragraph indentations or indented sections at all), and variously sized fonts makes reading laborious. In addition, the outline numbers are placed within the paragraphs they introduce and are only separated from the text by one space, which makes them difficult to pick out when glancing at a page. (It is noteworthy that the German edition is just as complex in terms of content but better formatted to accentuate the structure.)

Despite this complaint, the distinctive features of this book make it an important contribution. The grammatical observations are thoroughly illustrated from the Greek NT and other literature (with English translations). Though not free from linguistic terminology and jargon, it is accessible to non-specialists and represents a good introduction to the linguistic study of Greek. Finally, since the author draws on the best of both traditional and linguistic approaches, *AGG* is securely grounded in its description of ancient Greek and avoids falling prey to idiosyncratic approaches and fads. I highly recommend this volume and expect it to be a standard reference work for years to come.

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E. Ray Clendenen. *Jesus's Opening Week: A Deep Exegesis of John 1:1–2:11*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019. xiii + 175 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-1532675072. $20.00

E. Ray Clendenen's *Jesus's Opening Week* is a delightful commentary on John 1:1–2:11. Clendenen is the senior editor of Bibles and reference books for Lifeway Christian Resources in Nashville and is a former professor of Hebrew and Old Testament. He previously served as general editor of the New American Commentary and authors the volume on Malachi. In *Jesus's Opening Week*, he draws upon Peter Leithart's method from *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture* to discover the *sensus plenior* and to identify crucial elements for discovering the meaning of the text (p. xiii). Clendenen's work is a formidable commentary that is useful in multiple settings, but he primarily writes for "those who are called to minister the gospel of Christ to a hurting world" (p. xii). However, the pastoral focus, which includes numerous examples of application, does not completely overshadow his technical analysis of passages.

Clendenen's approach is what separates *Jesus's Opening Week* from other commentaries on the Gospel of John. He explores parallels and comparisons between Jesus's "passion week" (John 12:1–20:23) and Je-

sus's "opening week" (John 1:1–2:11). He suggests, "From the perspective of post-resurrection Christians … Jesus's opening week is bursting with excitement. Nothing in our daily lives can touch the tremendous significance of the beginning of the earthly work of the Son of God, the Savior of the world" (p. 11). One example of this is found in his evaluation of Jesus's first sign of turning water into wine. That sign pointed ahead to the cross, with the wine suggestive of the Last Supper, strengthened by Jesus's response to Mary that his hour has not yet come.

Clendenen draws heavily upon his expertise in Hebrew and the Old Testament. He examines every passage through the lens of the Old Testament background which informs both the original readers and the current author. For example, he carefully analyzes every aspect of the brief interaction between Nathaniel and Jesus in John 1:47–51. He observes that Nathaniel being found "under the fig tree" reminds John's readers of several Old Testament passages that describe the promised renewal and blessing for remnant Israel (p. 93). He further examines the Old Testament background of Nathaniel responding with the messianic titles "Son of God" and "King of Israel." Another example is Clendenen's examination of Jesus asking two of John's disciples, "What are you looking for?" He compares this question to the many references to seeking the Lord in the Old Testament while calling attention to the significance of "seeking" in John's Gospel (pp. 71–74).

Clendenen's approach, both examining the parallels between Jesus's opening week and his passion week and examining the Old Testament background, challenges the complacency that may stem from familiarity with the opening chapters of John's Gospel. He provides an example of how Christians can read Scripture with a sharp awareness of the broader context of all Scripture. He also challenges those who preach and teach Scripture to both increase awareness of the Old Testament background of the New Testament and to lead others to appreciate the intricate connection between the two testaments.

Clendenen is careful and cautious in his analysis, but his pursuit of thoroughness sometimes leaves complex typology underdeveloped due to space limitations. For example, he connects Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana to God turning the water of the Nile River into blood in Exod 7:20–21. His analysis relies on a connection between blood and water in the Old Testament that may be a valid typological connection but requires more analysis than was possible in this present work.

Regarding structure, the commentary portion is divided into three main sections: Prologue (1:1–18); Introductions (1:19–51); and Day Seven: Jesus's First Sign (2:1–11). Each chapter addresses its content sufficiently, but the third section is disproportionately long compared to the

other two. The abundant content covering John 2:1–11 conflicts with Clendenen's stated goal of providing a tool for those called to gospel ministry. He seems intent upon examining these verses as a jeweler examines a gem from every possible angle. The time spent reflects that he places high value on these verses, but many in gospel ministry may find the abundance of content so unwieldy that the usefulness of this chapter is limited.

Nevertheless, *Jesus's Opening Week* is a valuable resource to have on hand in order to prepare a sermon or lecture series on John's Gospel. Despite Clendenen's narrow focus on the first sixty-two verses of the book, he writes with awareness of the full scope of John's Gospel. He is not writing a technical commentary, but his insight and analysis of John's opening verses through the lens of the Old Testament lends itself to modest use as a technical source. Ultimately, Clendenen succeeds admirably in furnishing a useful aid for pastors, theologians, seminary students, and anyone interested in studying the Gospel of John.

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John Behr. *John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel: A Prologue to Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 416 pp. Hardcover. ISBN 978-0198837534. $120.00.

Good theological writing not only sheds fresh light on the unchanging faith of the Church but also conveys the power of spiritual significance. In his latest work, Fr. John Behr, Distinguished Professor of Patristics at St. Vladimir's Seminary, follows this method with success. The book unveils a kaleidoscopic sampling of academic disciplines to deliver a feast of Johannine scholarship. As Behr surveys the authorship, content, and theological implications of John's Gospel, he creatively brings his readers to the center of faith—Christ's Passion according to the Scriptures—that they too might take up the cross and follow. Behr's "Prologue to Theology" provides a multidisciplinary, sometimes radical, always richly textured account of the Gospel of John, giving special attention to Christ's death for the life of the world.

Part 1 of the book makes a historical case that John the Elder, not the Apostle, wrote the biblical text. While admitting the author's identity remains "a fertile enigma" (p. 77), Behr marshals second-century sources, along with modern scholarly insights, to bolster his conclusion. The evidence Behr amasses is tenuous, however, compared to the Gospel's own testimony. For instance, the disciple whom Jesus loved, the Gospel's author (John 21:24), "leans on Jesus' breast" at the Last Supper (13:25). This honor surely belonged to one of the Twelve. Moreover, unless John the

Elder was also a fisherman—which, from Behr's portrayal of him as a member of the priestly class, seems unlikely—then the Gospel presents this fishing disciple "whom Jesus loved" (21:7) to be Zebedee's son, the Apostle himself.

After a chapter outlining an "apocalyptic" reading of the Gospel, one that "pivots upon the cross" to unveil the mystery of God (p. 110), Part 2 begins Behr's exegetical foray into the Gospel's theological subtleties. For example, the "descent" of Christ's life-giving flesh and blood in John 6, and the command to physically "chew" his flesh, requires eucharistic communicants to share in his Passion—his "ascent" of the cross—so that they too may be raised up (pp. 155–56). Behr here deftly accents the radical physicality of authentic discipleship while foregrounding the inseverable unity of the paschal event, Christ's death and resurrection. Those who follow the Son of Man by embodying the "exaltation" of the cross typify true humanity, displaying the paradoxical principle of life in Christ: the way up is the way down (p. 233).

Behr rounds out Part 2 with a chapter on John's Prologue. He boldly asserts this passage is a paschal hymn, a poetic summary of the Gospel's theme (i.e., Christ's Passion), and not a statement about a "pre-incarnate Word." Behr rejects the latter notion by arguing that the Incarnation ought not be thought of, in Rowan Williams's words, as "an episode in the biography of the Word." Rather, as Part 3 demonstrates through a phenomenology of "flesh," Behr envisions the Incarnation as the Word becoming flesh through the Passion itself, a flesh that reveals God and is received as life-giving Eucharist by those who participate in the *pathos* of Jesus (pp. 321–22).

There is much to commend in Behr's account, especially his emphasis on Christ's Passion and the call to Christian participation therein. His repeated denial of the Son's "preexistence," however, is unfortunate. Behr assumes a version of "classical theism" in which there exists no temporal point at which the Word becomes Jesus, thus leaving no distinction between the Son of God prior to and after the Incarnation (p. 248). Although Behr insists that, in the main, early Christian theology upholds his thesis, the patristic luminary St. John of Damascus stands as a salient counterexample.

For the Damascene, there is indeed something "new," from God's side, about the Incarnation. The hypostatic union brings real though indefinable novelty to the life of God, referred to as the "new theandric activity" of Christ (*De fide orthodoxa* 3.19). The God-Man's two natures, each with its own proper will and energies, interpenetrate one another to form a new theandric effect. The Word now wills and acts in both a divine *and* a human way. But did he always? If one posits the eternality of the

Incarnation, based on the assumption that God's life lacks successive "episodes," then the same eternality would apply to creation *in toto*. Behr veers close to this doctrinal precipice.

With its rich combination of disciplines, scholars in varied fields would profit from reading *John the Theologian*. The volume makes substantial contributions to New Testament studies, and those with serious interest in John's Gospel should attend, especially to Behr's account of the Prologue as paschal hymn. Systematic theologians will no doubt find intriguing fodder concerning the relation of God's essential nature to the Incarnation. Philosophers as well could glean phenomenological insights, set within the motif of Behr's project. The book thus serves as a powerful and—with several caveats—exemplary meditation on Christ's Passion. In as much as the work "pivots upon the cross," more academic theologians should take up and follow Behr's way.

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Katja Kujanpää. *The Rhetorical Functions of Scriptural Quotations in Romans: Paul's Argumentation by Quotations*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum 172. Boston: Brill, 2019. viii + 374 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978–9004381292. $174.00.

The Rhetorical Functions of Scriptural Quotations in Romans seeks to investigate how Paul used Old Testament quotations in his letter to Rome rather than how Paul read and interpreted them. Katja Kujanpää maintains that Paul composed the letter to the Romans to "persuade" the Roman audience, and to accomplish this goal, Paul used OT quotations "to articulate his views, to anchor them in scriptures, to increase the credibility of his argumentation, and to underline his authority as a scriptural interpreter" (p. 1).

To offer a text-critical and rhetorical analysis of every OT quotation in Romans (fifty-one citations), Kujanpää utilizes two modern literary theories in her analyses of Paul's quotations—Demonstration Theory (pp. 24–25) and the Proteus Principle (pp. 26–27). In applying the two theories to Paul's OT quotations in Romans, she attempts to demonstrate that the popular approaches of Richard Hays, J. Ross Wagner, and Brian Abasciano do not provide satisfactory explanations of Paul's use of the OT in Romans.

After the introductory chapter, Kujanpää presents her understanding of the fifty-one OT quotations in the next seven chapters. Each of Chapters 2–7 focuses on a catena or connected chain of quotations that form an argumentative paragraph: 3:1–20 (Chapter 2); 4:1–25 (Chapter 3); 9:6–

29 (Chapter 4); 9:30–10:21 (Chapter 5); 11:1–36 (Chapter 6); and 14:1–15:21 (Chapter 7). Chapter 8 deals with the remaining individual quotations (1:17; 2:24; 7:7 and 13:9; 8:36; 12:19–20). Each of these chapters consists of four main sections. First, the author examines how Paul forms the preceding argumentation and introduces the quotation. Second, Kujanpää treats the questions concerning the accuracy of Paul's quotation in light of the original wording of the OT reference. Third, she discusses points of continuity and discontinuity between the original literary context of a given quote and its new context in Romans. Fourth, Kujanpää describes the functions of a given quotation in Paul's argumentation. Each chapter ends with a conclusion that synthesizes the main findings in the body. In the ninth and concluding chapter, the author amalgamates the preceding findings and proposes three major propositions: First, Paul uses OT quotations in a variety of ways. Second, Paul actively controls the meanings of OT quotations. Third, "when tracing Paul's intention, the interpretive hints he offers should be given priority over the original literary context of the quotations" (p. 341).

The Rhetorical Functions is a ground-breaking and thought-provoking monograph that achieves its research objectives with several strengths. First, the scope of its research is impressive. Kujanpää identifies fifty-one direct OT quotations in Romans and analyzes each one with considerable depth of research. Second, she offers a thorough and fair analysis of the original text, the quoted reference, its textual traditions, and its rhetorical functions. Third, the author makes a new contribution to Pauline studies and LXX textual criticism. She challenges the scholarly consensus that Rom 11:35 is based on Job 41:11 by presenting a number of manuscripts that contain Isa 40:14, which have the exact wording of Rom 11:35 (pp. 257–60).

Nevertheless, this fair work is not without weaknesses. Perhaps its most significant shortcoming is Kujanpää's frequent overstatements of the difference between the meaning of the original reference and that of Paul's quotation in Romans. For example, in analyzing Rom 9:13, which cites Mal 1:2–3 [LXX] (cf. Gen 25:23), she avers that Paul deliberately ignores the original context of Gen 25 and Mal 1 to get his point across (pp. 95–97). She says that, while the point of the original texts is God's choice of Israel over other nations, Paul's point in Rom 9 is God's sovereignty. Yet, for the present reviewer, the two points are highly compatible. Contrary to her judgment, God's choice of Israel over other nations clearly demonstrates God's sovereignty, and that is precisely what Paul intends to stress in Rom 9:13 by citing Mal 1:2–3. Similar overstatements concern Rom 11:4 and 1 Kgs 19:18 (pp. 224–25) and Rom 11:9–10 and

Ps 69:22–23 (p. 274). Most significantly, because of her tendency to distance the meaning of Paul's quotation from that of the original reference, in her discussion of Rom 10:13 (pp. 168–71), Kujanpää completely ignores the theological significance of Jesus being called "the Lord" (cf. Joel 2:32). In the original context of Joel 2, "the Lord" refers to Yahweh of the OT. For interpreting these references, Richard Hays's metalepsis is more applicable than Kujanpää's.

Despite the shortcomings, *The Rhetorical Functions* is a wonderful resource for those who want to examine the relationship between the OT and Romans. Though one may disagree with some of Kujanpää's conclusions, her insights into various LXX traditions, NT textual criticism, and detailed analyses of Paul's quotations are certainly beneficial for anyone attempting to plumb the depths of "the greatest letter ever written."

Yeonghwi Jo
Cary, North Carolina

Matthew Y. Emerson. *"He Descended to the Dead": An Evangelical Theology of Holy Saturday*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019. ix + 251 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0830852581. $30.00.

Both the Apostles' and Athanasian Creeds contain the phrase "He descended to the dead." What does the phrase mean? Can a good evangelical confess it? Some have said "no," calling for its excision (Wayne Grudem, "He did Not Descend into Hell: A Plea for Following Scripture Instead of the Apostles' Creed," *JETS* 34.1 [1991]: 103–13). Evangelical theologian Michael Bird has written, "I think it is probably fair to say that there is no line in the creed more misunderstood and more neglected than this one. It is the poor cousin of the christological doctrines" (*What Christians Believe* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016], 143). In *"He Descended to the Dead,"* Matthew Emerson, Dean of the Hobbs College and an Associate Professor of Religion at Oklahoma Baptist University, addresses this situation, seeking to "recapture a doctrine neglected in many evangelical circles today—Christ's descent to the dead—via biblical, historical, dogmatic, and practical reflection" (p. 17; cf. p. xiii).

"He Descended to the Dead" is a work in systematic, theological doctrinal retrieval. The author synthesizes evidence from the fields of biblical, historical, dogmatic/confessional, and practical theology to make his argument. Emerson's central claim is that "Christ's descent … is part of what Christ experiences for us in the incarnation. Death, both the moment of dying and the state of being dead, is a universal human experience, and Christ experiences it with us and for us" (p. 57; see p. 99 for a full summary of the doctrine).

The book is divided into three parts which form a coherent progression and argument for its thesis. In Part 1, Emerson clarifies the derivative authority of creeds, locating the project within the evangelical, Protestant tradition (Chapter 1; p. 3). He articulates the biblical and historical foundations of the doctrine, exposing straw man, common criticisms in the process (e.g., that it means Christ suffered in hell or implies a post-mortem second chance; Chapters 2–3).

In Part 2 (Chapters 4–9), Emerson works through the dogmatic implications of the doctrine of Christ's descent for the Trinity, Creation, Christological Anthropology, Salvation, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology. This section is the longest in the book and the one in which he signals he is making his most unique contribution (p. 18). In Part 3 (Chapter 10), Emerson briefly considers the "pastoral and practical" implications of the descent for hermeneutics, liturgy, missions, and pastoral care.

Three strengths and a potential area for strengthening are worth noting. First, the author's defense of the descent occasions thoughtful reflection upon theological method. In response to the objection that the descent is based merely upon one or two biblical passages (i.e., 1 Pet 3:18–22; 4:6), Emerson offers a cumulative case response that appeals not only to particular texts but also to biblical-theological "patterns" (pp. 11–12; 53). The methodological discussion of the early chapters and examples across the book will (helpfully) push readers who have been overly shaped by a mere proof-texting approach.

Second, the work achieves an evangelical doctrinal construction through historical doctrinal retrieval. For example, even as he argues his (biblical-historical) case against evangelical detractors, Emerson maintains critical distance from versions both Roman (purgatory and salvation of "virtuous pagans"; pp. 88–89) and Eastern Orthodox (universalistic tendencies including Christ emptying hell of all its occupants; pp. 82–86, 171–85). The author ably manages both fronts of this polemical conflict and, in the process, offers a positive evangelical account of the doctrine.

Finally, though Emerson does fine work in the biblical and historical sections (Part 1), the dogmatic reflections of Part 2 offer the book's most unique and stimulating content. The discussions of the Trinity (Chapter 4; inseparable operations), Creation (Chapter 5; burial and cosmology), Christological Anthropology (Chapter 6; holistic dualism), and soteriology (Chapter 7; unlimited vs. limited descent) stand out, but the section as a whole is interesting and ripe with insights.

As to the area for strengthening, within the stages of Christ's work, the Spirit's involvement is often well formed from the virgin conception up until the cross and then picks up in the resurrection. However, his role at the cross and subsequently in the descent is frequently underdeveloped.

For this reason, I would have liked Emerson to have engaged this issue directly. Nonetheless, a gap here in no way undermines the value of what he does provide.

Overall, Emerson's contribution is significant. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the author's argument, responsible work in evangelical systematics will need to reckon with this monograph for the foreseeable future. Further, the pastoral insights offered across the book—especially the reflections on the ordinances (Chapter 8), grief counseling (Chapter 9), and liturgy (Chapter 10; among others)—will edify a wide variety of readers. Emerson achieves his stated goal: "to show the biblical and historical warrant for the descent so that, in turn, we can see how vital this doctrine is for the confession and ministry of the church" (p. xiii). As such, *"He Descended to the Dead"* is warmly recommended for scholars, pastors, and informed laity who find themselves wary of the long-confessed, oft-misunderstood doctrine of Christ's descent.

Jonathan D. Watson
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Ian A. McFarland. *The Word Made Flesh: A Theology of the Incarnation*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2019. x + 250 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0664262976. $26.99.

Making sense of the Incarnation is no easy task. Church history records various attempts, some successful, some providing cautionary tales for Christian posterity. In his recent work, Ian McFarland—the Robert W. Woodruff Chair of Theology at Emory University—bravely accepts this challenge. His thesis is bold and succinct: "to know God *rightly*, one must look at Christ's humanity *only*" (p. 6). In this way, McFarland gives the Incarnation's epistemological purpose center stage. This manner of knowing God is summed up by Martin Luther: "Whoever wishes to deliberate or speculate soundly about God should disregard absolutely everything except the humanity of Christ" (p. 14). With this rule, McFarland's logic finds its guiding light. The historical flesh of Jesus the Nazarene forms the criterion of *all* claims regarding who God is.

McFarland's reasoning revolves around the Christological teaching of the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451). He suggests a "Chalcedonianism without reserve," meaning that full weight should be given not only to Christ's deity but also (and especially) to his human nature. A robust Chalcedonian Christology insists "that because Jesus of Nazareth is the Word made flesh, God is fully present and truly known in Jesus' humanity" (p. 213). This principle—that the flesh of Christ forms the locus of God's presence and revelation—undergirds all three sections of the book.

McFarland first discusses God's nature and creative work (Chapters 1–2) before properly addressing the person of Jesus Christ (Chapters 3–5) and, finally, showing the implications of this Christological approach for both Christ and the Church (Chapters 6–7).

One strength of the work is its unified argument. Diverse themes are all fused to the silver thread running throughout—the personal presence of the Word united to and "seen" in Jesus's humanity. This strength, however, weakens the project when McFarland introduces his doctrine of divine simplicity, for this idea colors his subsequent claims about Christ. McFarland subscribes to a radical, absolute variety of simplicity, as found in Thomas Aquinas. Thomistic simplicity denies all real distinctions in God, so that God's essence is identified not only with his existence (p. 75), but also with his attributes, will, power, intelligence, etc. Indeed, there is no distinction between what God is and what God does (pp. 38–41).

The upshot of this teaching is manifold. First, it precludes a doctrine McFarland seeks to promote: the essence-energies distinction in God (p. 91). He rightly affirms (1) that God's *essence* is unapproachable, and (2) that God interacts with creatures by means of his personal *energies/activities*. However, no such real distinction is possible in the Thomistic schema, for everything in God is identical with the divine essence. Thus, God's energies are taken as *created* realities (see p. 65, where the *logoi* of Maximus the Confessor are misconstrued as "nondivine forms") rather than uncreated activities which provide direct experience of God's life (p. 72). Within McFarland's paradigm, it seems one can never truly encounter God, for God, in every respect identical with His *unapproachable* essence, acts in the world only through created means (p. 209). People therefore remain aloof from real involvement in divine life.

Scripture, however, envisions Christians as coworkers with God, as partakers of the divine nature (1 Cor 3:9; 2 Pet 1:4). McFarland asserts that the hypostatic union bridges the ontological divide between Creator and creature. Yet he denies a vital aspect of that union, namely, that the Word's divinity "shines through" the assumed humanity (p. 216). The glory of Christ's divine nature—best understood as God's *uncreated* activity—not only shone at the Transfiguration, but also has been clearly perceptible "since the creation of the world" (Rom 1:20), apprehended by the "pure in heart" who truly "see God" (Matt 5:8).

McFarland's doctrine of simplicity further complicates when he denies the Incarnation represents "an event … in the life of the Word" (p. 84). Likewise, the Word's pre-existence is rejected: "the Word simply *is* Jesus" (p. 85). These assumptions wrongly suppose that God cannot act in new ways, within time and space, and remain transcendent. Yet if God cannot act with some novelty, then both Jesus's created humanity and creation in

general must exist eternally. Moreover, McFarland states that Christ's resurrection, ascension, and parousia ought not be conceived "as a sequence of distinct events" (p. 160). Rather, the risen life of Jesus exists outside time and space: He lives as God lives, "not in doing *particular* things … but doing *all* things" (pp. 179–80). The mistaken assumption, again, that God cannot exercise distinct acts results in an odd view of Jesus and of mankind's final participation in his risen life.

McFarland's singular focus on Christ's historical humanity for divine knowledge, coupled with his doctrine of God, unfortunately leaves wanting a full vision of the Incarnation. Although a stimulating study and a worthy dialogue partner in contemporary Christological conversation, *The Word Made Flesh* should be read with caution. Perhaps only those with a firm grasp of historical theology, fully aware of the Church's dogmatic declarations, should take up and ponder this erudite but imperfect attempt to explicate the heart of the gospel.

Owen Kelly
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W. Matthews Grant. *Free Will and God's Universal Causality*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. 248 pages. Hardback. ISBN 978-1350082908. $114.00.

Free Will and God's Universal Causality is a significant and novel contribution to the philosophical and theological literature on divine providence, in particular the interaction between human and divine agency. The book is clearly written, exceptionally argued, and truly innovative in many ways. Unfortunately, a review of this length will inevitably fail to do justice to the subtlety, thoroughness, and novelty of the work.

Matthews Grant's primary thesis is to demonstrate that, despite near universal claim to the contrary in contemporary debates, a libertarian view of human freedom (roughly, the view that humans are free if and only if they are the ultimate, originating cause of their actions and have the ability to choose otherwise, all prior conditions remaining the same) is entirely compatible with the claim that God is the universal cause of all that is distinct from God, including the free actions of creatures. Grant calls the latter thesis "Divine Universal Causality," DUC for short.

Let us call Grant's primary thesis, the compatibility of libertarian freedom and DUC, "The Compatibility Claim." It is commonly thought by friend and foe of DUC alike, that DUC demands the rejection of human libertarian freedom insofar as it straightforwardly entails what is known as Theological Determinism, the view that God's action or decree is *both* explanatorily prior to and logically sufficient for the occurrence of each

and every creaturely action. The primary contribution of Grant's book is to challenge the alleged entailment from DUC to Theological Determinism.

While The Compatibility Claim may be novel with respect to contemporary theology and philosophy of religion, Grant points out that his proposal traces its roots to the medieval theological tradition, most notably in the account of human-divine action articulated and defended by Thomas Aquinas. Hence, Grant's book is devoted to (1) filling out and defending the specific theological and metaphysical details of his "dual sources" account of human and divine agency (Chapters 1–5), (2) responding to the most prominent philosophical and theological objections to DUC from the standpoint of the dual sources account (Chapter 6, "Does God Cause Sin?," and Chapter 7, "The Problem of Moral Evil"), and (3) comparing and contrasting the dual sources account with competing models (Open Theism, Theological Determinism, Molinism) regarding specific theological doctrines such as divine providence, grace, and predestination (Chapter 8).

At the heart of Grant's project to defend The Compatibility Claim is a view of human and divine agency he calls the "dual sources" account. According to the dual sources account, *both* God and human agents are the ultimate causes of creaturely actions; all human actions, including free human actions, have two ultimate causal sources, human and divine. Since God is the universal originating and sustaining cause of all creaturely reality *per se* (DUC), the free actions of creatures are no exception on the dual sources account. Chapter 3 provides a thorough defense of the claim that DUC does not entail divine occasionalism and thus render human agency superfluous.

Yet the question immediately arises: How can Grant's dual sources account avoid collapsing into Theological Determinism? If God is the universal cause of all creaturely actions that come to pass, how could the actions of creatures be anything other than fixed, settled, or causally determined by God prior to their occurrence? The key, Grant argues, is to develop an account of divine agency in general—what he calls "the extrinsic model of divine agency"—where God's causally bringing about a creaturely act A "need not introduce any factor that 'determines' A—that is, any factor both prior to and logically sufficient for A" (p. 60). On Grant's extrinsic model of divine agency (following on the heels of Thomas Aquinas) God's causing some particular creaturely act A is simply God's standing in the extrinsic causal relation to A. God's causally bringing about A involves nothing more than God, A (the creaturely act in question), and the causal relation between God and A. Yet Grant argues, persuasively in my estimation, that none of the above items in the causal

story leading to A constitute factors that are both explanatorily prior to *and* logically sufficient for A (both of which are needed for A to be causally determined).

While God is, of course, causally prior to A, God *per se* is not logically sufficient for A (since it is logically possible for God to exist without A given God's aseity and independence of creation). What about God's reason for causing A, is it explanatorily prior to and logically sufficient for A? While God's reason for causing A may be prior to A, it is not logically sufficient for A, at least according to traditional theists who aim to uphold a robust conception of divine freedom where God could have refrained from causing A (even with the very same reason in place). That is, God's reason for A doesn't *necessitate* his bringing about A.

Grant rightly points out that if, as the Christian tradition has maintained, God is wholly metaphysically independent (*a se*), simple, and radically free and unconstrained, then divine causal activity cannot be modeled in a one-to-one fashion with creaturely causal activity. God's causal relations to creatures (as with all relations *ad extra*) are purely relational and involve no intrinsic foundation in God. God as he is in himself in the fullness of divine perfection, is intrinsically the same in a world where God causally interacts with creatures and in one in which he does not. To think otherwise entails the problematic view that some aspect of God's intrinsic being can be the way it is *in virtue of* creatures, which cuts against God's intrinsic completeness.

Ross D. Inman
Wake Forest, North Carolina

Andrew Davison. *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. xii + 423 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-1108483285. $99.99

The notion of participation in God has received renewed attention in the theological literature, notably in the work of Reformed theologian Hans Boersma (*Heavenly Participation*, *Seeing God*) and Eastern Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann (*For the Life of the World*). In his new book, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics*, Anglican theologian Andrew Davison, Starbridge Lecturer in Theology and Natural Sciences at the University of Cambridge, aims both to explore the historical roots (Christian and non-Christian) and to retrieve the biblical, theological, and metaphysical plausibility of a participatory ontology and theology.

Davison's primary lens, throughout the book, is a Thomistic one,

drawing heavily (though not exclusively) on the thought of Thomas Aquinas as "a clear master of the participatory perspective" (p. 7). The work is divided into four main parts (I: Participation and Causation; II: The Language of Participation and Language as Participation; III: Participation and the Theological Story; IV: Participation and the Shape of Human Life). For the sake of space, I will briefly unpack the participatory ontology that forms the framework of the book (Part I and Part II, Chapter 6) and explain and evaluate a particular application of the framework to divine and human agency (Part III, Chapter 9).

In Part I, Davison frames each of the five chapters in terms of the four Aristotelian causes (efficient, formal, material, and final) and provides a broadly classical account of how creation is *from* God (efficient cause), *through* God (formal cause), and *to* or *for* God (final cause), echoing the biblical refrain of Rom 11:36 (the exception being the material cause). Part I, together with Chapter 6, provides the metaphysical framework that undergirds the various applications of a participatory metaphysic to different theological topics. Such theological themes in the first part cover creation *ex nihilo* (Chapter 1); divine processions, Trinitarian creation and inseparable operations (Chapter 2); divine ideas and the similitude of creatures to God (Chapter 3); *imago Dei* (Chapter 3); and creational consummation and the beatific vision (Chapter 4). The author's careful attention to how a participatory theology and ontology has traditionally undergirded each of these doctrines is to be commended.

Part II of the book is devoted to thoughtful philosophical and theological exposition of the very notion of participation itself, as well as the idea that how we speak about God via analogy is predicated on a participatory framework. Chapter 6 "pops the hood" on participation (so to speak) and examines the precise details of participation in God. Davison makes the important preliminary distinction between two conceptions of participation, a "part of" and a "part in" approach. The "part of" approach, which Davison quickly jettisons for good theological reason, maintains that creatures become a part of the divine nature, or that the divine nature is partitioned out to creatures in some way. Here he cites Jürgen Moltmann's famous concept of "zimzum," or the making of space within the divine being for creation. In contrast to the "part of" approach, Davison recommends (following a detailed exposition of the development of Aquinas's own understanding of participation across his corpus) the "part in" understanding of participation in God. On this view, just as the light of the sun is not diminished by its illumination of the world, so too God is in no way diminished by his creatures participating in and receiving their creaturely existence and qualities from God.

Part III guides the reader through participation as it bears on Christology, human freedom, the nature of evil as privation, and human redemption. Of interest is an application of the participatory framework regarding the "non-competitive" account of the relationship between divine and human agency. Following Aquinas, Davison argues for a version of a much-neglected option in contemporary philosophy of religion and theology, that robust creaturely agency is entirely consistent with God's direct causal involvement in creaturely actions. On this story, God's causal agency and the creature's causal agency are not "part of the same causal story in the same way" (p. 228). In fact, God and creatures are not metaphysically commensurable beings that stand alongside one another in competition for the leading causal role in human action. Rather, since God immediately confers existence on every created thing, including creaturely powers and the exercising of those powers in action, creaturely actions exist and are what they are in virtue of the causal agency of God.

There is, however, one important misstep in the argument for the non-competitiveness of divine and creaturely causation. Davison seems to think that a participatory framework applied to divine and creaturely causation is in tension with a libertarian understanding of human freedom. Roughly, this is the view that humans are free if and only if they are the ultimate, originating cause of their actions and can choose otherwise, all prior conditions remaining the same. Yet W. Matthews Grant has recently argued in his excellent new book *Free Will and God's Universal Causality* (reviewed above) that universal divine causation (the thesis that God causes all creaturely being) is entirely compatible with creaturely freedom understood along the lines of libertarianism. As Grant has persuasively shown, one need not choose between a Thomistic, non-competitive model of divine and human agency and a libertarian view of human freedom.

Ross D. Inman
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Alexander J. D. Irving. *T. F. Torrance's Reconstruction of Natural Theology: Christ and Cognition*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019. 248 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-1793600516. $95.00

T. F. Torrance is increasingly recognized as one of the most important theologians of the second half of the twentieth century. While his Trinitarian theology and interaction with the natural sciences are well acclaimed, it is Torrance's reconstruction of natural theology (NT) that Alister McGrath declares "one of his most significant achievements" (*Intellectual Biography* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999], 179). And it is within the

burgeoning conversation of secondary literature on this issue that Alexander J. D. Irving offers the latest full-length treatment.

Irving's work sets out to correct past missteps on the topic by first "situating (the present contribution) within Torrance's synthetic approach to cognition more generally" (p. 1). To this end, Part 1 delivers as promised. Here Irving helpfully establishes Torrance's reconstructed NT upon the proper foundation of his unitary (or non-dualist) understanding of reality and human knowledge as well as his strict adherence to objectivity in epistemology. Part 2, then, seeks to "provide a new analysis of Torrance's important innovation within theological method" (p. 1). For it is the unique methodology employed in Torrance's reconstruction of NT where Irving sees "one of the most creative and provocative elements of his vast theological contribution" (p. 1). Irving states in full:

> The power of Torrance's NT is in the inversion of the relation between the rational structure of theology and its material content. Instead of NT functioning as a preliminary foundation for our engagement with revealed theology in an autonomous and external fashion, Torrance's NT is in coordination with the actual knowledge of God through his self-revelation. Torrance described this new relationship by explaining that his NT has been brought within the body of positive knowledge of God. (p. 174)

In this way, Torrance's methodological inversion represents a "synthesis of natural theology and revealed theology" (p. 199) that reformulates NT into the "rational intra-structure of theology determined by the material content of God's revelation" (p. 226).

Torrance's contribution at this point, as Irving notes, is "also one of the least well understood" parts of his corpus (p. 1). That is because Torrance's proposal is "subversive in that it inverts the terms on which NT is considered to be natural" (p. 226). Ergo, what Torrance means by "natural theology" indicates the inverse, the exact opposite, of the traditional conception in two primary ways:

1. Not knowledge found by studying nature but pursuing knowledge of God "determined by reality such that it is in accordance with the nature of the object under inquiry" (p. 170).

2. Nor knowledge that is in us by nature, but exploring our own, human "rational structures from which revelation is cognized" by grace through the Spirit (p. 139).

And it is in these two coordinated emphases that Torrance both "journeyed through and *beyond* Karl Barth's fierce rejection of NT" (p. 141, emphasis added). More specifically, whereas Barth's conviction of grace

in revelation seemed to undercut personal agency, as Irving notes, Torrance "would not leave human rationality hanging in the air" (p. 180).

At this point Irving keenly identifies Torrance's elevation of the incarnation of Christ, and especially the hypostatic union, as the "normative framework for theological knowledge where the priority of divine grace and the integrity and actuality of human thought are held together" (p. 211). By comparison, however, Irving's coverage of Torrance's emphasis on the role of the Spirit in theological knowledge is noticeably light—a single page as opposed to seven for Christology. Irving, therefore, seems to rely more heavily on the import of Torrance's "nuanced attitude to logic, which valued the logical precision of symbolic logic" (p. 179; cf. Chapter 3; pp. 93–120). That unduly elevates Torrance's proposal of the temporary isolation of the rational structure of natural theology from revelation to achieve "sophistication and precision in its inferential systems" (p. 179). It appears this is also the driving force behind Irving's brief proposal of the "compatibility" between Torrance's program and the contemporary project of Analytic Theology (cf. pp. 216–18).

Torrance, however, repeatedly emphasizes the "epistemological relevance of the Spirit" so that true theological knowledge, according to Torrance, "happens only as in the Spirit the being and nature of God is brought to bear upon us so that we think under the compulsion of His Reality" (*God and Rationality* [London: Oxford University Press, 1971], 167). Indeed, as Irving himself notes, for Torrance the human side of knowledge is "only conducted in constant contact with God's self-revelation" (p. 198, cf. also p. 226). In addition, it seems Torrance is not so much advocating for *our* analytic refinement, but rather "the questioning and speaking of the Spirit" (*The Ground and Grammar of Theology* [Charlottesville, VA: The University Press of Virginia, 1980], 188). For it is by the Spirit that "divine revelation penetrates our inquiries, takes the initiative in questioning us, and so turns our questions upside down and inside out, reshaping them creatively under the impact of his eloquent Being" (*Ground and Grammar of Theology*, p. 154). A fuller expression of the epistemological relevance of the Spirit would not solve the tension in Torrance's own thought at this point, but it would safeguard against these undue emphases of temporarily bracketing human knowledge for autonomous analysis.

In sum, the present volume has much to be commended: it covers complex material with remarkable clarity, collates integrated subject matter with intuitive organization, and builds an argument with little repetition of material. Though points of application are debated, this project represents a very helpful analysis of an important piece of Torrance's program and the resources surrounding the conversation. In short, Irving's

work would be a helpful addition to any theological library, notwithstanding the high cost that often attends such a fine, scholarly monograph.

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Christine Helmer. *How Luther Became the Reformer*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019. xiii + 160 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0664262877. $20.24.

Christine Helmer is Professor of German and Religious Studies at Northwestern University. She is editor or coeditor of numerous books pertaining to Martin Luther, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and biblical theology. Recent works include *Theology and the End of Doctrine* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2014) and *The Trinity and Martin Luther* (Lexham Press, 2017).

In *How Luther Became the Reformer*, Helmer uses the work of Karl Holl (1866–1926) as her main example to argue that Luther Renaissance scholars wrongly "imposed upon him characteristics of a German modern that dovetailed with their own political interests" (p. 13). These early twentieth-century scholars wrote in the context of the devastation of World War I, the failure of the Weimar Republic, and an effort toward German nationalism and patriotism. For them, Luther represented the ideal modern German. Their incorrect view of Luther, she argues, also set the necessary groundwork for several deformities of modernity—namely, anti-Catholicism, anti-Judaism, and anti-Semitism—that also included "Lutheran theologians signing on to the National Socialist platform" and giving "allegiance to Hitler's regime" (pp. 11–12).

Chapters 1 through 5 focus primarily on Holl's reception of Luther's theology and the impact of this reception on those who followed Holl's view of Luther. After an introductory chapter that lays the groundwork for her argument, Chapter 2 concerns Luther's biographical description of his conversion, which is the basis of his doctrine of justification. With this information in hand, Helmer argues, Luther Renaissance scholars like Holl began to portray Luther "not as a systematic theologian … but as a religious virtuoso, whose novel … experience of God became foundational not only for his own theology, but also for the modern West" (p. 20).

In Chapter 3, "How Luther Became the Reformer," Helmer argues the work of theologians from the Luther Renaissance transitioned the perception of Luther as one reformer (lowercase) of medieval Catholicism among many to *the* Reformer (uppercase) of Catholicism (p. 60). In the

former scenario, Luther is more like Saint Catherine of Siena (1347–80) or Hans Küng, the controversial Swiss priest. Here Luther is depicted as a "historical figure who drew on the Catholic theological and philosophical arguments of his time to propose reforms to the church of which he was a member" (p. 3). In the latter scenario, she argues, "Holl took Luther in a nationalist-German direction.… [Holl saw] Luther as Reformer of German society … [and] Holl's Luther will eventually sacrifice the self for the love of the fatherland" (pp. 61–62).

Chapter 4 examines "how Luther and 'modernity' are yoked together" (p. 15). Here, for Helmer, Holl's rendition of "a German Luther was more than the symbol of modern culture; he was its progenitor" (p. 73). In this way religion and modernity are linked and "tethered to Germany" (p. 77). Holl's account of Luther, Helmer argues, "became a theological tool legitimating the rise of German fascism" (p. 80). Then, in Chapter 5, she presents a test case—namely, Holl's rendition of Luther that links the Reformer to anti-Judaism that gave rise to murderous anti-Semitism (e.g., pp. 92–94).

In her last two chapters, Helmer lays out an alternative view of Luther (i.e., Luther as one of many Catholic reformers). She states, "The aim of this chapter [6] is to show how a revised story of Luther as Catholic reformer can be generative for a new assessment of modernity that might be more adequate for addressing the concerns of modernity's contradictions stipulated in previous chapters" (p. 16). In Chapter 7, her reconfigured Luther challenges the "usual triumphant narratives of modern Protestantism" (p. 16) and depicts Luther "primarily as a theologian—one steeped in late medieval Christianity, its theology, philosophy, and liturgy—rather than as a statesman" (p. 122).

Whether Luther historians agree with her depiction of the effect of Holl's Luther on modernity is questionable. Carter Lindberg, author of *The European Reformations Sourcebook*, remains unconvinced by her argument.[4] At a minimum, Helmer's work would find greater credibility had she engaged with Luther's untiring criticism of princes, or with thoughts by prominent Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who opposed Hitler and chafed at aspects of Luther's theology. Further, direct quotes of Luther are surprisingly sparse in *How Luther Became the Reformer*, an ingredient one would think essential toward the defense of her argument. Nonetheless, Helmer's contrast of Luther as Catholic reformer and theologian

[4] "Perhaps this is a useful study for those unfamiliar with Reformation studies and Luther research; however, scholars in these fields long ago moved on from what Helmer perceives as the dark side of the Luther Renaissance." Carter Lindberg, "Review of *How Luther Became the Reformer* by Christine Helmer," *Lutheran Quarterly* 33 (2019): 326.

causes her work to stand out amongst the plethora of other related publications that accompanied the 500th anniversary of Luther's ninety-five theses. For this reason alone, it commands an audience.

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Rhys S. Bezzant. *Edwards the Mentor*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. viii + 208 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0190221201. $74.00.

When scholars turn their gaze to Jonathan Edwards, they tend to emphasize a number of recurring themes: Edwards the theologian, Edwards the philosopher, Edwards the revivalist, Edwards the pastor. In the best studies, two or more of these themes intersect. This was the case with Rhys Bezzant's important 2013 monograph *Jonathan Edwards and the Church* (OUP), which offered the first book-length examination of Edwards's pastoral ecclesiology. In his most recent book, Bezzant focuses upon Edwards the mentor. The result is another richly textured study of a less-examined aspect of Edwards's life that touches on all the common themes mentioned above.

Bezzant's straightforward argument is that mentoring was a key component of Edwards's pastoral theology and practice. Edwards inherited a number of medieval and Puritan notions about the nature of pastoral ministry, friendship, virtue, spiritual formation, and theological education. He integrated these themes with eighteenth-century concepts of human agency, affective anthropology, and institutional authority. In so doing, Edwards's vision for mentoring represented not only an early evangelical paradigm for discipleship and ministerial formation but a constructive critique of the Enlightenment tendency toward fragmentation and rationalism. This argument is laid out skillfully over three major chapters before Bezzant turns attention to Edwards's mentoring legacy among the New Divinity theologians whom he shaped and who further developed what scholars now consider the Edwardsean theological tradition.

As was common in his day, Edwards took under his wing numerous younger ministers who lived with him and studied theology and pastoral ministry in their post-college years. The most famous of these men were Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins, each of whom replicated his mentoring paradigm in their own ministries. Edwards also mentored parishioners, often through a combination of pastoral counseling and strategic correspondence, as well as young pastors who never formally studied with him, the most famous of whom was David Brainerd. Edwards's preaching ministry was respected in New England and his published writings were

seminal documents read throughout the transatlantic evangelical world. However, it was Edwards's mentoring ministry that transmitted his theology and ministerial priorities most directly to the rising generation of ministers who became the standard-bearers of the New Divinity movement.

Edwards was ever the theologian, and his vision of mentoring was thoroughly theological. In his interpretation of Edwards's theology, Bezzant follows the work of scholars such as Kyle Strobel and Oliver Crisp, who rightly argue that Edwards was driven by a creative combination of Reformed Orthodoxy, Puritan pastoral theology, and evangelical emphases that were coming together in the early eighteenth century. Edwards's theology was both robustly Trinitarian and warmly Christocentric, resulting in a spirituality that embraced a Reformed version of *theosis* and an evangelical adaptation of the medieval emphasis on imitating Christ. As he invested in those around him, he assumed they were naturally capable of making spiritually meaningful decisions. With the gracious intervention of the Holy Spirit, those decisions would result in conversion to Christ and ongoing growth in Christlikeness. Mentoring played a key role in the latter because it was a strategic means of sanctification, the final end of which was the experience of the beatific vision. For Edwards, mentoring was ultimately for the sake of spiritual maturity. Faithful pastoral ministry was but one important application of spiritual maturity for the young men whom Edwards took into his home and mentored.

Edwards as Mentor is an important work that fills a lacuna in Edwards Studies. As a work of historical theology, it will be widely read and appreciated by scholars of Edwards and eighteenth-century evangelicalism. Scholars of spirituality and spiritual formation will also benefit from this book. Edwards's spirituality has received increased attention from scholars in recent years. *Edwards as Mentor* sheds light upon an important component of Edwards's "applied spirituality" wherein his convictions intersected with his pastoral practice. Finally, as is so often the case with works about Edwards, ministers will resonate with the book, not least because it addresses a topic directly related to pastoral theology and practice. While Edwards was not exemplary in all aspects of his pastoral ministry, in this particular area he continues to "mentor" evangelical pastors through his legacy.

I want to close this review with a word about Bezzant's methodology. An ongoing debate among Christian historians is how to reconcile one's faith commitments with one's historical interpretation. It is refreshing to see an erudite work of historical scholarship written by a scholar who owns his evangelical faith within the book itself. Bezzant is open about how his own pastoral sensitivities led him to Edwards in general and the

topic of mentoring in particular. At various points in the monograph, Bezzant makes suggestions about what contemporary pastors can learn from Edwards. At the conclusion of the book, he devotes a brief coda to practical application. Bezzant demonstrates that Christian historians can write academic history that contributes to the field while also making overtly edifying application of that scholarship. I hope Oxford University Press publishes an affordable paperback edition of the book so it will be more accessible to pastors and other interested readers outside the scholarly guild.

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Tim Patrick and Andrew Reid. *The Whole Counsel of God: Why and How to Preach the Entire Bible*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2020. 256 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1433560071. $22.99.

In *The Whole Counsel of God*, Tim Patrick and Andrew Reid lament how preachers often neglect significant portions of Scripture. Therefore, they propose this challenge: "All vocational preachers should set themselves the goal of preaching through the entire Bible over a thirty-five-year period" (p. 81). By "entire Bible" they clarify: every book, every chapter, every verse.

In Part 1, they lay sturdy theological and canonical foundations for preaching (Chapters 1–2). Then they identify various preaching methods often used in today's churches (Chapter 3). The spectrum includes worshipping without preaching, "springboarding," book series preaching, preaching "overview series" and "highlight packages," topical preaching, and doctrinal-paradigm preaching. Without denouncing every facet of these options, the authors rightly argue that they foster unhealthy views of Scripture. These views include canons within the canon, narrow and imbalanced theologies, and a poor grasp of the overall narrative of the Bible.

Part 2 (Chapters 4–8) contains insight into *how* to preach the whole Bible. In Chapters 4 and 5, Patrick and Reid demonstrate the preaching value of biblical theology, systematic theology, and gospel theology. These three theological frameworks are distinct yet interrelated. Furthermore, they are all invaluable for preaching the whole counsel of God. In Chapter 6, they exhort preachers to plan long-term to exposit God's Word according to its six divisions: law, former prophets, latter prophets, writings, Gospels, and epistles/Revelation.

In Chapters 7 and 8, the authors tackle the tangible challenges of long-

term pulpit planning. They endorse *seriatum* preaching, whereby the preacher progresses sequentially through a book of the Bible. In their plan, however, the preacher does not necessarily walk through each book in one continuous series. He may preach (for example) a few weeks in an epistle, a few more weeks in a major prophet, then a few in a Gospel—eventually returning to finish his current epistle before preaching another epistle. Thus, he balances the six canonical divisions.

Detecting the inevitable tension between planning long-term and selecting preaching texts, Patrick and Reid suggest that a preacher work ahead to determine the natural preaching units for each book. They recommend identifying the "applyable unit of text." Texts of different sizes will warrant various sermon lengths. Also, it is important for the preacher to value and honor the repetition found within the Bible's parallel sections. Honoring repetition avoids the temptation to harmonize parallel texts. Instead, one preaches each text distinctly, trusting that its God-breathed design rewards unique exposition. Having identified the "applyable units of text," the preacher is then encouraged to plot these texts onto a calendar.

Chapters 7 and 8 contain the authors' most distinctive contribution. Their guidelines are sound. They are honest to admit this approach has natural shortcomings, and they also responsibly remind preachers to customize plans according to their unique contexts. Nevertheless, they provide examples of planning and text selecting for only one year in advance. Their thirty-five-year proposal might be better appreciated and utilized had they offered an example thirty-five-year draft. Also, many a preacher would wince at the thought of preaching each biblical text only once during his ministry.

In Part 3 (Chapters 9–12), Patrick and Reid discuss practical implications of their proposal. In Chapter 9, they encourage churches to emphasize the centrality of Scripture by integrating the sermon series with other facets of the church ministry, including the other elements of a church's worship gatherings, various church ministry programs, and efforts to engage the community. In Chapter 10, the authors remark on the need for a church's preaching team to remain theologically aligned. Also, they offer a helpful discussion on potential disruptions to the preaching agenda. The need to balance the disciplined preaching diet with flexibility reinforces the value of solid planning and record-keeping. In Chapter 11, they accurately identify personal implications for the pastor, including growing in one's personal Bible study and prayerfulness, gaining familiarity with the different biblical genres, and committing to a long-term pastoral ministry. In Chapter 12, they encourage the preacher to instruct intentionally and patiently his people to know and love God's Word. Also, they defend

their approach of *seriatum* preaching as effective for all congregations. Finally, they admonish the preacher to focus on the people God has put under his care. God sovereignly places each preacher. Therefore, he must be faithful to feed *his* flock.

The Whole Counsel of God sounds a timely call and presents an inspiring challenge. Today's preachers need continual exhortation to preach all of Scripture as God's Word to God's people. Patrick and Reid have contributed a work that will sharpen every preacher and student of preaching. They offer theological, homiletical, and practical substance in their discussions. This book comes highly recommended!

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