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Introduction: Preaching the Word

Ronjour Locke
Guest Editor

It has been said that, in the task of exegesis, context is king. While such an adage is generally helpful, further considerations reveal its shortcomings. What entails a context? The common usage of the term "context" refers to the literary setting of a particular passage. The literary setting, however, is situated in several other contexts. The biblical author writes the passage in a *cultural* context, one which exists in a particular *historical* context. He also writes in light of the *canonical* context. The biblical writer understood his message in the light of what has been revealed in Scripture. He writes as a member of the community of God, with a particular story and tradition. He writes to this community as a people consecrated from the world to be God's possession and witness to the world. Each of these contexts has varying levels of impact on the author's writing of the passage. The aforementioned adage, therefore, should be amended. The metaphor should not depict one reigning, monolithic context but a multifaceted senate of contexts, each guiding the exegete to discern the author's intended meaning.

The task of preaching brings additional levels of complexity. Because of the nature of the Scriptures to speak to generations well beyond the original (cf. Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:6, 11; 2 Tim 3:16–17), the preacher must not only recognize the Scriptures' place in its literary, historical, cultural, and canonical contexts; he must also proclaim the Scriptures to his contemporary context. This includes the history from the time of the Scriptures to today. This also includes the eschatological context; that is, the preacher speaks both in light of where he and the church are in the plan of God and where they will be in the age to come.

How does the preacher preach with these contexts in mind? The articles in this journal provide help. Regarding exegesis, Eric C. Redmond, Professor of Bible at Moody Bible Institute and Associate Pastor of Preaching and Teaching at Calvary Memorial Church in Oak Park, IL, and Ryan Ross, Ph.D. Candidate at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Pastor of Discipleship at Veritas Church in Fayetteville, NC, each write on the exegesis of the Psalms for preachers. Redmond investigates the use of Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4 and demonstrates that Paul draws from the meaning of the psalm to recognize Christ as the

fulfillment of the Moses tradition referenced in the psalm. Ross writes on the prosopological exegesis of the Psalms for Christ-centered preaching. Both articles serve as a reminder that preachers do not have to choose between proclaiming Christ and doing exegesis; they must proclaim Christ in their exegesis.

Jared Bumpers, Associate Professor of Preaching and Evangelism at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, gives practical reasons for preaching Christ in all of Scripture. He demonstrates that preaching Christ follows the pattern of the New Testament, benefits the church, and protects the church from the dangers of losing its Christ-centered focus.

Adam Hughes, Associate Professor of Expository Preaching at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church in Bolivar, MO, uses the "sermon" of the Melchizedekian priesthood in Hebrews as a lesson in contextualization for preachers. Hughes covers four of the contexts that the preacher must consider: historical, canonical, contemporary, and eschatological. Hughes demonstrates well that the author of Hebrews recognizes each of these in his own exposition, and therefore his letter is a biblical example for preachers seeking to do the same.

James R. Newheiser, Professor of Christian Counseling and Pastoral Theology and Director of the Christian Counseling Program at Reformed Theological Seminary, describes what he calls the "four-legged stool of proclamation." As preachers seek to proclaim God's Word in their particular contexts, Newheiser calls for them to consider four tasks: expound the text, show how the text points to Christ, show how the text applies today, and ground teaching in sound theology. Instead of focusing on one of these tasks, which Newheiser laments is a common approach today, preachers must develop a balanced approach that incorporates each task as essential to faithful exposition.

Finally, Jim Shaddix, W. A. Criswell Chair of Expository Preaching and Professor of Preaching at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, helpfully summarizes how each context impacts both the expositor and the exposition of the Scriptures. His hope and prayer that future generations will respond to God's call, carefully proclaim God's Word, and remain fully dependent on God's Spirit are commendable. It is my prayer that this volume further equips future generations to that end.

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The Use of Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4: A Typological Approach Toward a Solution

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Abstract: *The grammatical changes Paul makes to the Greek quotation of Ps 68:18 (Ps 67:19 LXX) in Eph 4:8 raises a question about his hermeneutics. Some scholarly proposals for a solution include Paul's misquotation of Scripture, a nuanced reading, a "reading" as opposed to "exegesis," or use of an unknown Hebrew manuscript. At question in Paul's quotation of the OT verse also is the identification of Moses as the ascending one in the Targum tradition. The Targum reading provides an avenue to consider Paul's use as a typological reading of the exodus narrative in light of viewing Christ as the final ascending Moses in the work of redemption.*

Key Words: *ascension, decent, Ephesians 4:9, exodus, hermeneutics, Psalm 68, typology.*

Some consider the use of Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4 to be one of the thorniest problems in the New Testament.[1] It seems that the Apostle Paul, in making a case for the relationship between church unity and diversity of gifts, appeals to the Old Testament for support.[2] The Eng-

[1] Stephen E. Fowl notes mildly, "This is a complex and intriguing passage on a variety of levels" (*Ephesians: A Commentary* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012], 136). John Muddiman speaks without timidity, "This and the next two verses of Ephesians are possibly the most difficult in the whole letter" (*The Epistle to the Ephesians* [London: Continuum, 2001], 187).

[2] Διὸ λέγει introduces the quotation of Ps 68:18 (Ps 68:19 MT) in Eph 4:7 even though Eph 4:7 does not reflect a direct quotation of Ps 67:19 (LXX). In Eph 5:14, διὸ λέγει introduces a saying found nowhere in the Old Testament. This would suggest that Paul's use of the introductory formula in Ephesians intends to indicate a general reference to an OT concept rather than a direct quotation; he makes a general appeal to the work of God, seeing it has significance to the Ascension. However, in Jas 4:6, the quotation of Prov 3:34 is introduced by διὸ λέγει, demonstrating the use of the introductory formula to introduce a direct quotation from the OT. Given the affinities of Ps 68:18 to Eph 4:8, it is possible that Paul is quoting Ps 68:18 from an LXX manuscript unknown to us.

lish translations demonstrate the affinities:[3]

	Text	Translation[4]
Ps 68:19 (MT)	עָלִיתָ לַמָּרוֹם | שָׁבִיתָ שֶּׁבִי לָקַחְתָּ מַתָּנוֹת בָּאָדָם וְאַף סוֹרְרִים לִשְׁכֹּן | יָהּ אֱלֹהִים׃	You ascended on high, leading captivity captive in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell there.
Ps 67:19 (LXX)	ἀνέβης εἰς ὕψος, ᾐχμαλώτευσας αἰχμαλωσίαν, ἔλαβες δόματα ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ, καὶ γὰρ ἀπειθοῦντες τοῦ κατασκηνῶσαι.	You ascended on high, taking captivity captive, receiving gifts in a man, for also the disobedient ones caused to dwell there.
Eph 4:8 (NA[28])	διὸ λέγει· ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος ᾐχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν, ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.	Therefore it says, "Ascending on high, he took captivity captive, and gave gifts to mankind."

The texts reveal two primary issues of concern in Paul's use of Ps 68:18.[5] First, there is a change from second person singular to the third person singular—from "you" to "he"—moving from direct address to recitation. Second, rather than *receiving* gifts, in Pauline usage, the one

[3] Unique elements are underlined.

[4] Author's translation.

[5] William N. Wilder succinctly summarizes the concern of the Pauline use of Ps 68:18: "What finally accounts for Paul's apparent changing or choosing of a text that differs from both the MT and LXX? This question engenders others. Is it an intentional misquotation, driven by a particular theological agenda and without regard to the meaning of the passage in its original context? Perhaps a convenient memory lapse of some sort is involved. One might, of course, present exculpatory evidence in this case in an attempt to clear Paul of a cavalier or careless attitude toward Scripture. It may be that he is making use of an alternative Hebrew textual tradition or perhaps his own more nuanced understanding of the Hebrew Language" ("The Use (or Abuse) of Power in High Places: Gifts Given and Received in Isaiah, Psalm 68, and Ephesians 4:8," *BBR* 20 [2012]: 186).

ascending *gave* gifts—a shift from ἔλαβες to ἔδωκεν.

An additional problem stems from the Targum tradition, which consistently sees Moses as the one ascending rather than God ascending.[6] One wonders how Paul views the passage in relationship to the work of Christ when the rabbis saw it in relationship to Moses's experience in the wilderness.

This work attempts to explore Paul's use of Ps 68:18 in Eph 4:8 by considering the hermeneutics of the psalm. The essay will argue that the psalmist sees typology in the exodus narrative of Moses's ascents up the mountains. That typology is what accounts for the rabbis' readings of Moses. Paul, seeing Christ in the pattern of Moses, finds the fulfillment of the typology and the psalm in the work of Christ. I will explore the meaning of Psalm 68 in order to make this point.

Proposed Meaning of Psalm 68

I propose the subject of Psalm 68 is the people's celebration of the Lord's triumphal ascent to Mt. Zion as Israel's victor in the wilderness. This is the psalm writer's central idea that unifies all other ideas within the psalm. The complementary idea to the subject is the people's celebration "anticipates his coming salvation, and his destruction of his enemies." What follows is justification of the proposed subject and complement as a statement of the meaning of the psalm.

The People's Celebration

The psalmist invites the people to sing praise to God (68:4, 25). In turn, those celebrating invite all people of the earth to join the celebration (68:32). The people are not idle witnesses to the events of this psalm. Women participate in the announcement of the Lord's defeat of the armies (68:11–13). The people ascribe blessing to the Lord (68:19, 26, 35). The words of song and blessing are followed by descriptions of God's greatness (68:5–10, 20–23, 28, 33–35).

The first celebration focuses on God's role as a deliverer of the marginalized, including the fatherless, widows, and prisoners (68:5–6). These are objects of God's mercy through the people of Israel via the

[6] The earliest texts of the Targum tradition were composed centuries after the Eph 4:18 text but give witness to an older textual tradition. See Frank Thielman, "Ephesians," in *Commentary of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament,* ed. Greg K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 821.

commands of the Law of God (cf. Deut 10:18). A second set of verses celebrates his provision for the land, identifying his people as marginalized on the earth (68:8–10).

In a third set of celebrations, the people remember God for his salvation from their enemies (68:19–21), and a fourth remembers his exaltation of the tribes (68:26–27). The final celebration blesses God in summation of all his acts, past and future (68:35).

The tone of the psalm, therefore, is one of celebration. The people *celebrate* God's mighty acts. The celebration will be global, encompassing "the kingdoms of the earth" (68:33). The leaders of Cush and Egypt will come to celebrate the Lord with outstretched hands.[7]

The Lord's Triumphal Ascent to Mt. Zion as Israel's Victor in the Wilderness

The celebration of the people concerns God's ascent to Mt. Zion—"the mount that God desired for his abode… where the Lord will dwell forever" (68:16),[8] "your temple at Jerusalem" (68:29).[9] The people view a procession of God the King[10] into the sanctuary of God (68:24).[11] In the procession, "the chariots of God" number in the ten thousands as they proceed with the Lord to his sanctuary (68:17).[12] This is a reference to a company of angelic hosts, describing something "of God" rather

[7] In light of the many prophetic passages addressing justice toward Egypt, this verse seems to speak of a remnant of Egyptians and Cushites.

[8] All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

[9] If the ascription of Davidic authorship of Psalm 68 is true, then it is not yet 970 BC; it is not likely for the reference to be the yet future, earthly temple constructed by Solomon. Seemingly, David envisions an eschatological temple that exceeds Solomon's temple.

[10] The personal pronouns indicate David's personal relationship to God and intimacy with him. The remainder of the psalm celebrates God's victories as God of the corporate body of Israel and Lord over the nations.

[11] It is tempting to assume that the ark of the covenant is in view. However, this assumption is unnecessary when the Ark is not mentioned. Instead, it is possible for the psalmist to speak prophetically and be ambiguous about the sanctuary. However, below I will give evidence for the Ark being in view.

[12] The chariots of warriors ride with their King to "[the place] God desired for his abode, the Lord will dwell there forever" (רֶ֣כֶב אֱ֭לֹהִים רִבֹּתַ֣יִם אַלְפֵ֣י שִׁנְאָ֑ן אֲדֹנָ֥י בָ֝֗ם סִינַ֥י בַּקֹּֽדֶשׁ).

than "in Israel."[13]

The ascent motif begins with God arising (68:1). In the Psalms, these terms are related to God going to war on behalf of the psalm writer or the people of God.[14] The terms are associated with the presence of God above the ark of the covenant.[15]

A refrain in the psalm describes the Lord as "him who rides through the deserts" and "him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens" (68:4, 33).[16] While the psalm yet celebrates acts of deliverance among the poor and needy in visible realms (68:4), the psalm testifies that the acts of salvation also seem to be taking place in the heavenly realms from all eternity (בִּשְׁמֵי שְׁמֵי־קֶדֶם, "in the heavens of ancient heavens").[17] It is in this realm that the appearance of God that covered Sinai now resides enthroned in the sanctuary on Zion (68:17).[18]

Repeatedly, the psalm depicts the Lord scattering his enemies (68:1, 2a–b 12, 14, 30d) and destroying them (68:2c–d, 6c, 21–23, 30a–c). As he goes out to war, God leads his armies—"the chariots of God"—against the myriads of kings and armies of his enemies. He is victorious in all of his battles. He accomplishes these battles on behalf of "your people" (עַמֶּךָ, 68:7), as "God, the one of Sinai" (אֱלֹהִים זֶה סִינַי, 68:8) and "God, the God of Israel" (אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, 68:8), for those who are "the fountain of Israel" (מִמְּקוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל, 68:26), as the one who is "the God of Israel" (אֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל, 68:35).

[13] In the Hebrew Bible, there is not a Davidic or pre-Davidic story that would fit a description of tens of thousands of Israelite warriors accompanying God as he ascends to Jerusalem. The description transcends an earthly experience.

[14] The psalms use both "arise God" (קוּמָה אֱלֹהִים) and the synonymous "arise Lord" (קוּמָה יְהוָה) in this manner (Pss 3:7; 7:6; 9:9; 10:12; 17:13; 74:22; 82:8; 132:8; see also Pss 12:5 and 102:13 for slightly different ideas). Important to the argument below, the writer of Judges uses the term when Barak takes away his "captives" in the Song of Debra (קוּם בָּרָק וּשֲׁבֵה שֶׁבְיְךָ בֶּן־אֲבִינֹעַם, Jdg 5:12).

[15] The background to the psalmist's usage is Num 10:35: קוּמָה יְהוָה וְיָפֻצוּ אֹיְבֶיךָ.

[16] The psalmist might be making a deliberate comparison of YHWH (as one who rides both the deserts and heavens) to the Canannite god, Ba'al, who is known in the Canaanite Ugaritic texts as "the rider of the clouds." Greg Herrick notes, "Baal is also referred to about 12 times as 'the Rider of the Clouds,' which undoubtedly testifies to his control over the rain and storms. Psalm 68 may have been written, in part, as a polemic against Baal worship wherein it is indicated in verse 4 that YHWH is the *one* who rides the clouds" (Greg Herrick, "Baalism in Canaanite Religion and Its Relation to the Old Testament," online, accessed 11/15/19, www.bible.org). Whereas Ba'al's domain extends to the clouds in the Ugaritic Myths, YHWH's rule is over the entire creation in the minds of the psalmists.

[17] Where the MT has לָרֹכֵב בִּשְׁמֵי שְׁמֵי־קֶדֶם, the LXX has ἐπὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατὰ ἀνατολάς ("upon the heaven of heaven to the east"), reading ־קֶדֶם as "east" rather than as "from old" (cf. מִקֶּדֶם, Mic 5:2 [MT 5:1]).

[18] The image of warriors accompanying a victorious king to his throne is one of enthroning a king.

The descriptions of some of God's acts recall events of Israel's sojourn from Egypt to Canaan. God is the one who rides through the deserts with his people in order to give the needy a home (68:4–6). As they marched through the wilderness, God supplied an abundance of rain (68:7–9). Israel had provisions from the land so that they might graze as God's flock (68:10). It is on the basis of the acts of God in the wilderness journey that the psalmist invites Israel to sing to God.

His Coming Salvation and Destruction of His Enemies

The structure of the psalm reflects on the events in the desert (68:4–10) that become the basis for hope of a future victory (68:11–14), after which, God ascends "on high" (68:15–18). The psalm writer revisits the daily accomplishments of God (68:19–20) before looking to victories and judgments that are yet future (68:21–23). The request for God to act with power on behalf of Israel in the writer's present day looks backward to God's power in the past dealing with Israel (68:28–30).[19]

The author, therefore, speaks of both past and future. The ascent in 68:18 comes within the context of reflection on the wilderness experiences and anticipation of similar victories in the future. Both past and future victories point to God as victor. The past successes provide a pattern of victories to be accomplished from the Lord's sanctuary in heaven (68:35), where he will be enthroned as the Warrior-King of Israel.

Preliminary Solutions to the Use of Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8

Having established the meaning as the context for interpretation, one can reason from the proposed statement of meaning (above) to solutions for questions on the relationship of Ps 68:18 to Eph 4:8. I will

[19] There seems to be a past-looking sense to פָּעַלְתָּ (Qal., perf.), as reflected in the ESV, NET, and NASB.

address the changing of the pronouns first, then the issue of the Moses tradition in the Targums, and finally the problem of the verb for "give" rather than "receive."

Change in Person of Pronouns

The psalmist uses direct address when speaking to God: He says, "O God" in address in 68:7, 9, 10, 24, 28b.[20] The concept of "the people's celebration," as derived from the psalm, includes the psalmist's personal devotion to and praise of the Lord. The psalmist is a member of Israel and worships the Lord as such. To the psalmist, the Lord is "[the] God of *our* salvation" (הָאֵל יְשׁוּעָתֵנוּ, 68:19c). As aforementioned, he is "*my* God, *my* King" (אֵלִי מַלְכִּי, 68:24). Therefore, it is not unexpected for the psalm writer to address God in the second person, "You ascended" (עָלִיתָ).

In Ephesians 4, Paul speaks of the work of Christ on behalf of the church. In 4:9–11, Paul speaks of Christ's work in the second person, recounting Christ's work in his humiliation and exaltation: ἀνέβη τί ἐστιν… κατέβη εἰς τὰ κατώτερα [μέρη] τῆς γῆς … Καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν. Building up to this, Paul uses the third person to speak of Christ as the one who ascended. It is not necessary for Paul to use the second person, for he is not making a direct address to God. Yet his use of the third person still reflects that God is the one who has ascended.

Moses and Targum

The author of Psalm 68 recounts portions of God's dealings with Israel in the wilderness. It is from that backward glance that the writer telescopes into the future to speak of God's forthcoming deliverance and enthronement. In doing so, he appears to depict God going up the mountain in the same way that the wilderness narratives repeatedly depict Moses going up mountains to meet with the Lord to receive the law for Israel.[21]

[20] The Swete edition of the LXX reflects an anarthrous use of θεός, which is also vocative: ἔντειλαι, θεός, τῇ δυνάμει σου, δυνάμωσον, ὁ θεός (Henry Barclay Swete, *The Old Testament in Greek: According to the Septuagint* [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1909], Ps 67:29).

[21] Jonathan M. Lunde and John Anthony Dunne, "Paul's Creative and Contextual Use of Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4:8," *WTJ* (2012): 102. Also, W. Hall Harris concludes, "Every time Psalm 68:19 is mentioned in the rabbinic literature, it is (without exception) interpreted of Moses and his ascent to heaven to receive the Torah" ("The Ascent and Descent of Christ in Ephesians 4:9–10," *BSac*

One first sees Moses ascending in Exod 19:3. The LXX reads, καὶ Μωυσῆς ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος τοῦ θεοῦ. The use of ἀνέβη is significant, Paul uses the same tense form of ἀναβαίνω in Eph. 4:9 to comment on Jesus's ascension:

Exod 19:3 (LXX):	ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος τοῦ θεοῦ
Eph 4:9:	τὸ δὲ ἀνέβη τί ἐστιν

Paul's use, being third person rather than second person (as in the MT), recognizes that the discussion is about "he who ascended" instead of "You ascended."[22]

The echo of Exod 19:3 in Eph 4:9 introduces the typology of Moses's ascensions. Exodus 19:20, 24:15, 34:4, and Deut 34:1 each depict Moses ascending the mountain with ἀνέβη. The four uses demonstrate an ascent (and descent) pattern in the life of Moses. The editor of the Pentateuch crafts the narrative so that no single ascent by Moses accomplishes all that God intends to do for Israel.

The first giving of the Law ends with broken tablets. The ascent of the mountain to receive the instructions on the tabernacle and the ark ends without a reception of the new tablets of the Law. The ascent to receive the second set of tablets of the Law ends with copies of the Law, but more revelation is needed for Israel to follow the Lord in obedience and receive the promises to the patriarchs. This suggests, too, that another trek to see the Lord on the mount is necessary for Israel to gain enough revelation to receive all that God has promised Israel.

The final ascent brings the death of Moses at Mt. Nebo. Moses is not able to enter the Promised Land, to enter the presence of God in the Promised Land, or to provide all the blessing of the Promised Land to the people. The inheritance intended for Israel is incomplete and awaits another prophet—καὶ οὐκ ἀνέστη ἔτι προφήτης ἐν Ισραηλ (Deut 34:10)—to ascend the mount to provide all that God has promised to Israel.[23]

[1994]: 210; Harris, *The Descent of Christ: Ephesians 4:7–11 and Traditional Hebrew Imagery* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996], 91).

[22] Theilman, following Harris, sees Paul's reading influencing the text of the correctors of Sinaiticus and Vaticanus rather than vice-versa. Theilman, "Ephesians," 822.

[23] Tg. Ps. 68:19 reads, "You ascended to the expanse, O *prophet* Moses, you took captives, you taught the words of the Law, you gave them as gifts to the sons of man, even among the rebellious who are converted and repent does the

It seems that this pattern is the reason that the Targum writers associate Moses with Psalm 68. The psalm recounts dealings in the wilderness, including the ascent of God up the mountain. The actual wilderness narrative depicts Moses ascending the mountain. Since Moses's ascents are incomplete in their accomplishments and there is no mention of God ascending the mountain in the Pentateuch, it would be easy to see how the rabbis inserted Moses into an ascension episode in the psalm. Moses is the one who ascended; God one day will ascend.[24] Christ, for Paul, will ascend the mountain of God *par excellence*, and provide to the people of God all that the one who ascends should provide.

The Replacement of "Receive" with "Give"

The typology of Moses's ascents also gives insights into Paul's reading of ἔδωκεν (Eph 4:8) rather than ἔλαβες (68:18 [67:19 LXX]).[25] Four times the psalmist uses a form of δίδωμι in Psalm 68 (67 LXX), three uses of which are significant:[26]

Ps 67:12 LXX	κύριος δώσει ῥῆμα τοῖς εὐαγγελιζομένοις δυνάμει πολλῇ

Shekinah glory of the Lord dwell" (italics added).

[24] "Led captives captive" continues the typology as Barak leads the captives: ἐξεγείρου ἐξεγείρου, Δεββωρα, ἐξέγειρον μυριάδας μετὰ λαοῦ, ἐξεγείρου ἐξεγείρου, λάλει μετ' ᾠδῆς, ἐνισχύων ἐξανίστασο, Βαρακ, καὶ ἐνίσχυσον, Δεββωρα, τὸν Βαρακ, αἰχμαλώτιζε αἰχμαλωσίαν σου, υἱὸς Αβινεεμ (Jdg. 5:12). Theilman notes that the psalm "continues with a historical review of God's military triumphs over Israel's enemies from the exodus to the battle of Deborah and Barak against the forces of Sisera" ("Ephesians," 824).

[25] Although not discussed below, the Targum on Ps 68:18 has *giving* of gifts to humanity. Also, Richard A. Taylor notes the majority of the Peshitta manuscripts have "you gave." He suggests "the passage in Syriac is a variant text-form attested in the early Christian period (and no doubt earlier as well), though extant evidence does not allow this to be stated with certainty. Familiar with this variant text-form, Paul chose to adopt it in preference to the common text because it was particularly well suited to his theological argument in Ephesians 4" ("The Use of Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8 in Light of Ancient Versions," *BSac* [1991]: 332). I will argue differently than Taylor. It is speculative to conclude Paul adopted the Syriac.

[26] The fourth use is Ps 67:35 LXX, δότε δόξαν τῷ θεῷ, *ἐπὶ τὸν Ισραηλ ἡ μεγαλοπρέπεια αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἡ δύναμις αὐτοῦ ἐν ταῖς νεφέλαις*. The aorist, active, imperfect, second person, plural form speaks of ascribing glory (δόξαν) to God. It is of the peoples of the earth acting, and not of the one ascending acting.

Ps 67:34 LXX	ψάλατε τῷ θεῷ τῷ ἐπιβεβηκότι ἐπὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατὰ ἀνατολάς, ἰδοὺ δώσει ἐν τῇ φωνῇ αὐτοῦ φωνὴν δυνάμεως
Ps 67:36 LXX	θαυμαστὸς ὁ θεὸς ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ, ὁ θεὸς Ισραηλ αὐτὸς δώσει δύναμιν καὶ κραταίωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ. εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεός

The tense form of each use is future, active, indicative, third person, singular, whereas Paul uses a form that is aorist, active, indicative, third person, singular. Yet in each, God—the one who ascends in Psalm 68—is the one who gives or will give.

In the first use, God gives his *word* (ῥῆμα, 67:12 LXX). In the second example, he gives his *voice* (τῇ φωνῇ αὐτοῦ, 67:34 LXX). In the third, he gives *power and strength* to his people (δύναμιν καὶ κραταίωσιν, 67:36 LXX).

The giving of the Law—his word and his voice—to the people reflects Moses's ascents as Moses receives the Law and instructions for the tabernacle and ark so that he might give them to the people. It is Moses, the ascending one, who gives in the wilderness narrative. It is God, the ascending one to the final mountain of God, who will give the full inheritance of the land to his people.[27] This includes giving *power and strength to his people* (Ps 68:35)—the very thing that Christ does in giving the Holy Spirit and his gifts to the church (Eph 4:8–12).

Conclusion

A better solution than seeing Paul misquoting the Psalmist or reusing Psalm 68 loosely for Christological purposes might be in seeing the Psalmist reading the Moses tradition typologically within the full message of Psalm 68.[28] It would account for the Targum interpretation

[27] The LXX of Deut 34:4 reflects this idea when Moses has ascended to the mountain for the last time: καὶ εἶπεν κύριος πρὸς Μωυσῆν Αὕτη ἡ γῆ, ἣν ὤμοσα Αβρααμ καὶ Ισαακ καὶ Ιακωβ λέγων Τῷ σπέρματι ὑμῶν *δώσω* αὐτήν, καὶ ἔδειξα αὐτὴν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς σου, καὶ ἐκεῖ οὐκ εἰσελεύσῃ.

[28] Timothy G. Gombis writes, "The imagery of Yahweh ascending to his heavenly throne from which he blesses his people is what the author aims to capture in the quotation in Eph. 4:8. He is not simply quoting one verse—Ps. 68:19 in abstraction from the remainder of the psalm—but rather appropriating the narrative movement of the entire psalm" ("Cosmic Lordship and Divine

of Moses, the use of ἀνέβη by Paul, and the giving of gifts instead of the receiving of gifts.[29] In this reading, Paul offers *exegesis* of Psalm 68 rather than making a "reading" of it.[30]

Leading captives captive was yet unfulfilled in Moses's day; that was not part of his purpose on ascending the mountains. Instead, the psalmist foresees a day when God himself must do so, for Moses died in the wilderness and failed. While the law was received from Moses, as were the tabernacle instructions, the full promised inheritance was not, and neither was the power spoken of in Ps 68:35. The fulfillment of all things, foreshadowed in the promised inheritance, and the power of Ps 68:35, partially fulfilled in giving the Holy Spirit to the church, awaits to be fulfilled in fullness when Christ ascends the mount to be enthroned as the victorious Warrior King by all peoples of the earth.

Gift-Giving: Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4:8," *NovT* [2005]: 375). Gombis, however, makes his case on the basis of the Divine Warrior theme in Psalm 68 and Ephesians.

[29] While I have great agreement with Lunde and Dunne, I would disagree with their conclusion that Paul's use of Ps 68:18 "is not to be understood to be the fruit of the apostle's direct meditation on the psalm in its original setting" ("Creative and Contextual Use," 102).

[30] This conclusion is contra Seth M. Ehorn, who concludes, "The work of Francis Watson can helpfully be invoked when he argued that Paul (in Romans and Galatians) offers a 'reading' of Scripture rather than an 'exegesis' of it," ("The Use of Psalm 68 (67).19 in Ephesians 4:8: A History of Research," *CBR* 12 [2012]: 114). Ehorn makes reference to Francis Watson, *Paul and Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 515.

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About Whom Does the Prophet Say This? The Implications of Prosopological Exegesis for Christ-Centered Preaching of the Psalms

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Abstract: *Modern advocates of Christ-centered preaching have championed typology as one of the best strategies to preach Christ from the Old Testament. In this article, I seek to show that when it comes to the book of Psalms, prosopological exegesis offers a better way to preach Christ from many of the Psalms than typology. To demonstrate this claim, I first define prosopological exegesis, then provide examples of the practice from early church Fathers. After this, Psalm 22 and 69 are used as "case studies" to demonstrate instances where the apostles interpreted the Psalms prosopologically. Finally, I discuss the implications of prosopological interpretation for Christ-centered preaching of the Psalms, showing how it supplements typology as another exegetical practice to preach Christ from the Old Testament, and in many cases, provides a richer way to preach Christ from the Psalms than typology.*

Key Words: *Christ-centered preaching, exegesis, prosopological, prosopology, Psalms, typology.*

The practice of preaching Christ from the whole of Scripture has experienced a renaissance in popularity over the past few decades.[1] Preaching Christ from every text was considered normative practice during the first millennium and a half of the church, up until the Enlightenment.[2] During the Enlightenment, the rise of the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation fragmented the sense of the unity of Scripture and divine inspiration and authorship. When this method was used, it evacu-

[1] This has been fueled by the preaching and books of men like Bryan Chappell, Sidney Greidanus, Graeme Goldsworthy, Edmund Clowney, G. K. Beale, Christopher Wright, and Tim Keller.

[2] The exegetical history of Christ-centered preaching and exegesis is traced out in De Lubac's three volumes: Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998–2009).

ated the ability to legitimately see Christ in the Old Testament because the "meaning of the text" could be nothing more than what the human author intended to the original audience. Any Christological interpretation of an Old Testament text was considered a reading into the text because, under the presuppositions of this method, the human authors would not have been able to understand that they were speaking about Christ, nor would there have been any legitimate Christological "fuller sense" in the text that could be discerned in light of Christ's incarnation and passion.

What was considered illegitimate during the Enlightenment and the rise of the historical-critical method is once again considered a legitimate goal in expository preaching. Preachers are encouraged to preach Christ in every sermon, whether their text is from the Old or New Testament. With that said, those championing Christ-centered preaching today have neglected to engage in retrieving some of the Christ-centered reading strategies of the early church. Many warnings have been offered by contemporary advocates of Christ-centered preaching to avoid allegorical interpretation without providing counter-examples, which has hampered many preachers' confidence to preach Christ out of more difficult Old Testament texts. Sidney Greidanus is representative, saying, "If we were to preach the story of Sarah and Hagar (Gen 21) guided by Paul's use in Galatians 4, we would miss the point of the Old Testament story."[3] Dennis Johnson argues that allegory loses controls for interpretation by devaluing the historical and narrative context of the passage.[4] Bryan Chapell agrees, saying that allegorical interpretation devalues the literal sense and allows the interpreter's imagination to make the Bible say "anything we want."[5]

I propose that the continual warnings against allegory and the "allegorism" of the church fathers have prevented modern preachers from using reading strategies which are found in the New Testament itself. Instead of being eisegetical impositions on the text, many of the exegetical practices the early church used to interpret the Old Testament Christologically are used by the New Testament authors themselves. There-

[3] Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 190.

[4] Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 232–33.

[5] Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 76–78.

fore, retrieving the exegetical practices of the early church, specifically prosopological exegesis, will help us more clearly see Jesus in the text of the Old Testament. Recovering this reading strategy can help us better reach our ultimate goal: to faithfully preach Christ from the whole of Scripture in a way that does justice to the text. My proposal in this essay is that prosopological exegesis is often superior to typological exegesis for preaching Christ from the Psalms.

To show the superiority of prosopological interpretation of the Psalms, prosopological exegesis will be defined, then examples of the practice from the early church will be shown. Case studies of the New Testament's interpretation of Psalm 22 and 69 will show the way the apostles interpreted the Psalms prosopologically. Finally, the implications of prosopological exegesis for Christ-centered preaching will be drawn out to show that this reading strategy often makes better sense of the text of Psalms than typological interpretations. Retrieving this exegetical practice helps one more faithfully preach the good news of the person and work of Christ from the whole of Scripture, rather than simply the mechanics of justification or the atonement disconnected from his person.

Defining Prospological Exegesis

Prosopological exegesis is a new name for an old practice. Matthew Bates has now written two books discussing the importance of this reading strategy in the New Testament and the early church.[6] He defines prosopological exegesis as: "a reading technique whereby an interpreter seeks to overcome a real or perceived ambiguity regarding the identity of the speakers or addressees (or both) in the divinely inspired source text by assigning nontrivial prosopa (i.e., nontrivial vis-à-vis the "plain sense" of the text) to the speakers or addressees (or both) in order to make sense of the text."[7] In other words, when an Old Testament text is ambiguous with regard to who is speaking, being spoken to, or being spoken about, prosopological exegesis refers to discerning who is speaking,

[6] Matthew W. Bates, *The Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation: The Center of Paul's Method of Scriptural Interpretation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012); Matthew W. Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in New Testament and Early Christian Interpretations of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[7] Bates, *The Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation*, 218.

being spoken to, or being spoken about (or all three) in a text.[8] The Greek word πρόσωπον (*prosōpon*: later translated *persona* in Latin) originally referred to a "face" or a "mask" that an actor would wear on stage, but by the time of the New Testament had come to refer to "personal presence or the whole person."[9] Thus, prosopological exegesis is concerned with determining which person or persons (most often of the Trinity) are speaking or being spoken about in an Old Testament text. Bates argues that many theologians in the early church believed that through the inspiration of the Spirit, certain prophets were able to "overhear" conversations between the Father and the Son. These conversations were then recorded as Scripture. In other places, various prophets took on the "person" of the Son or the Father as if they were actors delivering a script in a play that would later be acted out on the stage of world history when the Son came into the world.[10]

While this specific term seems to have been recently created by Marie-Josèphe Rondeau,[11] once again, it describes a reading practice that is seen in the church as early as the writings of the New Testament. As an introductory example, consider what the author of Hebrews writes in Hebrews 10. In discussing the inability of the sacrificial system to truly effect atonement, the author of Hebrews says that "when Christ came into the world, he *said*" (Heb 10:5 ESV, italics added) and proceeds to quote from Psalm 40 (Heb 10:5–10). Thus, the author of Hebrews asserts not simply that Jesus typologically fulfills the pattern of some aspect of David's life in Psalm 40, but rather Jesus *is the speaker* of Psalm 40, speaking about the human body the Father has prepared for him in the incarnation and how in the incarnation he has come to do the Father's will. David, through the inspiration of the Spirit, spoke the Psalm in the person (*prosopon)* of the Christ.

This reading strategy continues after the New Testament in the early church as well. For example, Justin Martyr, in his *First Apology*, says:

[8] "Prosopological exegesis demanded that the interpreter identify a speaking character or person (Greek: *prosōpon*; Latin: *persona*) and/or a personal addressee, and early Christian interpreters frequently assigned persons that are not explicitly mentioned in the scriptural passage at hand as an explanatory move" (Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity*, 36).

[9] Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity*, 37.

[10] Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity*, 4–5. See also Craig A. Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 192–93.

[11] Bates, *The Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation*, 186–87.

> However, when you listen to the prophecies, spoken as in the person (of someone), do not think that they were spoken by the inspired Prophets of their own accord, but by the Word of God who prompts them. For, sometimes He asserts, in the manner of a Prophet, what is going to happen; sometimes He speaks as in the name of God, the Lord and Father of all; sometimes, as in the name of Christ; sometimes, as in the name of the people replying to the Lord, or to His Father. So it may be observed even in your own writers, where one person writes the entire narrative, but introduces different persons who carry on the conversation.[12]

Tertullian writes in *Against Praxeas*:

> No, but almost all the Psalms which sustain the role (*personam*) of Christ represent the Son as speaking to the Father, that is, Christ as speaking to God. Observe also the Spirit speaking in the third person concerning the Father and the Son: *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies the footstool of your feet* (Psalm 110:1). Again, through Isaiah: *Thus says the Lord to my lord Christ* (Isaiah 45:1)…. So in these texts, few though they be, yet the distinctiveness of the Trinity (*Trinitate*) is clearly expounded: for there is the Spirit himself who makes the statement, the Father to whom he makes it, and the Son of whom he makes it. So also the rest, which are statements made sometimes by the Father concerning the Son or to the Son, sometimes by the Son concerning the Father or to the Father, sometimes by the Spirit, establish each several Person (*personam*) as being himself and none other.[13]

Augustine, preaching on Psalm 31 and commenting on verse 5, says:

> Let us listen now to something our Lord said on the cross: *Into your hands I commit my spirit* (Lk 23:46). When we hear those words of his in the gospel, and recognize them as part of this psalm, we should not doubt that here in this psalm it is Christ himself who is speaking. The gospel makes it clear. He said, *Into your hands I commit my spirit; and bowing his head he breathed forth his spirit* (Lk 23:46; Jn 19:30). He had good reason for making the words of the psalm his own, for he wanted to teach you that in the psalm he is speaking. Look for him in it.[14]

[12] First Apology, ch 36 in Justin Martyr, *The First Apology, The Second Apology, Dialogue with Trypho, Exhortation to the Greeks, Discourse to the Greeks, The Monarchy of the Rule of God*, trans. Thomas B. Falls, The Fathers of the Church 6 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1965), 37.

[13] Tertullian in *Against Praxeas* 11, quoted in Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity*, 27–28.

Examples could be further multiplied, but these suffice to show a sampling of how often this exegetical strategy was practiced in the early church. The reason this reading strategy was practiced in the early church is because the example of the New Testament authors encouraged it.[15] They constantly interpret the Psalms as the speech and actions of Christ, particularly psalms of lament. Not only do they portray Christ's speech and work in the passion through prosopological exegesis of the Psalms and Isaiah, in the way that the New Testament authors interpret them, the Psalms open a window into Christ's human soul during the work of salvation.[16]

Further, Jesus himself reads the Psalms in this way. The prime example is when Jesus is teaching in the temple during the Passion week. In Mark 12:35, he poses the question, "How can the scribes say that the

[14] Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms: Volume 1, 1–32*, trans. Maria Boulding (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000), 1:330–31.

[15] Jason Byassee writes, "While contemporary exegetes may wish, for whatever reason, to say that 'the stone the builders rejected' of Psalm 118 or 'the Lord said to my Lord' of Psalm 110 ought not be read with reference to Christ, Jesus' own exegetical practice demonstrates otherwise and so closes the case for Christian exegetes" (*Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine*, Radical Traditions [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 54).

[16] Michael Cameron says, "The canonical gospels portrayed Jesus using psalms to explain his identity, his message, and above all his passion. The Synoptics cast the story of the crucifixion in terms of lament psalms, especially Psalm 21 (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34), Psalm 30 (Luke 23:46), and Psalm 68 (Matt. 27:34). Luke's post-resurrection Jesus is said to have explicitly taught the apostles 'everything about himself in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms' (Luke 24:44). The apostles are portrayed as preaching and teaching the Psalms as prophecies of the messianic age in general and of Messiah in particular (Acts 2:25–28; 4:25–26; 13:33–37; Rom. 15:8–11; Heb. 1:5–13). But Christians also read the Psalter as the Book of Christ in another way: not only as an 'objective' account of fulfilled prophecies but also as a spiritual revelation of his human soul, in fact as a virtual transcript of his inner life while accomplishing the work of redemption. Paul particularly taught Christians to read the Psalms as echoes of the voice of Christ" (*Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology [New York: Oxford University Press, 2012], 167–68). Quoted Psalm numbers are 1 behind English manuscripts.

Christ is the son of David?" He then quotes Psalm 110:1, saying that David, speaking in the Spirit, says that he heard the speech of the Lord saying to his Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet." Jesus then says that David himself refers to the Messiah as Lord, and questions how he can be both David's Lord and Son. The pertinent point for prosopological exegesis is that in Jesus's interpretation, David under the inspiration of the Spirit hears a conversation between two persons that are both referred to as Lord. This has implications for the doctrine of the Trinity,[17] but it also shows that Jesus read the psalm Christologically, with himself as the referent! He reports that this is divine speech between the Father and the Son (himself), written down thousands of years before his incarnation and concerning the time of his ascension and session, before his return. Even though Jesus had not been born as a human being at the time the Spirit uttered these words through David, he believes he is the referent of the Father's speech in Psalm 110. He disambiguates the identities of the "Lords" that David speaks of in Psalm 110 using prosopological exegesis.[18]

Jesus is not the only person to utilize this sort of interpretation of the Psalms in the New Testament. Both Peter and Paul, in Acts 2 and 13, quote and explain Psalm 16 in their preaching. Peter states that David spoke concerning the Christ and then quotes Ps 16:8–11. Then, he makes an important move. He tells his audience that David clearly could not be speaking about himself, because the words he uttered would not be true if he was their referent. He did die, and his body has seen decay. Because of this, Peter argues that David was speaking prophetically about the coming Christ, knowing God's promise to him about one of his descendants—which Peter infers is Jesus Christ, who was not abandoned to death, nor did his flesh see corruption, because he was raised from the dead. Thus, because Jesus is the referent of David's words, David, through the inspiration of the Spirit, was speaking in the person of the Christ in Psalm 16. This evidence is strengthened by the use of personal pronouns throughout the quoted verses, both in Psalm 16 and in Peter's quotation of it in Acts 2, such as "you will not abandon *my soul* to Hades." Thus, Peter seems to be arguing that the "yet-to-be revealed Jesus was making an in-character speech at the time of David *through*

[17] This is the major thesis of Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity.* He is concerned to demonstrate how prosopological exegesis of the Old Testament in the New Testament was critical for the orthodox formulation of the Trinity as one God existing as three persons.

[18] See Bates's discussion of this text (*The Birth of the Trinity*, 47–62).

David."[19] Jesus spoke through David as David prophetically spoke in the person of the future Christ about his hope of resurrection on the other side of death.

A key element of Peter's exegesis of Psalm 16 is the need to look for another referent since the quoted words are clearly not true of David. Paul makes the exact same argument in Acts 13:36–37 after quoting Ps 16:10. This is important for prosopological exegesis, as it seeks to clarify ambiguous referents. If David's words are not true of David, it is a clue to look for another speaker and/or referent. As will be discussed in more detail below, this contrasts prosopological exegesis with typological exegesis because both Peter's and Paul's "point is specifically that David's experience was *incommensurable* with the words spoken by the Psalmist, but Jesus Christ's was not."[20] Typology depends on a historical pattern and parallel in the experience of both type and anti-type, but Peter and Paul both state that these words were not true of David's life and experiences.[21] Thus, at least in the case of Psalm 16, a typological explanation for how Christ is present in the Psalm goes astray from the New Testament authors' own convictions and fails to sufficiently explain the words of the text.

Multiple church fathers follow the teaching of Peter and Paul, that when David clearly cannot be the referent of a psalm, it is a clue to look for another speaker or addressee. Discussing Ps 2:7–8, Irenaeus says:

> These things were not said to David, for he did not rule over the nations nor over the ends (of the earth), but only over the Jews. So it is evident the promise (made) to the Anointed, to rule over the ends of the earth, is to the Son of God, whom David himself confesses as his Lord, saying in this way, "The Lord says to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand,'" and the following, as we have said before. For he says that the Father speaks with the Son… it is necessary to affirm that it is not David nor any other one of the

[19] Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity*, 153–54.

[20] Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity*, 72.

[21] Graeme Goldsworthy states, "The essence of typology is the recognition that within Scripture itself certain events, people, and institutions in biblical history bear a particular relationship to later events, people, or institutions. The relationship is such that the earlier foreshadows the later, and the later fills out or completes the earlier" (*Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 77).

> prophets, who speaks from himself—for it is not man who utters prophecies—but the Spirit of God, conforming Himself to the person concerned, spoke in the prophets, producing words sometimes from Christ and at other times from the Father.[22]

He later discusses Isa 50:6, saying that Jesus himself said through Isaiah the words of Isa 50:6.[23] He also says of Ps 3:6, "David did not say this concerning himself, for he is not raised after dying, but the Spirit of Christ, who (was) also in other prophets, now says by David concerning Him, 'I lay myself down and slept, I awoke, for the Lord has received me'—he calls death 'sleep,' because he arose."[24] Augustine's interpretation is similar in his exposition of Psalm 3. He writes:

> That this psalm should be understood as spoken in the person of Christ is strongly suggested by the words, *I rested, and fell asleep, and I arose because the Lord will uphold me* (Ps 3:6). For this seems more in tune with the Lord's passion and resurrection than with the particular story in which we are told about David's flight from the face of his own son who was at loggerheads with him.[25]

He then proceeds to interpret the psalm as referring to Judas' betrayal of Jesus.[26] Theodoret of Cyrus, commenting on Ps 22:9, says, "So blessed David, in the person of Christ the Lord, says, You both formed me in the womb and in turn brought me forth from there."[27] He says at

[22] Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. John Behr, Popular Patristics 17 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 73. Content in parentheses is supplied by the translator, John Behr.

[23] Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, 84.

[24] Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, 87.

[25] Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms*, 1:76.

[26] Craig Carter lucidly explains Augustine's hermeneutical strategy as he interprets Psalm 3: "Augustine is reading Psalm 3 as a psalm of David, just as anybody who pays attention to the title would do. The psalm is literally about David. But the psalm is also literally about more than merely an incident in the life of David; it is prophetic speech, which can be understood to have been spoken by Christ, who inspired the prophet David and speaks through him… This is not a matter of reading New Testament content into an Old Testament text, because the preincarnate Word, the Son and Wisdom, was really inspiring David so that David's psalm became Christ's own speech" (*Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition*, 208).

[27] Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Psalms, 1–72*, trans. Robert C. Hill, The Fathers of the Church 101 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 148.

the end of his commentary on the psalm, "We see none of this happening to David or to any of his successors. Only Christ the Lord, on the contrary."[28]

These examples suffice to show that prosopological exegesis was practiced frequently by the church fathers. But the most pertinent questions for prosopological exegesis are: Can this be demonstrated from Scripture? Does this align with the interpretive practices of the New Testament authors themselves? When the church fathers use prosopological exegesis, are they interpreting in ways that go with or against the grain of the interpretative practices of the New Testament authors?

Case Studies

In support of an affirmative answer to these questions, two psalms will be used as case studies, Psalm 22 and Psalm 69. These are chosen as paradigmatic examples, because of how frequently they are quoted or alluded to in the New Testament. I will argue that psalms like these are interpretive guides that teach an attentive reader of the New Testament how to read the rest of the Psalms and Prophets.[29] If the presupposition is granted that the New Testament authors are teaching followers of Jesus how to read the Old Testament,[30] the use of these two psalms in the New Testament can be transformative examples for preaching and hermeneutics.[31]

[28] Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Psalms, 1–72*, 155.

[29] Concerning Augustine, Cameron writes, "The bedrock authority of the dying Savior's exegesis of Psalm 21 (22) discloses his voice throughout the Psalter and indeed the entire Old Testament. Psalm 21 accordingly reveals not only the Mediator's future work but also his secret pre-incarnate presence in the people, writers, and events of the ancient prophetic people" (*Christ Meets Me Everywhere*, 207).

[30] The appropriateness of following the apostles' exegesis of the Old Testament is a major debate in hermeneutical circles. For contrasting answers to the issue, see Peter J. Leithart, *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 29–40; Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), especially his answer on 198.

[31] As an example of this transformative effect of New Testament Scripture as a hermeneutical keystone in the preaching and exegesis of Augustine, Jason Byassee writes, "For Augustine, Christian teaching derives from scripture, and then sends one back to scripture, for new and deeper reading. For example, Augustine's interwoven doctrines of Christ and the church as one body—totus

Psalm 22

Quotations of Psalm 22 are concentrated in the Gospels, but one is also found in the book of Hebrews. Jesus takes the opening words of the psalm on his lips while on the cross in Matt 27:46, saying, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The crucifixion narratives are filled with allusions to the psalm. The mocking of Jesus in Matt 27:39–43 alludes to Ps 22:6–8. John 19:24 tells the reader that they divided up Jesus's clothing and cast lots for it, in direct fulfillment of Ps 22:18. Psalm 22:16 speaks of them "piercing my hands and feet," which is what would happen during a crucifixion. The author of Hebrews puts the words of Ps 22:22 on Jesus's lips in Heb 2:13, identifying Jesus as the speaker. It is plausible that Heb 5:7 is alluding to Ps 22:24. The apostles put direct quotations of verses at the beginning and ending of the Psalm on the lips of Jesus, in one case as he speaks the words directly from the cross; the other by the author of Hebrews, with Jesus speaking after his resurrection. The psalm moves from death to resurrection hope and life on the other side of death, and verses on both sides of the movement are put on the lips of Jesus by the New Testament authors. Further, by speaking the opening words of the psalm from the cross, knowing that his audience would know the full context of the psalm, which ends in triumphant hope and vindication from God, Jesus invites the attentive bystander and later reader to interpret the psalm as being spoken by him in full.[32] Cassiodorus says, "The Lord Christ speaks through the whole of the Psalm…. Though many of the Psalms briefly recall the Lord's passion, none has described it in such apt terms, so that it appears not so much as prophecy, but as history."[33] When interpreted as about

Christus—originate from Paul's teaching on the church as the body of Christ in such places as 1 Corinthians 12:12–27. That exegetically based teaching sends Augustine back to Psalm 21 (eng. 22) with new skills with which to read. In turn, this christologically laden rereading of Psalm 21 affects the way Augustine reads and uses 1 Corinthians 12 and the language with which he speaks of Christology, soteriology, and all the rest of Christian teaching throughout his work" (*Praise Seeking Understanding*, 56).

[32] Augustine concurs, saying, "Why did he say, *My God, my God, look upon me, why have you forsaken me?* unless he was somehow trying to catch our attention, to make us understand, 'This psalm is written about me'?" (*Expositions of the Psalms*, 1:229).

[33] "In the first section He cries that He has been abandoned by the Father, that is, He has undertaken the passion assigned to Him. He commends the great potency of His humility brought by the degradation imposed by men. In

Christ and spoken by Christ in the way that the New Testament authors do, Psalm 22 contains the story of the gospel, the saving death and resurrection of the Christ that results in salvation for the nations.[34]

Identifying the prosopological exegesis of Psalm 22 practiced by the New Testament authors provides a richer understanding of the whole of the Psalm in contrast to a typological explanation, as this is another Psalm that clearly does not align with David's experience. A typological explanation of this text will necessarily be strained, as one will look in vain for a situation in David's life that matches up with the words spoken in the text. Justin Martyr says, "You are indeed blind when you deny that the above-quoted Psalm was spoken of Christ, for you fail to see that no one among your people who was ever called King ever had his hands and feet pierced while alive, and died by this mystery (that is, of the cross), except this Jesus only."[35] This Psalm can only be referring to one person—Christ. The apostles' clarity in showing how the Psalm refers to the crucifixion and resurrection along with the vast amount of quotations and allusions to it means interpretative weight should be given to their interpretation of the Psalm. The apostles' interpretation of Psalm 22 can and should function as a hermeneutical guide to the rest of the Psalms.[36]

the second part He foretold the sacred passion by various comparisons, praying to be freed by divine protection from His savaging enemies. Thirdly, He advises Christians to praise the Lord for having looked on the Catholic Church at His resurrection, so that having heard of this great miracle they may continue in the most salutary constancy of faith. This was so men's weak hearts might not be in turmoil, if the passion alone had been foretold. Let us listen to this psalm with rather more attention, for it abounds in admiration of mighty events" (Cassiodorus, *Explanation of the Psalms, Vol. 1*, trans. P. G. Walsh, Ancient Christian Writers 51 [New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1990], 216).

[34] Chapter 106 in Dialogue with Trypho in Martyr, *The First Apology, The Second Apology, Dialogue with Trypho, Exhortation to the Greeks, Discourse to the Greeks, The Monarchy of the Rule of God*, 313.

[35] Chapter 97 in Dialogue with Trypho. Justin spends chapters 96–106 discussing Psalm 22 and how it is fulfilled in Jesus (Martyr, *The First Apology*, 301).

[36] Theodoret of Cyrus says, "The psalm, then, moves along those lines: more faith is to be placed in the sacred apostles' and the Savior's own clear adoption of the psalm's opening than on those essaying a contrary interpretation" (Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Psalms, 1–72*, 145).

Psalm 69

While Psalm 69 is not quoted or alluded to as often as Psalm 22, the quotations are spread out throughout the New Testament, unlike the quotations of Psalm 22 which are mostly concentrated in the Passion narrative. Psalm 69:4 is quoted by Jesus in John 15:25. Psalm 69:9a is quoted in John 2:17, Ps 69:9b is quoted in Rom 15:3. Psalm 69:21 is referred to as "fulfilled" in John 19:28–29. Psalm 69:25 is quoted in Acts 1:20. In each of these references, Christ is implied to be the speaker of the psalm, except potentially the quotation in Acts 1:20 which refers to the death of Judas as the fulfillment of the imprecation. When Jesus quotes Ps 69:4, he is talking about how the hatred of the world for him fulfills this verse, ostensibly placing himself as the "me" who the psalmist says they hated without a cause.

The quotation of Ps 69:9a in John 2:17 is intriguing because, after Jesus overturns the tables and cleanses the temple, John says the disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." At the end of the pericope, John says that after the resurrection, the disciples remembered Jesus referring to the temple of his body and they believed "the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken" (John 2:22). The most natural referent for the "Scripture" they believed would be Ps 69:9. If this interpretation is correct, Jesus is being placed as the speaker of the Psalm,[37] and if the disciples are remembering after the resurrection, Jesus seems to be speaking of how zeal for the Father's house will consume him, literally in death. The disciples remember this Scripture after it has been "lived out" in the death of Jesus, which gives credence to it being prophetic speech from the person of the Christ, rather than simply a typological identification with David. It is as if the Spirit had written a script through the prophetic word of David that Jesus then acted out in history.[38]

Paul's quotation of Ps 69:9b in Rom 15:3 also seems to place Christ as the speaker of the psalm through the use of personal pronouns. In

[37] Origen has a similar interpretation in his commentary on John, saying, "However, we must know that Psalm 68 (69), which contains the statement, 'The zeal of your house has devoured me,' and a little later 'They gave me gall for food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink,' both having been recorded in the Gospels, is placed in the mouth of Christ, indicating no change in the person of the speaker" (*Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Books 1–10*, The Fathers of the Church 80 [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006], 304).

[38] Broadly following the discussion in Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity*, 115–22.

encouraging the church to welcome one another, Paul states that "Christ did not please himself, but as it is written," then quotes Psalm 69:9b, which says, "the reproaches of those who reproached you fell on *me*" (italics added). With this quotation, Paul seems to be placing Christ as the speaker of the psalm speaking to God the Father about the reproaches of those who reproached God the Father that fell on him on the cross.[39]

The quotation of Ps 69:21 in John 19 is especially pertinent because John says that Jesus says, "I thirst," to fulfill the Scripture, then is given sour wine to drink. This echoes the first-person pronouns used in the psalm: "they gave *me* poison for food, and for *my* thirst they gave *me* sour wine to drink." Jesus places himself as the speaker of the psalm by saying, "I thirst."[40]

Finally, the quotation of Ps 69:25 in Acts 1:20 comes on the heels of Peter saying, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus" (Acts 1:16). Thus, even if Jesus is not explicitly named as the speaker of the psalm in Acts 1, Judas is named as the enemy the psalmist is referring to. His betrayal of Jesus fulfilled what the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand concerning him in Psalm 69, which lends further credence to the Spirit inspiring David to speak Psalm 69 prosopologically as a prophetic script in the person of the Christ. The New Testament authors interpret the prophetic script of Psalm 69 as being realized in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.[41]

In summary, prosopological exegesis of the Psalms as practiced by the New Testament authors and further developed by the early church fathers can serve as a hermeneutical key for how to read the rest of the Psalms according to their ultimate subject and referent: Christ. The way that some Psalms, such as 2, 22, 31, 40, 69, and 110, appear throughout the New Testament and are interpreted as spoken by Christ or speaking of Christ should demonstrate that other salms not discussed in the New

[39] This is Augustine's interpretation of the verse as well. See Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms: Volume 3, 51–72*, trans. Maria Boulding (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 3:379.

[40] Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity*, 116.

[41] "Christ's 'Action' earned him the right to speak the Psalms, not only as the Word who divinely authored them, but even more as the Just Man who humanly lived them" (Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere*, 209).

Testament are similarly spoken by Christ or speaking of Christ. Jesus himself testified to this on the road to Emmaus, saying that all that was written about him in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms had to be fulfilled (Luke 24:44).

Implications of Prosopological Exegesis for Preaching

The implications of prosopological exegesis for preaching are best seen by contrasting it with typological exegesis. Typological exegesis is held by many modern advocates of Christ-centered preaching as one of few legitimate methods of Christ-centered interpretation. They frequently highlight allegorical interpretation in contrast to typological interpretation. Allegory is used as an example of an illegitimate way to interpret the text. In so doing, they often undercut ways that New Testament authors see Christ in an Old Testament text, specifically through the use of prosopology. Prosopological exegesis is a type of allegorical exegesis in that it recognizes the text's ability to "other-speak" and speak beyond its original historical context about Christ.

Dennis Johnson worries that allegorical interpretation devalues redemptive history and thus loses controls on interpretation.[42] Bryan Chapell echoes this worry as well, arguing that not interpreting the Old Testament text according to the grammatical-historical method allows the interpreter to determine the meaning of the text rather than discovering the author's intended meaning.[43] Graeme Goldsworthy contrasts allegory with typology by saying that allegory saw "the old events and images as largely unimportant in themselves" compared to typology caring about the history and establishing a connection between the historical event and its later antitype (fulfillment) that builds upon it.[44] He later borrows John Currid's four characteristics of a type to define typology: "First, it must be grounded in history; both type and antitype must be actual historical events, persons, or institutions. Second, there must be both a historical and theological correspondence between type and antitype. Third, there must be an intensification of the antitype from the type. Fourth, some evidence that the type is ordained by God to foreshadow the antitype must be present."[45] Leonhard Goppelt concurs, writing, "Only historical facts—persons, actions, events, and institutions—are material for typological interpretation; words and narratives can be utilized only insofar as they deal with such matters."[46] Sidney Greidanus works with a similar definition of typology and warns against "typologizing," meaning, searching for these correspondences in every detail of the texts, which he argues devolves into allegory.[47] He later sets this up as a rule for using typology, instructing readers to "look for a type not in the details but in the *central message* of the text concerning God's activity to redeem his people."[48]

The typological method sketched out above is commonly used by modern interpreters to see Christ in the Psalms. Richard Hays advocates for such an approach, writing, "The earliest church read the Psalms as the Messiah's prayer book … because they read all the promises of an eternal kingdom for David and his seed typologically… 'David' in these psalms becomes a symbol for the whole people and—at the same time—a prefiguration of the future Anointed One."[49] When discussing Paul's quotation of Ps 18:49 in Rom 15:9, which Paul seemingly places on the lips of Christ, Hays writes, "The point here is that Paul does not read the text, in Matthean fashion, as a 'prediction' about the Messiah; rather, the Messiah embodies Israel's destiny in such a way that David's songs can be read retrospectively as a prefiguration of the Messiah's sufferings and glorification."[50] Thus, for Hays, seeing Christ in the Psalms depends on a typology of David representing the people of Israel, a role that the Messiah will take on and intensify. But if the evidence was sufficiently proven above that the New Testament authors read the Psalms prosopologically, frequently highlighting that the text does not align with David's experience, in many places the typological explanation for seeing Christ in the Psalms loses its exegetical grounding and legitimacy.[51]

Prosopological exegesis represents a better way forward for preaching Christ from much of the Psalter and many portions of the Prophets

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[42] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 230–33.

[43] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 76–78.

[44] Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 77.

[45] Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 111; Sidney Greidanus has four similar principles in Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 256.

[46] Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 17–18.

[47] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 253.

[48] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 257.

[49] Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 110–11.

[50] Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, 115.

[51] Helped by Bates, *Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation*, 301–2; Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity*, 127, 182–83.

where the speaker is ambiguous. Craig Carter says, "The difference between prosopological exegesis and typological exegesis is that in typological exegesis (at its best) we may *see Christ opaquely* in the Old Testament text, but in prosopological exegesis we actually *hear Christ speak clearly* in the text."[52] What he means by seeing Christ opaquely through the typological method is that at best, one can say that Jesus fulfills a pattern or resembles some aspect of David's life. He is "mimicking" David, but one could easily rebut that this sort of exegesis is an unnecessary flourish to the original historical meaning, which would be whatever the text said about David. But the prosopological exegesis seen in the New Testament encourages Christian readers of the Old Testament to hear Christ speaking out the Psalms. They are not first and foremost about David, with Jesus coming along later to mimic their pattern; their original referent is Christ. Further, if there are many instances throughout the Psalms that are clearly not referring to David, a typological framework has no legitimate recourse to preach Christ from that psalm, because there is no historical correspondence between David's experience and Christ's. Prosopological exegesis, however, allows one to follow the pattern of the New Testament in seeing Christ as the speaker and ultimate referent of the Psalms, even when a historical correspondence with David isn't plausible. David was a prophet who foresaw and spoke of the Christ.[53] Therefore, in many places, we would be *unfaithful* to the text to read the psalm with David as its original referent, with Jesus typologically fulfilling the pattern of David's lived experience.

If prosopological exegesis is a better way forward for preaching Christ from much of the Psalms, are the worries listed above legitimate? Does interpretation of the Psalms lose all controls since it is no longer rooted in a historical typology of David? Jason Byassee helpfully counters this worry in describing Augustine's interpretation of the Psalms: "This is also a thoroughly *historical* vision of exegesis, rooted in the history of the incarnation."[54] The control on prosopological exegesis is the historical gospel story of Jesus's incarnation, death, and resurrection, as described in the New Testament, especially the gospel accounts.[55] The incarnate history of Christ is the historical meaning of the psalm that needs to be discerned, and by all accounts it looks to be the "historical"

[52] Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition*, 208–9.

[53] Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms*, 1:24, 44.

[54] Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding*, 62–63.

[55] Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition*, 214; Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding*, 230.

meaning with which the New Testament authors were concerned.

But if the entire Psalter is a prophetic witness to Christ, what about when the Psalmist confesses his own sins, or his weakness? Augustine's use of 1 Corinthians to develop a theology of Christ as both head and body and his understanding of the incarnation provide helpful answers. In Ps 40:17 the psalmist says, "As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!" The book of Hebrews has already put earlier parts of this psalm on the lips of Christ, so Augustine must interpret verse 17 with Christ as the speaker. He writes, "Christ himself is that poor man, since he who was rich became poor, as the apostle tells us: *Though he was rich he became poor, so that by his poverty you might be enriched* (2 Cor 8:9)."[56] In Augustine's understanding, Christ's emptying of himself in the incarnation makes sense of Jesus referring to himself in the psalm as "poor." In Ps 41:4, the psalmist asks God to heal him, because he has sinned against God. Augustine comments:

> But surely Christ cannot say this? Could our sinless Head make these words his own?... No, not as from himself; but as from his members he could, for the voice of his members is his voice, just as the voice of our Head is our voice. We were in him when he said, *My soul is sorrowful to the point of death* (Mt 26:38). He was not afraid of dying, for he had come to die; nor was the one who had power to lay down his life and take it up again refusing to die. But the members were speaking through their Head, and the Head was speaking on behalf of his members. This is why we can find our own voice in his in the psalm-verse, *Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.* We were in him when he cried out, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*... What sins could there be in him? None whatever, but our old nature was crucified together with him, that our sinful body might be destroyed, and that we might be slaves to sin no more.[57]

Jesus's substitutionary death for the sins of his people allows one to interpret verses referring to the salmist's sins as prophetic witnesses to the atoning work of Christ. The NT has shown that the Psalms are about Christ, so like Augustine, interpreters must wrestle with statements that would seem inconsistent with the NT presentation of Christ.

[56] Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms: Volume 2, 33–50*, trans. Maria Boulding (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000), 2:221.

[57] Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms*, 2:232.

The control and boundary for such interpretation is the Rule of Faith, as summarized in the later creeds (Apostle's, Nicene, Chalcedonian) because the Church confesses that the creeds are a faithful summary of the Bible's presentation of the person and work of Christ.[58] If an individual interpretation of a psalm or psalm-verse leads the interpreter to argue that Jesus is created (in reference to his divinity and not his humanity) or sinful, for example, such an interpretation would be ruled out of bounds by the Rule of Faith.[59] Further, one's interpretation of a psalm needs to align with the historical account of Christ given in the NT. The words and details of the psalm should be seen to correspond with some aspect of Christ's life as described in the NT. One can never reach the same confidence of veracity in prosopological interpretation of Psalms that are not quoted in the NT. However, the psalms interpreted prosopologically in the NT can teach interpreters patterns and techniques of interpretation that can be applied to Psalms not quoted by the NT.

Even with the initial difficulty of relating verses in the Psalter like those above to Christ, rather than assuming they don't speak of him, a better way forward is the hard work of seeing how the entire Psalter bears witness to Christ, as Augustine models. This work is warranted because if a legitimate type can only be seen in the major message and not the details of the psalm, the richness of the whole Psalter's prophetic witness to the person and work of Christ will be obscured. The typological method makes a more broad, general connection to Christ from the psalm but cannot get too carried away with "typologizing" the details of the text. But as seen above, the New Testament authors frequently do not interpret the Psalms this way. The New Testament authors interpret the entire psalm as about Christ, not just its central message. The whole gospel story of Christ's preexistence, incarnation, atoning death,[60] resurrection, ascension, session, and return is foretold in the Psalter,[61] as well as insights into his human soul during the work of

[58] R. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 95–116.

[59] Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition*, 148–59.

[60] Augustine says of Psalm 22, "The passion of Christ is recounted in this psalm as clearly as in the gospel, yet the psalm was composed goodness knows how many years before the Lord was born of the virgin Mary. It was a herald, giving advance notice of the coming of the Judge" (*Expositions of the Psalms*, 1:228–29).

[61] Athanasius sees in the Psalms this full scope of the gospel, all the way

salvation he accomplished. But if the details of individual psalms are not legitimately allowed to speak of Christ, then a preacher's confidence to preach the whole psalm as spoken by Christ or in some way referring to Christ will be diminished.[62] Many in the early church, and seemingly the New Testament authors, read the Psalms as speaking of Christ or spoken by Christ in their entirety. This exegetical practice can give a much greater depth and richness to preaching Christ from the Psalms in a way that appears more faithful to the text than simply making a broad connection to Christ from the life of David. Spending most of one's time in a sermon drawing applicational parallels from the life of David and making a typological connection to Jesus in the final minutes of the sermon is much different than spending most of one's time in a sermon showing how the psalm as a whole bears prophetic witness to the person and work of Christ. Prosopological exegesis allows the preacher to say more than a general statement such as, "Jesus suffered like David suffered." Instead, one sees the depths and specificity of Jesus's suffering, his human soul and emotional experiences during his suffering, and his trust in God during his earthly life; all of which serve as a model to contemporary hearers.[63] The applicational parallels that can be developed are greater under prosopological exegesis, because the hearers of a sermon

from Christ's eternal generation to his ascension and session and the gospel being proclaimed to the nations. Chapters 5–8 in Letter to Marcellinus Athanasius of Alexandria, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, trans. Robert C. Gregg, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980), 103–6; Matthew Bates makes a similar argument in Bates, *Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation*.

[62] Michael Fiedrowicz writes, "The result was that the risky wholesale interpretation of the psalms in reference to Christ, as Augustine understood it, proved repeatedly to be a gain in knowledge of Christ. If at first it seemed likely that some words in the psalms would threaten the personal mystery of the God-man, nonetheless the mode of understanding entailed by the prosopological option for the 'voice of Christ' led to a deeper understanding of Christ's person" (*Expositions of the Psalms*, 1:60).

[63] Cassiodorus, speaking of Psalm 31, says, "We have often said that the words contained in the heading are to be ascribed to Christ the Lord, with whom the whole of this psalm is to be associated, since it sings of His passion and resurrection. He deigned to speak from the level of our lowliness, and even endured a human body's suffering. The good master schools us by his eloquence, so that by imitating that teaching in things heavenly we too may with humility and devotion follow the words of our Head" (*Explanation of the Psalms*, 1:289–90).

can have greater confidence in the validity of God's promises in the Psalms because they have been actualized in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Because Jesus was truly crucified for sins, as the Psalms attest, but then was vindicated by God in the resurrection, as the Psalms also attest, hearers who trust in Jesus can have confidence that they also will be protected and vindicated by God because their lives are hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:1–4).

Conclusion

At the center of preaching stands a person. Preachers are called to preach "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). Paul gives preachers their subject: "Him we proclaim" (Col 1:28). Jesus tells us in both John 5:39–47 and Luke 24:13–48 that the Old Testament Scriptures bear witness to him. Prosopological exegesis will richly aid preachers in their task of preaching Christ from the Psalms. It has the potential to add a richness and depth to Christ-centered preaching that is still lacking in many contemporary approaches. Prosopological exegesis has biblical rationale and will allow the preacher to better preach the person and work of the main subject of the Bible: Christ.

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Christ Crucified: The Necessity of Preaching Christ from All of Scripture

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Abstract: *Must every sermon contain the gospel? This question has frustrated homileticians for the last several decades. While some homileticans argue preachers have a responsibility to preach Christ in every sermon, others argue preachers have a responsibility to preach the text (although they would affirm the importance of preaching Christ often). This article argues Christian preachers should preach Christ in every sermon and provides three reasons to substantiate this claim. First, the pattern of preaching in the New Testament was undeniably Christ-centered. Jesus, the apostles, and Paul embraced and practiced gospel-centered preaching. Second, Christ-centered preaching benefits the church. When Christ is preached, unbelievers are certain to hear the gospel and struggling Christians are comforted. Third, failing to preach Christ every week negatively affects the church. Christ-less preaching robs unbelievers of the opportunity to believe the gospel and withholds the true source of change from believers.*

Key Words: *Christ, Christ-centered, gospel-Centered, homiletics, pastoral theology, practical theology, preaching, redemptive-historical.*

Christian preachers have a responsibility to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ from all of Scripture. Jesus himself claimed the entirety of Scripture bears witness to him (John 5:39; cf. Luke 24:44–49), and Christian preaching should reflect that reality. Indeed, preaching the gospel is what makes Christian preaching distinctly "Christian."[1] While most preachers would affirm general statements concerning the importance of preaching Christ, many would bristle at the notion Christ must be at the heart of every sermon. "Must *every* sermon contain the

[1] Jay Adams observed, "What makes it [Christian preaching] distinctive is the all-pervading presence of a saving and sanctifying Christ. Jesus Christ must be at the heart of every sermon you preach" (*Preaching with Purpose: A Comprehensive Textbook on Biblical Preaching* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982], 147).

gospel," they ask. The short answer is "yes." Preachers who fail to proclaim the gospel in every sermon ignore the teaching of the New Testament, rob their congregations of the benefits of hearing the gospel each week, and expose their congregations to the dangers of Christ-less sermons.

The Pattern of Preaching in the New Testament

The Gospel writers portray Jesus as a preacher.[2] He began his earthly ministry by preaching the gospel (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:14). Throughout his ministry, Jesus taught and preached (Matt 11:1; Mark 1:38–39, 2:2; Luke 4:42–44, 20:1). He also sent his apostles out to preach the gospel during his earthly ministry (Matt 10:5–15; Mark 3:13–19; Luke 9:1–6). Preaching was at the heart of the ministry of Jesus and his apostles.[3] After the resurrection and prior to the ascension, Jesus commissioned his disciples to proclaim the good news of his suffering and resurrection to all nations (Luke 24:44–49), and the remainder of the New Testament bears witness to their faithfulness to preach the gospel.

Consider the sermons in Acts. Every sermon Luke recorded was gospel-centered. On Pentecost, Peter proclaimed Christ as the "crucified" (Acts 2:23), "raised" (Acts 2:24), and "exalted" Lord (Acts 2:33). At Solomon's Portico, Peter preached Jesus, the Author of Life, whom the religious leaders "killed" but God "raised" (Acts 3:15). In the house of Cornelius, Peter pointed Cornelius and his family to Jesus, who was

[2] Jesus himself viewed preaching as central to his ministry. Jonathan I. Griffiths wrote, "The work of preaching is given special dignity by the fact that Jesus identified his role in his earthly ministry as primarily that of a preacher. A range of passages throughout the Synoptic Gospels highlight this priority" (*Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical-Theological Study* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017], 122).

[3] In this article, "preaching" refers to the public proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The New Testament writers used a variety of terms to describe the task of preaching, which indicates the richness and complexity of the task of proclamation. At the same time, significant overlap exists between the various terms used to describe preaching. Every term highlights the verbal nature of preaching, and every term is paired with specific phrases to describe the Christ-centered content of preaching. For an analysis of preaching terms in Acts, see H. Jared Bumpers, "'No Other Name': A Biblical Theology of Preaching in Acts," *Midwestern Journal of Theology* 21.1 (2022): 79–98. For an analysis of preaching terms in the New Testament, see Klaas Runia, "What Is Preaching According to the New Testament?" *TynBul* 29.1 (1978): 3–48.

put "to death by hanging … on a tree" but was "raised" by God (Acts 10:39–40).[4] At Antioch in Pisidia, Paul preached about Jesus, who was "executed" by the rulers in Jerusalem (Acts 13:28) but "raised … from the dead" by God (Acts 13:30). In Athens, Paul proclaimed Jesus as the resurrected judge (Acts 17:31). Every sermon in Acts emphasized the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which indicates the centrality of the gospel in early Christian preaching.[5]

Paul's reflections on his own preaching ministry affirm the importance of the gospel in Christian preaching in the early church. Two passages in particular provide insight into Paul's preaching philosophy: 1 Cor 2:1–5 and Col 1:24–29. In 1 Cor 2:1–5, Paul described his ministry in Corinth. Rather than preaching with "lofty speech or wisdom," Paul resolved "to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). His preaching was explicitly and intentionally Christ-centered. This commitment to preaching Christ exclusively was not limited to Corinth; it was a "regular pattern throughout his ministry."[6] In his letter to the Colossians, Paul repeated his commitment to Christ-centered preaching (Col 1:24–29). After discussing his stewardship from God to make the Word of God fully known, Paul summarized his

[4] All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

[5] The descriptions of the preaching of Phillip and Paul in Acts also highlight the centrality of Jesus in early Christian preaching. Phillip went to Samaria and "proclaimed to them the Christ" (Acts 8:5), and the people "believed Phillip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12). After telling the Ethiopian eunuch the good news about Jesus, "Phillip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea" (Acts 8:40). Based on Luke's description of his preaching, Phillip was a Christ-centered preacher.

Paul "proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues" after his conversion (Acts 9:20), "continued to preach the gospel" in Lystra and Derbe (Acts 14:7), explained and proved "that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead" in the synagogue in Thessalonica (Acts 17:2–3), preached "Jesus and the resurrection" in Athens (Acts 17:18), and testified "to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus" in Corinth (Acts 18:5). After he was arrested and sent to Rome, Paul spent two years "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance" (Acts 28:31). According to Luke, Paul's preaching ministry was centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

[6] Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 114.

preaching ministry as follows: "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (Col 1:28). Christ was "the center and sole focus of Paul's gospel" and was at "the center of Paul's proclamation."[7] These two passages demonstrate Jesus was the content and the *telos* of preaching. Paul preached Christ (the content) with the goal of developing mature followers of Christ (*telos*).

Preaching in the New Testament was Christ-centered. From the commission of Jesus to the preaching in Acts and the ministry of Paul, the proclamation of the gospel was central. Furthermore, the Bible contains no examples of Christ-less sermons. A careful reading of the New Testament reveals the apostles and leaders of the early church consistently exalted Christ in their preaching. Contemporary preachers would be foolish to deviate from the pattern of preaching established in the New Testament. Besides, why would a Christian preacher "even want to try to preach a Christian sermon without mentioning Jesus?"[8] Preachers follow the pattern established by Jesus and the apostles by preaching the gospel in every sermon.

The Benefits of Christ-Centered Preaching

Preaching Christ in every sermon and from every text is biblical and beneficial. The following list is not exhaustive, but it does illustrate the benefits of preaching the gospel consistently:

First, gospel-centered preaching ensures unbelievers listening to the sermon will hear the gospel. As Paul noted in Romans 10, people cannot believe the gospel unless they hear the gospel, and they will not hear the gospel unless someone preaches the gospel to them (Rom 10:14–15). Therefore, preachers have a responsibility to preach Christ so those who do not know Christ can hear the gospel. A commitment to Christ-centered preaching ensures unbelievers who attend church—whether unregener-

[7] David W. Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 131. G. K. Beale also noted the gospel-centered nature of Paul's preaching ministry. He wrote, "This verb 'announce/declare' (καταγγελω, *katangellō*) refers to Paul's preaching, as in Acts, and is used only by Paul in his writings to refer to his or others' proclamation of the gospel." G. K. Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 151.

[8] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 115.

ate church members or visitors attending with a friend—will hear the gospel every time they attend.

Second, Christ-centered preaching reminds Christians of the true source of transforming grace: Jesus Christ. Christians need to be reminded of the gospel constantly, as they are prone to forget it.[9] Luther understood this well. In his commentary on Galatians, he stated the gospel is "the principal article of all Christian doctrine, wherein the knowledge of all godliness consisteth. Most necessary it is, therefore, that we should know this article well, teach it unto others, and beat it into their heads continually."[10] The grace to obey biblical commands comes from Christ alone. Preachers should constantly remind their listeners of their need for God's grace to live the Christian life by preaching the gospel in every sermon.

Third, preaching Christ in every sermon helps listeners see the big picture of God's story of redemption. If the metanarrative of Scripture is God's redemption of fallen humanity through the person and work of Christ, then Christians need to be taught how every passage of Scripture fits into that larger story. Gospel-centered preaching places every text in its larger redemptive-historical context and helps people see the Bible as an organic whole rather than a compilation of random stories.

Fourth, a commitment to gospel-centered preaching helps pastors avoid moralism. Julius Kim observed, "Much of what passes for Christian preaching is nothing more than moral advice or moving storytelling that leads to some form of good moral advice."[11] Preaching Christ in every sermon helps preachers avoid preaching self-help sermons or "boot strap" Christianity, where Christians are called to better themselves by picking themselves up by their bootstraps and obeying biblical commands. Instead, gospel-centered preaching points them to Christ, the one who obeyed God's commands in their place and empowers them to obey God's commands in the present.

Fifth, Christ-centered preaching comforts Christians who are struggling. When Christians fail to obey biblical commands, they often fall into doubt and despair. The gospel reminds them of their security in Christ. Their salvation is not based on their works, but on Christ's work. They did not earn

[9] Most Christians are what Paul Tripp calls "gospel amnesiacs." They forget the gospel regularly and need to be reminded. See Paul David Tripp, *New Morning Mercies* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 477–78.

[10] Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: William Tegg and Co., 1850), 67.

[11] Julius J. Kim, *Preaching the Whole Counsel of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 63.

their salvation, and they cannot lose it. Christ holds them fast. They belong to God, and "nobody steals God's stuff."[12]

In short, preaching Christ in every sermon strengthens the church. As John Piper argued, "Every sermon that offers anything good to believers in Christ, or that helps believers see that God will turn for good everything bad in their lives, must be a sermon that exults in Christ crucified."[13] Preachers who fail to proclaim Christ from all of Scripture rob their listeners of the benefits of hearing the gospel weekly.

The Dangers of "Christ-less" Sermons

What is at stake if preachers fail to preach Christ in every sermon? The following dangers lurk in the shadows of any preaching ministry that fails to exalt Christ every week:

First, Christ-less sermons attempt to rob Christ of his glory. Preaching the Word without preaching the Word made flesh misses the mark of faithful Christian preaching. Jesus Christ is the central figure of human history. All of Scripture bears witness to Christ (John 5:39; Luke 24:25–27, 44–47). Jesus "is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might have the preeminence" (Col 1:18), and "everything" includes our preaching! When preachers fail to preach Christ weekly, they fail to honor Christ as the central figure of Scripture and the one who saves and sanctifies his people.

Second, Christ-less sermons "subvert the gospel."[14] Preaching devoid of the gospel eventually ends up undermining the gospel. It makes the gospel about what Christians do rather than what Christ has done. While the Bible does contain imperatives, which should be preached, the biblical authors usually place these imperatives after the indicative of the gospel.[15] Thus, the indicative-imperative structure provides a helpful

[12] Jared C. Wilson, *Gospel Deeps: Reveling in the Excellencies of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 50.

[13] John Piper, *Expository Exultation: Christian Preaching as Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 225.

[14] This phrase is borrowed from Christopher J. H. Wright (*How to Preach and Teach the Old Testament for All Its Worth* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016], 131).

[15] For example, Paul spends the first three chapters of Ephesians discussing what Christ has done (the indicative of the gospel) before addressing the behavior of Christians (biblical imperatives). He does the same thing in Romans, where the first eleven chapters focus on doctrinal truths before turning to in-

framework for preaching biblical commands.

Preachers must avoid declaring the imperatives of Scripture apart from the indicative of the gospel. Merely preaching the imperatives "implies that the solution is that we improve our behavior on our own, which is the antithesis of the gospel."[16] Instead, preachers should proclaim the indicative of the gospel and encourage Christians to obey the imperatives of Scripture because Christ has redeemed them and empowered them to obey his commands.

Third, Christ-less sermons withhold the true source of change from believers. The gospel is instrumental in producing spiritual change in the life of Christians. Tim Keller explained, "After the gospel has regenerated us and we are converted, it is the instrument of all continual growth and spiritual progress."[17] Through the weekly proclamation of the gospel, Christians are reminded of their sinfulness, their need for grace, Christ's provision of grace, and the transforming power of the gospel. These powerful truths are withheld from believers when the gospel is not preached each week.

Fourth, Christ-less sermons produce prideful and self-righteous Christians. If you preach biblical texts without pointing to Christ as the means by which Christians can obey, obedient Christians will become proud of their good works. They will "become self-righteous, entitled, less patient and gracious with others."[18] Christians need to be reminded their obedience is due to God's gracious enablement and not their own strength, which should produce humility rather than pride.

Fifth, Christ-less sermons produce despairing Christians. While obedient Christians hear Christ-less sermons and become proud, struggling and disobedient Christians become distraught. After hearing a sermon filled

structions for believers in the final five chapters. For a good discussion of the relationship between the indicative and the imperative in preaching, see John Carick, *The Imperative of Preaching: A Theology of Sacred Rhetoric* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2002).

[16] Allan Moseley, *From the Study to the Pulpit: An 8-Step Method for Preaching and Teaching the Old Testament* (Wooster, OH: Weaver Books, 2017), 199.

[17] Tim Keller, "The Centrality of the Gospel," Redeemer City to City, https://redeemercitytocity.com/articles-stories/the-centrality-of-the-gospel. Keller goes on to say Christians "never 'get beyond the gospel' to something more advanced. The gospel is not the first step in a stairway of truths; rather, it is more like the hub in a wheel of truth. The gospel is not just the ABC's but the A to Z of Christianity. The gospel is not the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter the kingdom but the way we make all progress in the kingdom."

[18] Tim Keller, *Preaching* (New York: Viking, 2015), 61.

with lots of commands and no gospel, Christians who try to obey the commands of Scripture and fail feel hopeless and defeated.

Churches and Christians do not have to suffer. The dangers listed are avoidable. The key is to preach the gospel. By proclaiming the gospel in every sermon, preachers can insulate the body of Christ from the dangers of Christ-less sermons.

Summary

Every sermon should contain the gospel of Jesus Christ. The apostles modeled Christ-centered preaching. The church benefits when Christ-centered preaching is present. The church suffers when Christ-centered preaching is absent. Indeed, Christ is the only hope of salvation for sinners and growth for Christians. May every preacher join with the apostle Paul and say, "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (Col 1:28).

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Expository Preaching with Biblical Contexts on the Horizon: Hebrews as a Sermonic Model

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Abstract: *The rationale for and benefits of expository preaching have been well-established in the field of homiletics. If a fair critique exists for this philosophy of preaching, however, it is that it is often seen as less applicable to the lives of the audience and therefore less effective in producing life change. One reason may be the hesitancy of practitioners to employ contextualization in their preaching. Perhaps the hesitancy lies in the concern that to do so could corrupt the meaning and intent of the pericope in the sermon. In this article, the author addresses this perceived and potential deficiency by arguing for the use of multiple levels of contextualization in expository preaching. In order to do so, four aspects of contextualization will be identified. Then, by using these aspects as a guide, the book of Hebrews, which has been recognized by contemporary scholarship as being sermonic, will be analyzed to offer both a biblical precedent for and model of a four-fold aspect of contextualization in expository preaching. Finally, five implications for contemporary preaching will be offered.*

Key Words: *audience analysis, contextualization, expository preaching, Hebrews, homiletics, preaching, text-driven preaching.*

The foundations of and the rationale for expository preaching have been well established in the field of homiletics. Furthermore, lists of benefits for this approach in contemporary preaching manuals certainly are easily found. In the following excerpt from their 2018 publication, *Preaching for the Rest of Us*, Gallaty and Smith may offer the most thorough, yet concise, summary.

> There is no shortage of good arguments for preaching in an expository, text-driven way. Perhaps the most significant argument stems from the nature of the Word itself. If we believe Scripture contains the very words of God and that both God and what He speaks are perfect, then anything we do that hinders our presenting Scripture is a tragedy. While the nature of the Word is the primary factor that compels expositional preaching, the nature of the preacher's call and the nature of the church also lend support

> to this methodology. These three arguments for text-driven preaching may be summarized as follows:
>
> 1. The Nature of the Word: We are called to preach Christ, and Christ is revealed in the Word.
> 2. The Nature of the Call: Preaching the text is working out our own call to ministry by crucifying our personal agendas so others might live, and thus living according to Christ's example.
> 3. The Nature of the Church: The Word of God sanctifies the church.[1]

However, perhaps if a "fair" critique of expository preaching does exist, then it is a longstanding one. This critique has been stated in a myriad of ways such as "it is boring," "it is not engaging," or "it is ineffective." However, the sentiment is always the same. This type of preaching does not give the preacher's audience, the contemporary hearer, a significant enough "seat at the table" in the sermon. Andy Stanley codified this position and expressed his frustration toward expository preaching in his book *Communicating for a Change*. In the context of describing the three approaches to preaching (*teach the Bible to people*, *teach people the Bible*, and *teach people how to live a life that reflects the values, principles, and truths of the Bible*) and identifying the one that is most effective, he seemed to place expository preaching in the "least concerned about engaging the audience and most ineffective" category.

> The idea here is to teach the content of the Bible so that interested parties can understand and navigate their way through the Scriptures.
>
> This is usually the goal of a preacher or teacher who methodically and systematically teachers verse by verse through books of the Bible. This is the perfect approach for the communicator whose goal is to simply explain what the Bible means. Wherever we left off last week, we will pick up again next week. This approach requires no creativity. This approach need not include any

[1] Robby Gallaty and Steven Smith, *Preaching for the Rest of Us: Essentials for Text-Driven Preaching* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2018), 7. See also Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 2017), 23–93 and Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews, eds., *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 1–8.

> application. This approach assumes a great deal of interest by the audience. And honestly, this approach is easy when compared to other methods of communication.[2]

Stanley concluded by being even more direct: "Every communicator I know wants to see lives changed as a result of their preaching and teaching…. Preaching for life change requires far less information and more application. Less explanation and more inspiration. Less first century and more twenty-first century."[3]

Although he misses the proverbial bullseye, perhaps he has struck a target. In other words, even though Stanley's characterization of expository preaching and *all* expositors is deficient, he does seem to have identified a deficiency in the typical approach. For what is the essence of this position? Is it not true that a pastor who is committed to exposition can be in danger of being so focused on the "then" of the text that he gives little attention to the "now" of his audience? And by this reference, we ignore the real audience in front of the preacher: their background, hurts, struggles, experiences, needs, and brokenness. Of all types of preachers, we may indeed be the ones who are in the most danger of forgetting that we are not simply preaching sermons but that we are preaching sermons to people!

The authors of several homiletics textbooks, many of which advocate for expository preaching, have included the role of the audience in the sermonic process. A classic example is John Stott's seminal work on preaching, *Between Two Worlds*. In describing the task, and perhaps the difficulty of the job of the faithful expositor, he used the metaphor of "bridge-building" to describe preaching. The simple, yet profound, idea is that the effective preacher must have one foot firmly planted in the world of the text and his other foot securely immersed in the world of the day.

> It is because preaching is not exposition only but communication, not just the exegesis of a text but the conveying of a God-given message to living people who need to hear it, that I am going to develop a different metaphor to illustrate the essential nature of preaching. It is non-biblical in the sense that it is not explicitly used in Scripture, but I hope to show that what it lays upon us is a fundamentally biblical task. The metaphor is that of bridge-building.
>
> Now a bridge is a means of communication between two places which would otherwise be cut off from one another by a river or a ravine. It makes possible a flow of traffic which without it would be impossible. What, then, does the gorge or chasm represent? And what is the bridge which spans it? The chasm is the deep rift between the biblical world and the modern world.[4]

[2] Andy Stanley and Lane Jones, *Communicating for a Change* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2006), 93–94.

[3] Stanley and Jones, *Communicating for a Change*, 96.

But, is even this level of contextualization really all there is to contemporary expository preaching? Perhaps a more foundational question is: can a sermon be true to the text and simultaneously truly effective for a twenty-first century audience? And if so, is this all that should be considered for contextualization in preaching: the historical text and the contemporary audience? Biblically, what should be included when we discuss context for a sermon? Furthermore, is there a biblical precedent for and a model to follow when doing so?

In this essay, I will attempt to provide answers to these questions and in so doing offer an approach to contextualization in preaching with a clear biblical foundation. In order to do so, four aspects of contextualization, which are present in contemporary preaching literature, will be identified and described briefly. Then, by using basic descriptions of each of these aspects as a guide, the book of Hebrews, and specifically its use of the Melchizedekian priesthood motif from Genesis 14 and its application to Christ, will be analyzed in order to offer both a biblical precedent for and model of a four-fold aspect of contextualization in expository preaching. Finally, implications for preaching today will be set forth.

The Four Considerations for Contextualization

In this section, the four-fold aspect of contextualization will be briefly identified and described.

The Historical Context

First, the historical context is situated in the interpretation of the pericope in its immediate textual milieu. Such concepts as purpose and occasion and meaning as related to the original author and his primary audience, or authorial intent, are essential in determining this aspect.

[4] John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 137–38.

Carter, Duvall, and Hays illustrate this concept in preaching by comparing and contrasting the "their town" and "our town" of the sermon. For them, "their town" functionally describes the process of determining the historical aspect of sermon preparation. "We are referring here to 'their town' information, which includes context, history, and culture of the time…. We call it 'their town' information because the original audience would have known or quickly perceived this pertinent material as they received the message."[5] This context is essentially what the text meant "then" and is foundational for any approach to exposition. They explain, "Good biblical preaching occurs only when you personally grasp the full meaning of God's Word."[6] Many texts on expository preaching include this aspect as the beginning step for sermon composition. This practice of locating the historical context may involve such components as historical and cultural analysis, literary analysis, and grammatical and syntactical analysis.[7]

The Canonical Context

Second is what may be called the canonical context. This aspect may be encapsulated in the concepts of Biblical Theology or Exegetical Theology. The main point in discerning canonical context is to consider a context that extends beyond the immediate passage being investigated. As Greidanus notes, "Theological interpretation raises such questions as, Why was this text preserved in the canon? What does God reveal in this text about himself and his will? And what does this message mean in the context of the whole Bible?"[8] Stated simply, this aspect may ask how the truth or theology of the pericope connects to the larger redemptive story of God in his Word. Goldsworthy adds,

[5] Terry G. Carter, J. Scott Duvall, and J. Daniel Hays, *Preaching God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Preparing, Developing, and Delivering the Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 72–73.

[6] Carter, Duvall, and Hays, *Preaching God's Word*, 73.

[7] See Carter, Duvall, and Hays, *Preaching God's Word*, 74–83; David Alan Black, "Exegesis for the Text-Driven Sermon," in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon,* ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 138–52; and Robinson's definition of expository preaching in Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 21.

[8] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 102.

> From the evangelical preacher's point of view, biblical theology involves the quest for the big picture, or the overview, of biblical revelation. It is the nature of biblical revelation that it tells a story rather than sets out timeless principles in abstract. It does contain many timeless principles, but not in abstract. They are given in a historical context of progressive revelation. If we allow the Bible to tell its own story, we find a coherent and meaningful whole. To understand this meaningful whole we have to allow the Bible to stand as it is: a remarkable complexity yet a brilliant unity, which tells the story of the creation and saving plan of God.[9]

A key component of canonical context is intertextuality. Hays comments, "The phenomenon of intertextuality—the imbedding of fragments of an earlier text within a later one—has always played a major role in the cultural traditions that are heir to Israel's Scriptures: the voice of Scripture, regarded as authoritative in one way or another, continues to speak in and through later texts that both depend on and transform the earlier."[10] In the search for the "imbedded fragments," the preacher may find direct quotes, obvious allusions, or more faint echoes of the earlier text.[11] However, in preaching, we are not limiting ourselves to the New Testament's use of the Old when searching for the canonical context. Hays continues, "Such intertextual processes do not begin only with the formal closure of the canon."[12] Thus, even Old Testament texts may depend on or transform earlier Old Testament pericopes for the communication or teaching of God's revelation. This concept is important for determining canonical context.

Although today, several hermeneutics and homiletics texts include a section on canonical context, or at least show evidence of applying the concept to the discipline of preaching, it may have been Walter Kaiser who codified it as a methodology for effectively preaching the Old Testament.

> There is one place where canonical concerns must be introduced, however. *After* we have finished our exegetical work of establish-

[9] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 22.

[10] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 14.

[11] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 29–33.

[12] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 14.

> ing what, indeed, the author of the paragraph or text under consideration was trying to say, *then* we must go on to set this teaching in its total Biblical context by way of gathering together what God has continued to say on the topic. We should then compare this material with our findings concerning the passage being investigated. But mind this point well: canonical context must appear only as part of our summation and not as part of our exegesis.[13]

In practice, then, canonical context is the process of looking for how meaning or the truth(s) located in the immediate historical context of a passage is projected through the rest of the canon or perhaps even finds its terminus in another location in Scripture. "Preaching," states Goldsworthy, "to be true to God's plan and purpose, should constantly call people back to this perspective. If God has given us a single picture of reality, albeit full of texture and variety, a picture spanning the ages, then our preaching must reflect the reality that is thus presented."[14]

The Contemporary Context

Third, the contemporary context is situated in the significance of the pericope for the preacher's current and contemporary audience. Again, Carter, Duvall, and Hays's comparison and contrast of the "their town" and "our town" of the sermon helps with the understanding of this concept in preaching. For them, "our town" functionally describes the process of communicating to the contemporary context in the sermon. They write, "Crossing the bridge poses the greatest challenge to the interpreter but also promises the greatest reward, because here we cross from the ancient world to our world. The theological principle reflected in the meaning of the text allows us to cross from the biblical world to our world. Remember, this theological principle is tied to *meaning*."[15] This context is essentially why the text matters, or the "so what," to your specific audience and is essential for any effective sermon. Again, Carter, Duval, and Hays explain, "The burden of communication in the preaching event lies with you, the preacher…. The burden is on you to organize it in a way they can follow, say it in terms they understand, and

[13] Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 83.
[14] Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 22.
[15] Carter, Duvall, and Hays, *Preaching God's Word*, 61.

illustrate it, when needed, for maximum listener comprehension."[16] Many texts on expository preaching will include this aspect as a beginning step for sermon composition. Contemporary context is often grasped through what is referred to as audience analysis or audience exegesis.[17] Knowing the contemporary context should impact almost every aspect of the sermon including illustrations, application, and the preacher's style.[18] Ultimately, the contemporary context in the sermon must concern itself at all cost with the *real* audience in front of the preacher—their background, hurts, struggles, experiences, needs, and brokenness—and lead to a type of preaching in which these are addressed.

The Eschatological Context

The final context is what may be called the eschatological context. This aspect refers to how the theology or biblical truth(s) of the pericope under investigation connects to the "so what" in a consummatory way thus providing ultimate hope applied to the circumstance of the audience. This hope is futuristic and transcends the current place and time of the physical world by finding its foundation in the reigning King and his kingdom. The goal of the eschatological context is to find and reveal how the meaning of the text legitimately connects to the ultimate hope and provide grounds for why this hope should be relied upon.

Admittedly, this context may be the most difficult to define and specifically locate in texts on homiletic theory and practice. Nonetheless, conceptually this aspect is both present and modeled in sermonic material in the Bible itself. Consider Jesus's approach in what is known as "The Beatitudes" in the Sermon on the Mount:

> Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness,

[16] Carter, Duvall, and Hays, *Preaching God's Word*, 100.
[17] See Carter, Duvall, and Hays, *Preaching God's Word*, 85–98; and Wayne V. McDill, *The Moment of Truth: A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 1999), 39–55.
[18] See Vines and Shaddix, *Power in Pulpit,* 262–82.

> for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matt 5:3–12)[19]

Contextually, his entire message may have been situated in the fact that even though the kingdom is not completely here, it is here because the King has arrived. Therefore, how to live as kingdom citizens now in light of that reality and the hope it brings must be grasped. Jesus said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt 6:19–21). Later, Jesus continued with a similar thought: "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matt 6:33).

Even though this aspect of context is not directly locatable in most homiletics textbooks, Goldsworthy may have approached the idea conceptually:

> No New Testament document makes sense apart from the central affirmation that Jesus Christ has come among us as the bringer of salvation. Though a composite of twenty-seven distinct documents, the New Testament is unified as a book about Jesus who is the Savior who came to live, die, rise again; who comes among his people now through his word and Spirit; and who will come again in great glory to judge the living and the dead.... The soundest methodological starting point is the gospel since the person of Jesus is proclaimed as the final and fullest expression of God's revelation of his kingdom.[20]

The eschatological context, then, may be understood in how the text under investigation projects toward the ultimate hope that we have in Christ, how we are called to worship the returning King, and how we should live now as citizens of his kingdom; and thus, how the pericope should be preached in light of this hope and call to worship.

[19] All biblical quotations are from the New American Standard (NASB 1995) unless otherwise noted.

[20] Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 19 and 25.

Hebrews as a Biblical Model for the Four-Fold Aspect of Contextualization

Having located and described a potential four-fold sense of contextualization for preaching, a biblical justification for employing such an approach should be sought. Therefore, a brief analysis of a portion of the book of Hebrews will be conducted by using the four aspects of contextualization identified above as the guide. The goal is to offer a biblical model for effectively using each of the four aspects of contextualization in a sermon. Due to the limited space of the current study, if one occurrence of each aspect can be found within the Hebrews, then perhaps a biblical precedent, rather than a merely practical one, can be given for the use of multiple levels of contextualization in expository preaching. Before proceeding to this investigation, a rationale for using Hebrews as a sermonic model will be presented. Then, the Melchizedekian priesthood concept present in the book will be traced briefly in order to be offered as a template for employing this four-fold contextualization in expository preaching.

In his book, *Preaching for a Verdict*, J. Josh Smith argued that Hebrews is a model for exhortation in expository preaching. He contends, "Perhaps no book of the New Testament gives a greater example of exhortation than Hebrews."[21] His primary argument for employing Hebrews as such a model for exhortation in preaching was not simply that Hebrews exhorts the reader as its primary aim, but that Hebrews also was originally intended to be a written sermon.[22] Smith argues for this position based on the current state of scholarship, the linguistic structure of the book, and the stated purpose of the author himself being a "word of exhortation" (Heb 13:22).[23] He concludes, "Although Hebrews remains a book about which much debate ensues, it is now generally recognized that the book of Hebrews was originally a written sermon."[24] Note David Allen's summation, which Smith himself quoted in his work: "The frequent and well-placed imperative and hortatory subjunctives coupled with the interweaving of exposition and exhortation supports its sermon nature."[25] Smith's conclusion is that Hebrews, then, contains more than

[21] J. Josh Smith, *Preaching for a Verdict: Recovering the Role of Exhortation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019), 87.

[22] Smith, *Preaching for a Verdict*, 88–89.

[23] See also Smith, *Preaching for a Verdict*, 87–89.

[24] Smith, *Preaching for a Verdict*, 88.

[25] David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 25. See also

simply the content of exhortation but is also itself a model for preaching: "Because of this, the book of Hebrews is itself not just a call to exhort, but also an example of exhortation in preaching. If seen as it truly is, one will then see it as an 'excellent model for any preacher.'"[26]

If Smith's underlying understanding is correct, can the same approach to mining Hebrews as justification for the use of other biblical elements of expository preaching be borrowed by the current study? The answer would seem to be "yes." Below is the methodology that will be used to discover if the preacher may and even should consider multiple contexts when interpreting a pericope and preaching an expository sermon.[27]

With this justification established, this study will now briefly examine how the author of Hebrews uses aspects of contextualization for an effective "sermon" in the lives of his contemporary audience. In order to do this, the study will focus specifically on how the author uses the notion of the Melchizedekian priesthood. This concept is first raised in the Bible in Genesis 14 and then perhaps first referenced messianically in Psalm 110. In Hebrews, the concept of Christ as the ultimate and final High Priest may be implied from the beginning paragraph of the book: "When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1:3). Certainly, Christ as the Christian's High Priest is foundational for the aim of the book as a whole: "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, *yet* without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so

Smith, *Preaching for a Verdict*, 89.

[26] Smith, *Preaching for a Verdict*, 89. See also Andrew Lincoln, *Hebrews: A Guide* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 22.

[27] It should be acknowledged that Smith used Hebrews in a more direct way than this present study is proposing. After discovering and highlighting the "written exhortation" component of the book, he used this information as the foundation for employing exhortation in text-driven preaching today. This current study is using the book of Hebrews and the argument that it is a sermon in a less direct way. However, at a foundational level the methodology still seems valid. For instance, if Hebrews is indeed a written sermon, as thus its employment of one element of preaching, namely exhortation, should be done in preaching today; then, if some other elements of interpretation and/or preaching are also found to be present in the book, namely the concepts of contextualization, would it not seem to follow that these aspects should be used in contemporary preaching as well? It is at this level only that this study is borrowing from Smith's model.

that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:15–16).

The first explicit mention of the Christological priesthood in the book of Hebrews is in 2:17: "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Furthermore, Melchizedek and the concept of his priesthood, which the author seems to indicate is of a different order or kind, is introduced in chapter 5: "Just as He says also in another passage, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'" (v. 6). And later in the same chapter the author continues to argue, "And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 5:9–10). However, the specific explanation of Melchizedek in his historical and canonical context, which sets the basis for the type of priest of which Christ is the archetype, is not raised by the author until chapter 7. The Melchizedekian priesthood and its use by Psalm 110 is the basis for what the author is intending to teach about Christ and therefore the authority for the audience's response to his exhortation (Heb 8:1).

With this overall theme in view, how the author of Hebrews used the Melchizedek priesthood in his "sermon" in reference to the four aspects of contextualization will be discussed below. The goal will be to find one example of each and offer a brief explanation of their uses in order to justify that the reference does indeed constitute the particular aspect of contextualization.

The Historical Context in Hebrews

First, we consider the historical context for the interpretation and use of Melchizedek in Hebrews. Remember this aspect is primarily concerned with such concepts as purpose and occasion and meaning as related to the original author's intent to his primary audience. Its principal function is determining what the pericope or concept meant in its original or historical setting and is foundational for understanding how to use Scripture in a valid or objective way. Did the author of Hebrews consider this context for his reference to Melchizedek and his priesthood? As has already been argued above, the author first references "the order of Melchizedek" and his priesthood in chapter 5. In this chapter, the primary reference is to Psalm 110 and not Genesis 14. Furthermore, there does not appear to be any concern or consideration of a historical reference to Melchizedek at this point.

However, chapter 5 is only the introduction of this concept. The ex-

planation of Melchizedek and the important tenets of his priesthood for the contemporary audience are not raised until chapter 7. There, at least two or three primary related points are made of Melchizedek's priesthood: it was perpetual, without beginning or end, indicated by him having no genealogy recorded in Genesis; it was greater than the Levitical priesthood, indicated by the explanation that Levi (through his father Abraham) paid tithes to Melchizedek; and it did not follow the natural decent of the physical law through Aaron but was a priesthood of a different order. Even though no direct quote of Genesis 14 is used, the author makes his case through an obvious allusion to Genesis 14:17–20, which both respects and explains the historical context. Consider the following:

> For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all *the spoils*, was first of all, by the translation *of his name*, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace. Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually. (Heb 7:1–3)

The author of Hebrews certainly referenced and explained the historical context of the Melchizedekian priesthood in order to make his ultimate point about Christ's priesthood and apply it to his audience.

The Canonical Context in Hebrews

Second, we consider the canonical context for the use of Melchizedek, and specifically his unique priesthood, in Hebrews. Remember, here the main point in discerning the canonical context is to consider a context that extends beyond the immediate passage being investigated. The primary aim in this process is to look for how meaning or the truth(s) located in the immediate historical context of a passage or biblical idea has a trajectory through the rest of the canon or perhaps even finds its terminus in another location in Scripture. In Hebrews, simply by the fact that the author quotes Psalm 110 (which itself already contains intertextuality) no less that than four times and applies it to Christ shows that he is completely aware of and knows the importance of the canonical aspect of contextualization. Additionally, the author of Hebrews references the history of Genesis 14:17–20 in order to demonstrate that Christ fulfills the unique "order" of the Melchizedekian priesthood of Psalm 110. The connection of this content further strengthens the case for the intentional understanding and use of canon-

ical context in Hebrews.

Ultimately, by referencing Genesis 14 through Psalm 110, the author of Hebrews communicates a bigger understanding of the theological truth of the Melchizedekian priesthood as it was being projected in the canon messianically. Taking it to its natural conclusion in his "sermon," the author shows the terminus of this idea in Christ.

> For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become *such* not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. For it is attested of *Him*, 'You are priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" (Heb 7:14–17)

The author of Hebrews certainly utilized the canonical context of the Melchizedekian priesthood in order to make his ultimate point that Christ's priesthood was the fulfillment of this priesthood for the sake or advantage of his audience.

The Contemporary Context in Hebrews

Third, we consider the contemporary context of the use of the Melchizedekian priesthood, directly applied to Christ, by the author of Hebrews. This aspect is essentially why the text matters, or the "so what," to the contemporary audience. This context may be equally essential for any effective preaching as is the historical context. Remember, the contemporary context must concern itself with the *real* audience—their background, hurts, struggles, experiences, needs, and brokenness—and lead to preaching in such a way that these are addressed in the sermon. In order to investigate if Hebrews concerned itself with the contemporary context, we need to understand the historical purpose and occasion of the book. Although consensus on the issue is impossible, Allen's general statement proves helpful.

> Whatever the crisis facing the readers, it is clear that the author viewed them as Christians, most likely Jewish Christians, and he alternatively warned and encouraged them to press on to maturity in the faith. A determination of purpose must take into account that the epistle is primarily pastoral in nature and only secondarily doctrinal…. Thus, the necessity of pressing on to maturity in the midst of difficulty (6:1–3) by means of drawing near, holding

fast, and stirring one another up to love and good works (10:19–25) would appear to serve as a viable statement of purpose.[28]

Upon further investigation of the content of the book, that these Jewish believers were, either by an unintentional drift or an intentional departure, in danger of slipping away or abandoning their walk with God through their worship of Christ seems obvious (see 2:1–4; 3:7–4:13; 6:1–12; 10:19–39; and 12:14–29).

Why did the author write to his audience or "preach this sermon"? Allen asserts that it is to exhort them to "press on to maturity" (6:1), and the author does so by giving a warning not to drift and a call to pay attention (2:1; 4:11; and 10:26–27). Perhaps, then, the most relevant question for this study is on what basis was this call to press on to maturity and avoiding drifting away. For the author of Hebrews, the Melchizedekian priesthood fulfilled in Christ is at least part of the authoritative basis on which the purpose of the book is laid. Namely, his is a priesthood with a high priest who can sympathize with the weakness of the audience yet remain without sin. His is a permanent priesthood. And, his is a priesthood which mediates of the better covenant.

> But Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath which came after the Law, *appoints* a Son, made perfect forever. (Heb 7:24–28)

Jesus's permanent and better priesthood becomes one of the reasons for the audience not to "shrink back" but to "press on to maturity:" "And since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb 10:21–22). The author of Hebrews utilized the Christological fulfillment of the Melchizedekian priesthood in order to address the real background, hurts, struggles, experiences, needs, and brokenness of his

[28] Allen, *Hebrews*, 82.

audience.

The Eschatological Context in Hebrews

Finally, we consider the eschatological context as related to the Christological fulfillment of the Melchizedekian priesthood in Hebrews as the ultimate hope for the audience. Remember, this aspect is referring to how the theology or biblical truth(s) of the pericope under investigation connects to the "so what" in a consummatory way providing the ultimate hope to the dilemma of the audience. This hope is futuristic and transcends the current place and time of the physical world by finding its foundation in the reigning King and his kingdom. As mentioned above, this context may be the most difficult to locate specific references to in biblical interpretation and biblical preaching texts. Perhaps it comes as no surprise, then, that this context is the least observable in the corpus of Hebrews.

The eschatological aspect of the Melchizedekian priesthood is indeed in Hebrews, but it is much more indirect. In order to find how this context is being used, we will consider the book on a macro-level. When we do this, we see once more that the author's method is the connection to and use of Psalm 110. In Heb 1:4, he quotes Psalm 110, but not the verses directly related to the Melchizedekian priesthood. Rather, in comparing the divine Son to the angels, which shows his superiority, the author concludes by citing the verse 1 which contains the promises of God to a mighty King and Lord to make all his enemies his footstool: "But to which of the angels has He ever said, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'?" (Heb 1:13). Thus, he uses the whole context of Psalm 110 to link subtly the victorious kingship of the Messiah, the perpetual priesthood of the Messiah, and to set up a larger point.

Then, in chapter 2, by sympathizing with the current condition of his audience, he acknowledges that we presently do not see everything in subjection to Jesus. So, the author quotes a section of Psalm 8, which implies a similar concept as Ps 110:1: "'You have put all things in subjection under His feet.' For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him" (Heb 2:8). However, this current condition has a purpose and is only temporary. The author implies the "lowering" of the Messiah is only for a little while, and the audience will see eventually all things, including his enemies, under his feet as a footstool:

> But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste

> death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. (Heb 2:9–10)

The question is how and, perhaps more importantly, when will this reversal of the lowering occur? For the author of Hebrews, the answer to the "how" appears to be in the Christological fulfillment of the superiority and permanence of the Melchizedekian high priesthood promised in Psalm 110: "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, 'sat down at the right hand of God,' waiting from that time onward 'until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet'" (Heb 10:11–13). And, for the author the "when" seems to be the implied eschaton, which is also assured because of the Messianic High Priest's finished work of making purification of sins: "So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference* to sin, to those who eagerly await Him" (Heb 9:28). The author clearly uses an eschatological aspect of the Melchizedekian priesthood motif in his "sermon." The ultimate hope for this audience's current dilemma, who they should look to, and the sole basis for pressing on to maturity while enduring hardship is a consummatory one. It is Christ, his permanent high priesthood, and the promise of not only his coming but the total and complete subjugation of his enemies.

Implications for Contemporary Preaching

Considering how the author of Hebrews presented his "sermon," it does appear there is a biblical precedent and model for a four-fold approach to contextualization. This model, then, can and perhaps should be used in biblical exposition. With this in mind, this essay will now conclude by offering five implications for contemporary preaching.

First, exegete the text and the audience. This suggestion is perhaps the least novel and most obvious one. However, the study of Hebrews does indeed confirm what we have always known and argued for in expository preaching. There are at least two components to consider for an effective expository sermon: the text and the audience. We must continue to find the content and substance of our messages in the valid, authoritative interpretation of Scripture that is embedded in the objective truth of the historical context of the pericope. And, we must consider the audience. We must translate and communicate that objective biblical truth to our audience in a way they understand and that intersects with their lives. We practice the truth that we are preaching to people. The quote that has often been attributed to Danny Akin seems particularly apropos here: "What we say is more important than how we say it, but how we say it has never been more important."[29]

Second, preach to who you were and really still are. This is an extension or "Part B" of the previous implication. However, a helpful question when we are considering the audience in front of us is not only to think *about* your audience but to think *like* your audience. Consider their backgrounds and experiences and immerse yourself in their hurts, struggles, needs, and brokenness. Think about who you used to be before you were a believer and think about the struggles you still currently carry as a believer. This practice will help make the audience "real" and a real part of your sermon process. Zack Eswine, in *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, framed the importance of this approach for us: "And I have been asking myself this question: Could I now reach who I once was? . . . Every preacher needs to ask this question."[30] Preach in such a way that it would reach who you used to be and connect to who you still are.

Third, connect the big story. Since the beginning when God spoke to his people, he has always been saying the same thing, although he has said it finally in Christ. The practice of the author of Hebrews confirms this perspective. Therefore, when you preach, show the consistency of Scripture and the interconnectedness of the entire canon. Wherever you are in the Bible, and whatever truth you are preaching, show the audience how that theology projects through the tapestry of the entire canon. This will show the consistency and goodness of God and the fullness of Scripture and make for a richer understand of Scripture in the lives of your hearers.

Fourth, giv'em Jesus. The argument for the need to preach Christ in every sermon from every text has been made multiple times over and models for doing so are readily accessible. Summarizing those perspectives here are not necessary. However, in light of what has been observed in Hebrews, reaffirming that a distinctively Christian sermon is not complete until a definitive connection to Christ has been made seems appropriate. Therefore, wherever you are in the Bible, and whatever truth you are preaching, show the audience how the tapestry of the entire canon legitimately connects to or finds its terminus in Christ. The author of Hebrews certainly applied this practice with Old Testament

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[29] See Akin, Allen, and Matthews, *Text-Driven Preaching*, 7.

[30] Zack Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons That Connect with Our Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 11.

pericopes and the centrality of Christ. The contemporary expositor is called to do the same.

Finally, don't quit until you're finished. From the conclusions drawn from the practice of the Hebrews' "sermon," a case can be made that all preaching should end with a call to hope, even the ones that contain warnings or judgment motifs and certainly ones that address those facing hardship. We do not have to preach people into despair; in our culture they probably arrived at the sermon already there. We must paint them a picture of hope—ultimate hope that is consummatory and found beyond this time, beyond this world, and beyond any earthly kingdoms. Remember when we preach, we are expositing the King and his kingdom. In him, there is ultimate and final hope, and in it, our audience can reside now as a foretaste of that which is indeed to come. Show your audience this hope and invite them into it now. Preach every sermon with this hope in view.

Conclusion

In *Hebrews: A Guide*, Andrew Lincoln seemed to acknowledge indirectly that the author of Hebrews did aim at and accomplish some level of these four aspects of contextualization.

> Clearly Hebrews is not the sort of sermon that has been produced on the spur of the moment. Its preacher has felt his way into the problems and discouragements his hearers are facing, reflected on them deeply as he pondered the Scriptures, and been given the insights to make connections with their situation. In the process his sermon becomes the vehicle for God's earlier word, as it is read in the light of reflection on the significance of what God has now done in Christ, speaking again to the hearers. But that is not all. The preacher has clearly worked hard at crafting the sermon, choosing what will be the most effective language and employing all the rhetorical skills at his disposal to ensure that its argument will convince, that it will capture both his hearer's minds and their emotions, and that it will press home his message with urgency and compassion. Seen in this way, it can be said to contain features that make it an excellent model for any preacher. What is more, it reflects a confidence about the efficacy of preaching.[31]

[31] Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 21–22.

Preach! Preach trusting the efficacy of preaching. Preach having felt your way into and deeply reflected on the problems and discouragement of your hearers. Preach having pondered the Scriptures. Preach pressing the message into both the hearer's minds and emotions. And yes, preach in context, following the example of the author of Hebrews, that great biblical herald of God's eternal Word.

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Balanced Preaching: A Four-Legged Stool as a Model

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Abstract: *While consecutive expository preaching has become the norm in many conservative churches, different preachers have different emphases. Some focus upon detailed expositions of the text so that their sermons sound like running commentaries. Other preachers emphasize certain favorite theological themes. Some rush straight into application, with little explanation of the text. In recent years, preaching in which the focus of every sermon is how the text fits into the history of redemption has become popular in certain circles. I have developed a model for my students in which each of these four emphases is treated like the legs of a stool. While some texts may call for more emphasis on one "leg," every good sermon should have all four elements. Furthermore, over time, one's preaching ministry should be balanced among these four aspects.*

Key Words: *balanced preaching, consecutive expository preaching, Dennis Johnson, Edmund Clowney, Jay Adams, John MacArthur, preaching with purpose, redemptive-historical preaching.*

What's a Preacher to Do? Conflicting Approaches to Preaching

In 1999, Dennis Johnson, one of my professors from Westminster Seminary in California, shared an unpublished paper he wrote for his preaching students entitled "What's A Young Preacher to Do? Toward Reconciling Rival Approaches to Reformed Preaching." In this paper, Dr. Johnson shares his seminary experience in which he was exposed to various competing preaching models. Proponents of each approach offer reasons why their system is superior and point out potential weaknesses or excesses of other homiletic methods. Later, Dr. Johnson incorporated a revision of this material in chapter 2 "Priorities and Polarities in Preaching" in his book, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ*

from all the Scriptures.[1] Here he categorizes reformed preaching into three broad categories which I found to be helpful.

1. **Preaching to Convert.** Evangelism was an emphasis in the sermons of the Reformers, the Puritans, and many great preachers such as Spurgeon. Many evangelical churches in our day make the evangelization of the lost a primary focus of the worship service, which often culminates in an altar call. Preaching to felt needs has been an emphasis of seeker-sensitive churches whose preaching is primarily aimed at the conversion of the lost. There also have been well-known reformed preachers in recent years whose preaching has sought to show how the gospel speaks to people in our postmodern culture.

2. **Preaching to Edify**. Edifying-sanctifying preaching, of which Jay Adams is an example, focuses upon the application of the practical purpose of each biblical text to affect the congregation. This preaching is primarily aimed at believers for their edification and growth in holiness. Hearers should walk away knowing how their lives should be changed and what they must do as a result of the proclamation of God's Word.

3. **Preaching to Instruct.** Certain reformed denominations have a heritage of doctrinal preaching, particularly in their Sunday evening services during which they may preach through a confession or catechism. In more recent years, Redemptive-Historical preaching, which focuses on the place of each text in God's unfolding plan of redemption (as exemplified by Johnson's mentor, Edmund Clowney), has been promoted in certain circles as the only proper approach to public proclamation.

Dennis Johnson seeks to synthesize the best of each of the three broad categories he describes in what he refers to as "The Gospel Changes Everything: An Approach to Evangelistic, Edificatory, Historic-Redemptive Preaching."[2] Johnson cites Jack Miller and Tim Keller, who probably fall more into the Redemptive-Historical camp as exemplifying this balanced approach.

Other popular variants which might be subsets of some of Johnson's

[1] Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 25–61.

[2] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim,* 54–61.

broad categories include the "Fallen Condition Focus" approach of Bryan Chappell (whom Johnson puts broadly in the Redemptive-Historical preaching category of a given text)[3] and those who emphasize a law-gospel paradigm (resembling Lutheran tradition) in preaching. In the past, most preaching came in the form of textual sermons, typically based upon one verse, which typically becomes a jumping-off point for evangelism, edification, and/or instruction. I personally have read and profited from hundreds of textual sermons by Charles Spurgeon, some of which faithfully expound and apply the text and some of which are launch pads for many true and edifying statements which are not directly drawn from the chosen passage.

As someone who has been training preachers for almost forty years, I appreciate the dilemma a young preacher faces as he is exposed to various preaching paradigms. I have been exposed to preaching influences like those described by Dr. Johnson and have come up with a somewhat different model for embracing the strengths of each approach while trying to avoid the pitfalls. Just as Edmund Clowney was the most significant influence on Dr. Johnson, Jay Adams has had the greatest impact on my thinking.

My Personal Preaching Journey

My exposure to different approaches to preaching is similar to that described by Dennis Johnson, but I employ some different categories.

Consecutive Expository Preaching

I had the immense privilege of being converted as a teen at Believers Chapel in Dallas, Texas, in the early 1970s. It was an incredible blessing to be under the consecutive expository preaching ministry of Dr. S. Lewis Johnson. Hundreds of thousands of his tapes were sent out around the world, and now, over 1500 of his expositions are available online.[4] Dr. Johnson influenced a future generation of pastors and theologians including John MacArthur, Steve Lawson, Gregory Beale, William McRae, and Ray Ortlund (who was my first youth leader). In addition to Dr. Johnson, Believers Chapel had some amazing expositors in the congregation (most of whom were on faculty at Dallas Seminary) including Bruce Waltke and Haddon Robinson. Dr. Waltke's mid-week

[3] Bryan Chapell, *The Gospel According to Daniel: A Christ-Centered Approach* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014).

[4] S. Lewis Johnson Jr., n.d., https://sljinstitute.net/.

teaching from the Psalms and Proverbs was life changing. When Dr. Robinson preached from James at a summer conference I was absolutely mesmerized. I had never heard such a gripping proclamation of God's Word. Later, I eagerly devoured his classic work on Expository Preaching.[5] Each of these men, while possessing different gifts and emphases, modeled faithful consecutive expository preaching. I was convinced that this was by far the best way to "preach the word" (2 Tim 4:2).

Doctrinal Preaching

During my early days as a Christian, I was exposed to expositors who focused almost entirely upon the theology of the text. Their sermons would typically focus upon the doctrine and often would be very light on application. This was especially the case when the preacher had come to a new theological conviction. For example, when one preacher became a convinced five-point Calvinist, his expository sermons tended to be about how each passage supports God's sovereignty and the doctrines of grace. Another brother shifted his eschatological position away from dispensationalism and towards covenantal amillennialism and suddenly his sermons, week after week, seemed to focus upon how the text relates to his new understanding of the continuity between Israel and the church. I will say that I benefited from such preaching and as a result was well-prepared for the Systematic Theology classes in seminary.

Preaching with Purpose

In the early 1980s, I had the blessing of pastoring an underground English-speaking church in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Our congregation consisted of over two hundred expatriate believers from approximately thirty nationalities and various Protestant denominations. I sought to practice consecutive expository preaching, and the Lord saw fit to bless it in amazing ways, as many grew spiritually and many came to faith. While engaged in this ministry I shared a recording of one of my expository sermons (of which I was unjustly proud) with a friend who was in seminary. As the Proverb states, "faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Prov 27:6). My friend responded that his main criticism was that I was trying to say too much and that I had covered enough material for several sermons. He insisted that I read *Preaching with Purpose*, by Jay Ad-

[5] Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).

ams.[6] The two most important correctives I received from this book were that my preaching should focus upon the one main point (purpose) of the passage and that my proclamation should reflect the practical impact which the Lord intends the text to have upon my hearers. My preaching was transformed as I sought to work harder at being focused and relevant while being faithful to the text of God's Word.

Preaching Christ from All of Scripture

After being thrown out of Saudi Arabia in 1987 (which is another story), I completed my theological training at Westminster Seminary in California where I was extensively exposed to Redemptive-Historical preaching. We were taught that the focus of each sermon is to demonstrate how the text fits into God's redemptive plan. We were reminded that Jesus went through the entire Old Testament with his disciples demonstrating how it all points to him (Luke 24:27). We were impressed by how Geerhardus Vos's book *Biblical Theology* expounded the redemptive story from Genesis to Revelation.[7] Dr. Edmund Clowney masterfully instructed us in how to preach Christ from all of Scripture, especially the Old Testament.[8] We were taught to look for connections in our text to Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King. We were warned against moralistic preaching which failed to connect the biblical text to God's redemptive purposes. Dr. Clowney's work provided a paradigm for proclaiming Christ from the text and showed how any application had to be drawn explicitly from the redemptive purpose of the text.

More Preaching with Purpose

After completing my master's degree, I went on to get my Doctor of Ministry degree, beginning my study under Dr. Jay Adams. Dr. Adams had significant concerns with the Redemptive-Historical approach to preaching which he thought could become monotonous and lack practicality.[9] He taught us to determine the *telos* (purpose) of our text and then to construct a sermon which was focused upon God's intention for his people in the chosen passage. I finished my degree studying under Joey

[6] Jay E. Adams, *Preaching with Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986).

[7] Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth, 1975).

[8] Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002).

[9] Jay Adams, "The Proper Use of Biblical Theology in Preaching," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 9.1 (1987): 47–49.

Pipa, whose view of preaching was influenced by the experimental preaching represented by many of the Puritans and the Southern Presbyterians.

The Danger of Imbalance in Each Approach

While each of the approaches to which I was exposed has strengths, each has potential weaknesses. Often my main concern with some advocates of a particular approach would not be with what they were emphasizing, but rather with what they were neglecting. I also have observed that followers of an approach sometimes go to an extreme (for example, zero application in some Redemptive-Historical sermons) which their teachers would not embrace.

Concerns with Expository Preaching

Some expository preachers can sound merely like a running commentary on the text. A friend described his pastor's preaching as resembling someone cutting a long salami—each week the preacher would pick up where he stopped cutting last time and simply work his way through the text until his time was up. Such messages often lack clear focus and structure. A visitor walking in during the middle of the series may have difficulty picking up how this week's passage fits into the context of the book being studied. Some proponents of consecutive expository preaching so emphasize sticking to the text that they fail to make appropriate theological and redemptive connections to the rest of Scripture. If the gospel is not explicitly in the text, they may not bring in the gospel (except perhaps as an unrelated appeal to the lost at the end of the sermon). This can be especially problematic if a preacher is slowly going through a book of the Bible. They may spend several weeks in texts in which there is no explicit statement of the gospel. We should keep in mind that when the epistles were first read to the original audience, the gospel indicatives upon which the imperatives were based would have been heard in one sitting. Faithful exposition of a preaching pericope should be offered in the context of preaching Christ. Paul described his ministry as preaching the gospel and preaching Christ (Rom 1:15; 1 Cor 1:23). Some expository preaching is also weak in application. The preacher exegetes the text, explaining the meaning of the words and the grammar, without offering practical usefulness of the passage to his hearers.

Concerns with Doctrinal Preaching

Preaching which consistently emphasizes the great theological truths

appeals to many reformed congregations who love their doctrine and are well versed in their catechisms and confessions. Such preaching also appeals to many seminarians who already have an academic bent and to pastors who tend to live in their studies and love reading their books. A strength of such preaching is that it builds the congregants' mental muscles and may enhance their God-centered worship. Sometimes, however, such preaching fails to address the heart and lacks practical application to the lives of the hearers. The New Testament epistles serve as a model for how pastors should address their flocks. They build a doctrinal foundation and always address specific practical challenges faced by believers in the early churches.

Concerns with Application-Focused Preaching

Some preachers, by nature, have a very practical bent. They want to emphasize what their hearers must do in response to the text. Sometimes they can rush to the application without adequately following Paul's example (see Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, etc.) of laying the foundation for the application in God's work of redemption. Because human nature tends to go back to legalism and moralism, seeking to find some standard we can keep so that we can be good in the eyes of God, others, and ourselves, we need to continually be reminded of God's grace to us in the gospel. Some application-focused preaching carelessly uses biblical figures as mere moral examples without emphasizing how they point to Christ. Jay Adams rightly states that Christ should be at the center of all our preaching and that no sermon that would be acceptable in a synagogue or a Unitarian congregation should be preached in a Christian church.[10] Application-focused preachers also have less interest in proclaiming the doctrine of the passage because they want to get to the part of the message which they consider to be most practical.

Concerns with Redemptive-Historical Preaching

Redemptive-Historical preaching also has potential strengths and weaknesses. Many seminarians become enamored with the emphasis on preaching Christ from every text. Some of the proponents of this approach to preaching grew up in churches where the preaching was moralistic, focusing exclusively upon duty—serve more, evangelize more, give more, etc. They also heard biblical characters used as moral examples without connecting their stories to God's grand redemptive story—

[10] Adams, *Preaching with Purpose*, 11.

"You, like David, can fight the giant problems you face" or "Dare to be a Daniel!" They are thrilled when they realize that David functions as a type of Christ and that we were like the Israelites who needed God to provide an anointed warrior to defeat our great enemy against whom we were helpless and afraid (Heb 2:14–15).

In their quest to emphasize redemption and reject moralism, however, the pendulum can swing too far as they enforce their paradigm with a rigidity not supported by Scripture. Some judge any exemplary use of historical narrative as wrongfully moralistic. But Old Testament heroes can point both to our redemption in Christ and serve as practical examples. The New Testament explicitly uses Old Testament characters as examples. "Remember Lot's Wife" (Luke 17:32; also see Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11; and Heb 11). In addition, while the paradigm of first proclaiming the indicatives of what God has done for us in redemption as the basis for applying the text to our hearers is attractive and seems to follow Paul's pattern in some of his epistles (Romans, Ephesians, Colossians), the pattern of redemptive indicatives coming before and explicitly being the basis for the imperatives is not explicitly followed by all of the New Testament authors. For example, while James refers to our redemption as the basis for our new life in Christ ("Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures"; Jas 1:18),[11] James does not explicitly tie each of his many moral exhortations to redemption. Some proponents of Redemptive-Historical preaching even go so far as to deny the plain reading of books such as Proverbs and The Song of Solomon to state that the exclusive focus when preaching from these books should be to show Christ in the text. Some go so far as to say, "We come to church to hear what Christ has done for us, not what we should do for Christ." This statement addresses a valid point—that the gospel should be prominent in every sermon (and in worship) and that many preachers so focus upon duty that little emphasis is placed upon redemption, other than perhaps an appeal to the lost stuck on to the end of the sermon.

But this creates a false dichotomy. The Bible emphasizes both what God has done for us and what we should do for him in response. A final concern I have with this approach, from having heard many such sermons (often from seminarians), is that in their quest to find Christ in the text, they make redemptive connections (especially from the Old

[11] All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

Testament) which can seem obscure to ordinary congregants. Some sermons bring to mind the Magic Eye Pictures into which, if you stare long enough, you are supposed to see a hidden image. Years ago, I would stare at Magic Eye pictures and never see the image. I have had the same experience with some sermons which sought to show Christ and redemption in obscure ways. My advice to preachers would be to stick to clear connections easily followed by the ordinary person in the pew.

A Different Paradigm: A Four-Legged Stool

Rather than seeing the four primary approaches to which I have been exposed as competing, I teach my students to strive to incorporate the wisdom from each into their preaching ministry using the illustration of a four-legged stool. The legs represent how every sermon should expound the text, apply the text to the hearers, point to Christ, and be based upon sound doctrine. The seat of the stool represents the purpose of the text which holds the sermon together and to which each of the legs is connected.

The Seat: Purpose

I previously acknowledged how Jay Adams taught me the importance of determining and proclaiming the *telos* of the chosen biblical text. As the preacher studies, he should constantly keep in mind the need to ascertain the one main thing God would have to say to the congregation through this particular passage. After the bulk of studying is done, but before sermon composition begins, I encourage my students to write out a clear memorable statement of purpose which is succinct enough to be tweetable. A well-formed purpose statement will helpfully guide the rest of the process of sermon composition. Adams suggests

that the purpose should be so clear in the preacher's mind that "If your wife were to awaken you on Sunday morning at 4 o'clock and ask, 'What is the purpose of this morning's message?' you ought to be able to rattle it off in one crisp sentence, roll over and go to sleep again."[12] The purpose statement should correspond to the text without addition or subtraction.

Adams also distinguishes between the idea of theme, which tends to be more abstract, and purpose, which is aimed at the hearers.[13] The purpose of the sermon is to be developed and expounded on the main points of the preaching outline. The main points in the skeleton outline should develop the purpose statement in a way that is faithful to the text without going beyond the purpose statement or leaving out anything substantial. Adams encourages pastors to aim the main points of the sermon (the skeleton outline) at the hearers by using the second person plural "you" to help the preacher connect God's message to his hearers. He says that because preaching is heralding God's truth as his representatives, we should not be hesitant to speak with authority. Since the writers of the New Testament epistles often speak in the first-person plural, I believe that "we" may also be appropriate (often following the text itself). Different texts may have different types of purposes. Some passages are primarily to inform (1 Thess 4:13–17). Others are a call to action (Eph 4:1–3). Others appeal to both believers and unbelievers to turn from their sin to the Lord as they believe the gospel (Isa 55:1–7).

Leg 1: Exposition (2 Tim 2:15; 4:1–2)

Preaching derives its authority from Scripture so we must explicitly connect everything we say to God's Word. Christ himself is present in the faithful preaching of God's Word. Paul refers to Christ preaching peace to the Ephesians through those who first preached God's Word to them (Eph 2:17). Every faithful sermon must clearly explain the meaning of the chosen text. In order to do this, the preacher must be a workman who has no cause to be ashamed as he diligently studies to show himself approved by God (2 Tim 2:15). He must carefully study the passage, ideally in the original language, making sure that he understands the meaning of each word and how the words fit together grammatically.

The preacher also needs to understand his passage in its immediate

[12] Adams, *Preaching with Purpose*, 31.
[13] Adams, *Preaching with Purpose*, 42–46.

context and in the context of Scripture as a whole. An advantage of consecutive expository preaching is that the preacher (and hopefully the congregation) should be familiar with where the chosen text fits into the flow of the book being studied. After doing his own work in the text a preacher can benefit from exploring what the Lord has taught others through the centuries as he consults commentaries. He then needs to take what he learned and fashion it into a sermon which clearly explains the meaning of the text, as the Levites did when the Law was read in Nehemiah's day (Neh 8:8). The preacher's goal should not be to mesmerize his hearers with insights and explanations which will make them believe that they too must go to seminary and learn the original languages before they can understand Scripture. But rather as the preaching sheds light on the Scriptures, they should look into their open Bible and say, "Yes, that is clearly what this text means."

Leg 2: Christ-Centered Focus (Luke 24:27; Rom 1:15)

It is important that we always keep in mind that the big story in the Bible is redemption and that all of Scripture points to Christ. Proponents of Redemptive-Historical preaching have done a great service to the church to deliver us from merely moralistic preaching which focuses exclusively on the biblical imperatives while neglecting the gospel indicatives upon which the imperatives are based. They have also given appropriate warning against merely using historical figures as moral examples without showing how their exploits fit into the history of redemption and thus point to Christ. Many preachers find it difficult to make these redemptive connections in all of Scripture (especially the Old Testament). They may not have been trained in biblical theology. Just as most commentaries and lexicons don't offer much help for making applications, there aren't many commentaries that emphasize the redemptive connections emphasized by biblical theologians.

There are several things preachers can do to grow in this area. One is to take the time during their studies to consider and meditate upon the historical context of their passage and its place in the unfolding of God's plan of redemption. One should look for connections to redemptive themes—such as Jesus as God's Anointed Prophet, Priest, and King and God's acts of deliverance throughout Israel's history. When preaching the commands/law, we all are reminded how our failure to live up to God's standard drives us to Christ, who perfectly kept the law by his active obedience and fulfilled the just demands of the law through his passive obedience on our behalf. "So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith" (Gal 3:24). Weekly proclamation of the gospel ensures that any lost people in

the congregation hear the way of salvation. Believers also need to hear the gospel every Lord's Day. Just as Paul was eager to come to preach the gospel to the believers in Rome (Rom 1:15), we should be eager to preach Christ for the edification of the Christians in our churches.

Leg 3: Application (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11; 2 Tim 3:17; 4:2)

A frequent complaint against preaching in evangelical churches is that it is boring because it is both abstract and impractical. John Stott entitled his book about preaching *Between Two Worlds*.[14] In this book, Stott states that the pastor is to build a bridge connecting the world of the past about which we read in Scripture to where his hearers live in our present day. This takes effort. If a pastor's preparation consists merely of digging into the original languages and reading commentaries, his preaching may sound like a book that was written to people living "long ago and far away."[15] He needs to spend time considering how to speak specifically into his hearers' lives, or "zip code," as Haddon Robinson puts it.[16] Since most exegetical commentaries contain little or no application, the preacher will have to put in extra work on his own to build the bridge between his exposition of the text and the practical needs of his hearers.

Sometimes the work of faithfully applying the text expounded to the congregation is harder than exegetical work. There are some things a pastor can do to improve at making his sermons more practical. One is to identify connections between his congregation and the people and events in Scripture. For example, Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope," is often misused by those who don't consider and explain its meaning to Jeremiah's original hearers. Jeremiah spoke to the generation in Judah which was conquered and sent into exile by the Babylonians. The Lord promised that after seventy years the Lord would remember his covenant and miraculously bring them back to their land. This was fulfilled in the return of the exiles which is written about in Ezra and Nehemiah. This previous fulfillment does not mean that this passage is irrelevant to us today. The New Testament tells us that we are living as exiles in the world (1 Pet 2:11), and as exiles,

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[14] John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

[15] Adams, *Preaching with Purpose*, 31.

[16] Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 78.

we suffer. Yet, we are able to endure as we anticipate the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant promises in the return of Christ. Earlier in the chapter (Jer 29:1–7), the Lord tells the faithful among his people how to live during their exile—be busy in your family and vocation and pray for the peace of the city in which you are exiled. While we are not literally exiles in Babylon, this provides a great model for how we are to live in this present age.

Another way to get better at including useful applications in sermons is to spend time with your congregation in counseling and informal social situations. As you care for people, you will become more aware of their struggles and their spiritual needs and, hopefully, you will feel compelled to speak to these needs, and struggles in your sermons (without violating any confidences). Sometimes it could be helpful to have a cross-section of specific people in your church in mind as you are preparing your sermon. How would this passage help the couple having marriage problems, the single mom with the rebellious teen, the new widow, etc.

You also might think of people at different points in their lives—singles, young married, widows, older people. I try in every sermon to speak directly to the children in a practical way at least once or twice. Their parents, who are trying to get them to pay attention in church, are very appreciative. J. I. Packer points out that the Puritans sought to ensure that their sermons addressed people who are in different places spiritually including the ignorant, the proud, the desperate, those in need of correction, and the discouraged.[17] Applications should be derived from the unique purpose of the text being expounded. Some lazy pastors rarely get beyond "read your Bible more, pray more, attend more, give more, and serve more" in their application of the text. Work at it. Sometimes good ideas for application can be gleaned from listening to or reading expository sermons by preachers who are skilled at calling God's people to an appropriate practical response to God's Word. I also find that preaching extemporaneously from an outline, as opposed to a manuscript, gives me more freedom to make applications to the congregation as ideas come to mind while I am preaching.

Leg 4: Sound Theology (1 Tim 4:6; Titus 2:1)

Paul often refers to his message as the doctrine that must be taught

[17] J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 287.

and defended by those who preach God's Word (Rom 16:17; Eph 4:14; 1 Tim 1:3, 10; 4:6; 6:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 10). A body of core doctrine was taught in the early church (Acts 2:42; 18:11; 28:31; Rom 6:17; Col 1:28; 1 Tim 4:13; 6:1, 3; 2 Tim 4:2–3; Titus 2:7; 2 John 9–10). Our faithful preaching of God's Word should be filled with sound scriptural theology as is summarized in the historic confessions and creeds of the church. While sound doctrine is foundational in all of Scripture, certain texts lend themselves to more extensive theological teaching.

Some passages also are appropriate for the exposure and refutation of false teaching. For example, as the mystery of the incarnation and the full deity and humanity of Christ is expounded in John 1:1–18, it may be appropriate to refute the errors of the cults which corrupt this teaching. Similarly, as new errors arise in the evangelical church, such as the openness of God theology, which denies God's true omniscience, or elements of the New Perspective on Paul, which corrupts biblical teaching of justification by faith alone, it is appropriate to expose and refute these errors. It may even be appropriate to break away from a series in order to address an error that has been influential among church members. For example, I was in a church in which some were being enticed by full-preterism, the belief that Jesus returned spiritually in AD 70 and that the prophecies of Matthew 24 and Revelation were fulfilled at that time with no anticipation of the future bodily return of Christ to establish his kingdom (2 Thess 2:2). Our leadership decided that in addition to speaking to those who had been influenced by this error, we would answer this false teaching from specific passages of Scripture which we would preach. There may also be times when it is appropriate to preach a series of sermons that do systematic theology, drawing from the entire Bible's teaching on a particular topic. For example, I have preached such series on the attributes of God, the Trinity, and what the Bible teaches about the afterlife (heaven and hell).

Conclusion

As Dennis Johnson rightly points out, a preacher can be overwhelmed when considering the different approaches to preaching along with the awesome responsibility we face as those who will give account to God (Jas 3:1). I believe that my diagram of the four-legged stool can offer a helpful model for focused and balanced sermons. I acknowledge that different texts have differing emphases so that the four legs will not be of identical length in every sermon. Some passages are very doctrinal in focus (Eph 1:3–11) in which case the doctrine leg may be longer than usual, while others may be intensely practical (Eph 5:22–33) or may ex-

plicitly unfold the glorious mystery of redemption (Eph 2:1–10). Each element should be present in each sermon, reflecting the balance found in the epistles and apostolic preaching. Over the course of a preaching ministry, there should be a balance among the legs. It is also very important for a preacher to know which way he leans. Some of us are all about being practical and we need to work hard at exposition and finding redemptive connections. Others of us may be bent towards the theological, and need to make greater effort towards being practical. I also am thankful that God is merciful to ordinary, imperfect preachers who are striving to be faithful to him and his Word.

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Interview with Jim Shaddix

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There are several contexts that affect our exposition of the Scriptures: literary, historical, canonical/theological, and cultural. Why is each context important and helpful to the expositor?

In my estimation, one of the coolest things about God's Word—and one of the greatest testimonies to its supernatural nature—is that God gave us his Book through a variety of natural and understandable means. He didn't just write a book and drop it out of the sky or hide it under a rock. He didn't choose to use a cosmic microphone and broadcast it from the heavens. He didn't make his revelation a mystery that couldn't be solved or a puzzle that couldn't be put together. The Bible isn't a celestial version of "Where's Waldo" where God is sitting up in heaven being entertained by mankind's vain attempts to find his intended meaning in the Scriptures. He spoke—and continues to speak—through language and literature known to normal people, through historical events that happened to normal people, through cultures familiar to normal people, all by the pen of normal people. He used all these elements and more to inspire a supernatural account of his self-revelation through Jesus Christ to mankind. For me, that speaks of the astounding credibility and integrity of the supernatural nature of the Bible.

Consequently, preachers and teachers who are serious about discovering, embracing, and exposing God's intended meaning of the biblical text adopt what's commonly known as the historical-grammatical-theological approach to Bible interpretation. Normally, this approach assumes the consideration of not just history and grammar, but also literary genre, cultural background, and both biblical and systematic theology, not the least aspect of which is the Christological relationship between the text and the larger canon of Scripture. Such an approach reduces the human subjectivity in the interpretation process to the greatest degree. We don't just look at our favorite quality of God's revelation, whether we be language geeks, literature lovers, history buffs, cultural analysts, or scholarly theologians. We consider all the elements God sovereignly chose to use in inspiring Scripture to reduce the risk of biased and limited interpretation of the Bible.

That makes all these elements important and helpful for the expositor. Minimally, literary genre determines the rules of revelation and its subsequent interpretation, and sometimes the mood and tone of the biblical author; grammar provides us with the system and structure of human language, including the meaning of specific words and phrases; history and culture give us the necessary background and setting that helps us interpret language and events through the lens of the biblical characters and audiences. And, of course, the gospel of Christ provides us with Scripture's end game, the goal of all that God has spoken and done, which is the ultimate lens through which we are to see every passage. Together, these elements enable common folks to understand, obey, and be transformed by God's revelation in the Bible.

What are some recent trends in exposition that you consider helpful or unhelpful in recognizing literary context?

I'm excited about so many things I see in the practice of biblical exposition today that have a relationship to literary context. One of the most significant, I believe, is that many expositors are doing a better job of taking into consideration the different ways that meaning is communicated through different kinds of literary genres. Robert Stein helped me so much with the simple illustration he uses in his book, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Baker, 1994). He talks about the difference between the rules of football and the rules of soccer. He notes that in football every player on the field can hold the ball with his or her hands, but only one person kicks it. In soccer every player can kick the ball, but only one player can hold it with their hands. Stein points out the obvious: When we don't understand the rules of a particular game, confusion is bound to follow (pp. 75–76).

The same is true in Bible interpretation when it comes to literary context. If we don't understand the rules by which meaning is communicated through the literary genre of our text, then the probability rises significantly that we will misinterpret the text. Many of us preachers grew up in ministry trying to interpret and preach historical narrative passages the same way we preached Paul's epistles. That resulted in us taking shorter portions out of many Bible stories and forcing meaning on them that wasn't there. We failed to recognize that the rules for interpreting historical narrative are different from those for interpreting Paul's letters. I'm thankful that many expository preachers are growing

more comfortable with preaching longer passages of story material because they're giving more attention to the different way narrative communicates truth.

In the unhelpful category, I get concerned sometimes when I hear conversations about exposition that fail to make a distinction between the role of literary genre in hermeneutics (Bible interpretation) and its role in homiletics (sermon development). Some homileticians in recent years have suggested if we're going to do true exposition, then the sermon should be developed in the same genre as the biblical text on which it is based. While I affirm the passion for being as true to the text as possible, I think such a suggestion overlooks a crucial distinction in exposition—*The expositor's assignment is not to reveal truth but to explain it and apply it.*

Let me explain it this way. Exposition involves both hermeneutics and homiletics, and they must be done in that order. We can only do homiletics *after* we've done hermeneutics. Expositors must find out what the Lord saith before they can say, "Thus saith the Lord!" So, we must interpret the biblical text with integrity to determine accurately what God has revealed in that text. Then, we develop a sermon that serves as the contemporary vehicle through which he continues to say it. That makes the literary genre essential for the hermeneutical part of this process. Because the Holy Spirit revealed truth by inspiring his intended meaning in each text of Scripture using a particular kind of literature, we must take that kind of literature into account if we're going to interpret God's revelation in that text correctly. Every literary genre has its own set of rules, and those respective rules must be considered to get the text right. So, literary context is crucial for an accurate interpretation of God's revelation.

Once we get the text right, however, the homiletical part of the process takes on a different nature. As I already said, when we develop a sermon, our task is not to reveal the truth of God's Word but to explain and apply it in our contemporary context. The literary genre has played an important role in God's revelation and our subsequent interpretation of that revelation. But in the contemporary context, that kind of literature may not be the best way to explain and apply the truth of a given text. Carried to its logical conclusion, the suggestion that the literary shape of the sermon ought to be in the literary shape of the text would mean that all our sermons from the Psalms need to be delivered in poetic form or musical score. All our sermons from historical narrative texts would need to be delivered through stories (which I'm sure would please the New Homiletics camp!). All our sermons from apocalyptic texts would have to be couched in cryptic figures and symbols. While such

restrictions may inspire some artistic sermon-making and delivery, they likely won't foster clarity and understanding in the hearts and minds of contemporary listeners. The sermon, then, doesn't necessarily need to be driven by the literary genre of our given text, but by the development that enables us to explain and apply it in the most understandable way.

Is it still worth it to formulate a main idea? Is textual unity a fair expectation? How does an expositor discover and articulate this idea well?

It's not only worth it but it's necessary if the expositor is concerned about things like representing God rightly and communicating what he is saying with clarity and understanding. The Bible is not a collection of disjointed subjects like a dictionary or encyclopedia. It's a supernatural message that God wrote to his people with purpose. He wasn't just giving us a compilation of God-subjects when he wrote the Bible. He was and is communicating something specific to us. The Bible begins in Genesis and ends in Revelation with the overarching theme of its entire context—the re-creation through Jesus Christ of heaven, earth, and mankind into what God intended them to be. That unified story of the Bible means that every passage in it plays some role in that story and, therefore, has some purpose.

The expositor's responsibility begins with finding out what that purpose is in every text. He's responsible for "exposing" that meaning by peeling back the layers of time, language, literature, culture, and other elements that have covered up that meaning since the time the Holy Spirit inspired it. He must determine where every text stands in relation to the Christ event. Sometimes the purpose—or main idea—may be discovered in a paragraph. Sometimes we need to look at an entire Bible story. Sometimes we may have to consider several chapters in the Bible to find the main idea. But if we identify a segment through careful exegesis, we're sure to be able to discern the main idea in the text that serves the main idea of the entire Bible regarding the gospel.

It follows, then, that if the main idea can be identified in each passage of Scripture, then that main idea can and should determine the main idea of the expository sermon. Contrary to some recent conversations, Haddon Robinson didn't invent the concept of the 'big idea' in sermon development. We're all indebted to him for reviving and popularizing it in the latter part of the 20th century. But other homileticians discussed similar concepts before him, as well as numerous rhetoricians throughout history who championed the unification of a message around a single subject to communicate meaning with clarity. Doing so just makes sense in communication, especially public speaking. So, textual unity ought to inspire and determine sermonic unity with the accu-

rate identification and clear communication of the main idea of every biblical text.

There have been debates in recent years over the relationship between the biblical text and the historical events. As expositors of Scripture, how does historical knowledge benefit people's understanding of the text? How can it distract or even distort our understanding?

As I indicated earlier, God gave us the Bible through a variety of natural and understandable means, including historical events that happened to real human beings. So, every passage of Scripture is rooted in a particular time and place in history and is couched in a particular set of circumstances. Those circumstances include a specific time in history, a particular human author and his target audience, and a combination of unique circumstances that were going on in their lives, whether they be political, economic, cultural, or religious. That kind of information often is critical for determining the meaning and purpose of a given text of Scripture for its original hearers or readers. And because the Bible can never mean what it never meant, that original meaning and purpose provide the key to its meaning and purpose for the contemporary audience.

I think the history of the Bible—just like its grammar, literature, culture, or any other interpretive element—becomes a hindrance to the expositor when he begins to see it as an end in and of itself. Again, the Bible contains a lot of history, and it's consistent with all verifiable historical events. God chose to make himself known throughout history. However, the Bible was never intended to be just a history book. If I approach the Bible merely for its historical value, then I will learn a lot of interesting historical facts, but I will miss hearing the voice of God. If I let the Bible's history play a more influential role than the other interpretive elements, then my interpretation of it likely will be skewed and I will miss what God is saying. History is a crucial interpretive element in Bible exposition, but it's only one of several crucial interpretive elements.

There's an old adage that says, "Don't miss the forest for the trees." How does the expositor maintain a balance between the immediate context in the passage and the canonical context of the whole Bible?

I don't think the issue is as much balance as it is relationship and order. I'm assuming by the "old adage" that we're implying that the historical context is the tree, and the canonical context is the forest. A bunch of trees make up a forest, and a bunch of historical contexts make up the canonical context. The two are related and cannot be separated into

parts, but they aren't necessarily always balanced. Sometimes the more immediate context carries the weight in interpretation. Other times the larger biblical context carries the weight. So, we must think in terms of the relationship between the elements as well as the order in which they are considered.

Let's start with the relationship between the two elements. People can indeed become so enamored with the beauty of a particular tree that they never consider the grandeur of the forest of which it is a part. In the same way, a Bible interpreter can become consumed with the historical context of a passage but never consider its relationship with the larger context of the biblical canon. When that happens in Bible interpretation, the expositor never fully grasps the ultimate purpose of the immediate passage because he fails to see that its purpose in the Bible is to contribute to the grand narrative. Similarly, it's certainly possible to look at a forest from a distance—to gaze upon its splendor and beauty—and yet never appreciate the intricacies of the individual trees that make up the forest. When that happens in Bible interpretation, the expositor never completely draws out the practical truths embedded in the immediate passage because he fails to determine what it meant to its original recipients. To fully appreciate both the forest and the trees, we must observe them both from a distance and up close. Similarly, to grasp and appreciate the Holy Spirit's intended meaning in the Bible, we must zoom in to see each passage up close and zoom out to see it from a distance. So, for each Bible passage, we must consider both historical context and the larger biblical context if we're going to interpret the Bible correctly. The relationship between the two must always be part of the expositional process.

Now, let's consider the order of the two elements. This is where the analogy of the forest and the trees breaks down a little bit. It's possible (if not likely) that a hiker or traveler will see the forest before the trees as he or she makes their way along a journey. And the beauty of the forest can be seen and enjoyed from that vantage point. But we can't understand the Bible that way. We can't get the big picture of the Bible without first considering the individual trees and the contribution each one makes to the larger story. To say it another way, the only way we have been able to discern the grand narrative of the Bible is to have first considered each of the smaller components to determine how they're all tied together. Since the Holy Spirit utilized a bunch of historical contexts to inform the larger biblical context, it just makes sense that the expositor needs to first consider the original author's context of each passage to fully appreciate the biblical context. Once he determines the human author's purpose for his respective audience, he then can deter-

mine timeless truths that apply to all people of all time.

But the expositor can't stop there. Along with those considerations drawn from the immediate historical context and their relevance for succeeding generations, he must also think about theological implications intended by the divine Author regarding the larger biblical context that may not have been completely understood by the original author. And that "larger" meaning will never undermine or contradict the meaning of the text in its historical context. There will always be a relationship between the two, just like there's a relationship between the forest and the trees.

Should the expositor be a prophetic voice in the culture? What are the dangers and benefits of having (or not having) such a voice?

The first question on this subject isn't whether the expositor should be a prophetic voice in our culture. It's whether God's voice is a prophetic voice in the culture. And I think all of us would agree that it is. Our culture—and every culture—desperately needs to hear God speak. Consequently, if exposition is exposing the voice of God, then that makes the expositor a prophetic voice in our culture, whether he thinks he is or not, whether he wants to be or not. And that's just another reason good expository preaching is essential in our day. Contemporary culture needs to hear the voice of God, and expositors must see themselves as prophets who are communicating God's voice.

The danger of being a prophetic voice in this culture is just that—it's dangerous. Those who speak on behalf of God have always been the targets of the world's wrath. The gospel is scandalous, and those who declare it have paid the price with their blood in every generation. Israel rejected and killed God's prophets in the Old Testament. The Jewish religious leaders resisted Jesus and ultimately put him on a cross, and they treated the apostles with the same hatred. Rome persecuted and killed Christians, including their preachers. And church history is full of the testimonies of God's preachers who have been martyred for their faith…and their sermons. And while that ire has largely been limited to preachers outside the United States, the recent overturning of Roe v. Wade inspired both verbal and physical outbursts against those who risk taking a stand for the value God has placed on human life. The danger that goes along with being a prophet of God is increasing in America. The days of insulation and safety for God's prophets even in our own country are fading fast. Speaking on behalf of God is a dangerous duty.

Of course, the biggest danger of contemporary preachers not exposing the prophetic voice of God is people failing to hear the words of life. The gospel is the only chance our culture has of repentance from sin, forgiveness from God, re-creation into Christ's image, and eternal fellowship with him. When many of Jesus's followers were abandoning him because of the scandalous nature of his message, he asked his apostles if they planned to jump ship with them. Peter's response articulates the real danger of not hearing the prophetic voice in every generation: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68–69 ESV). To rob people of prophetic gospel preaching is the supreme tragedy of preachers failing to speak for God. But faithful, prophetic exposition redeems this danger and transforms it into its greatest benefit—people today get to hear and respond to Jesus's words of eternal life.

What are the benefits of the expositor not having or being a prophetic voice in our day? Based on what we've just said above, there are none. The prophetic voice of contemporary expositors is critical if people today are going to hear the words of eternal life and believe that Jesus is Lord and Savior.

After years of teaching expositors, what is your hope for the next generation of preachers and teachers of the Word? Has that changed over the years? If so, how?

If I had been asked this question ten years ago, I would have said that I'm prayerfully hoping for a new generation of preachers and teachers who are unapologetically committed to the careful exposition of God's Word, and who are utterly dependent on the power of his Spirit to do it. Neither of those desires has waned; both continue to be burdens and prayers of mine. And I don't think that will change in the coming days. I think both of those dreams will be challenges for every future generation. There will always be a tendency to make the preaching and teaching of the Bible something it was never intended to be. Preachers and teachers in every generation will be constantly lured to let something other than the Holy Spirit's intended meaning of the text drive their messages, whether it be their audiences or contemporary trends or something else. And preachers and teachers in every generation—with more and more access to more and more resources and more and more training and education—constantly will be tempted to depend on something other than God's other-worldly power to provide their messages with effectual power. The dual resolve to represent God's voice rightly and to be utterly desperate for the help of his Spirit will always be among my greatest hopes for the coming generations.

That two-fold hope, however, is based on a fundamental assumption, and that assumption is that there *will be* a next generation of preachers and teachers of the Word. Today, that assumption is at risk.

Now let me be clear at this point to say that I believe God will be faithful to raise up proclaimers of his Word in every generation. His kingdom will advance, and his gospel will prevail. But we've been in a crisis for several years now in the number of men who are responding to God's call to preach, and especially to do it as pastors of local churches. We have an increasing number of empty pulpits, and we have fewer men coming to seminary with a strong sense of call to be pastors and preachers. I don't think God is calling fewer men to be preachers and pastors, but there are certainly fewer who are responding to that call. And many of us who are pastors are not doing as good a job as we used to do of calling out the called in our local churches. So, at the top of my list of hopes and prayers for the next generation of preachers is that there will be one, that there will be a mighty army of men who rise up to take the mantle and be pastors, preachers, and teachers of God's Word in the coming days. We need a revival of men responding to the call of God to do this most important task.

Book Reviews

William A. Ross and W. Edward Glenny, eds. *The T&T Clark Handbook of Septuagint Research*. New York: T&T Clark, 2021. xxv + 486 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0567680259. $175.00

In recent years, there has been an increase in tools for studying the Septuagint (LXX). Students have access to journal articles, introductions, lexicons, grammars, concordances, translations, and editions in both diplomatic and critical formats. Moreover, computer programs like Accordance and Logos make these tools accessible digitally and provide users the opportunity to conduct research in record time. Now, thanks to William Ross and Edward Glenny, students, experts, and those whose fields interact with the LXX have a tool that acquaints them with the current state of research on the LXX's origins, language, text, reception, and theology (p. 3). The editors of this handbook have a twofold goal: to provide students with an overview of the current state of several relevant sub-disciplines and to equip students to conduct their own research in this field (pp. 3, 5). Overall, they achieve these goals in an accessible single volume.

Ross and Glenny divide the book into six sections. The first deals with the topic of the LXX's origins and surveys sub-disciplines such as the translators' social context (pp. 9–20) and their translation technique (pp. 21–33). Second, the topic of the LXX's language is discussed. In this section, disciplines such as phonology (pp. 37–62), discourse analysis (pp. 79–92), and Greek style (pp. 93–107) are surveyed. Third, issues related to the text of the LXX are investigated. Here readers find discussions on the important topics of the LXX's respective relationships with the text of the Greek versions (pp. 123–34), the Hebrew Bible (pp. 135–48), Qumran (pp. 149–60), the Hexapla (pp. 191–206), and the biblical canon (pp. 207–28) to name just a few. The fourth topic is reception. Articles range chronologically from the translation's reception in Second Temple Judaism (pp. 231–42) to early modern Europe (pp. 299–309). Fifth, the editors include several articles on the theology, translation, and commentaries of the LXX. They then conclude with a survey of the literature (pp. 381–96).

Several details make this handbook an outstanding contribution to the field. First, there is no comparable resource in LXX studies. Several introductions have been published recently, as well as two book-by-

book surveys, but no other work surveys current research in the field's many important sub-disciplines (p. xii). Such information may be accessed from various journal articles, presentations, introductions, and book chapters, but Ross and Glenny have compiled it for their readers in a single volume.

Second, this work is accessible. For example, the editors include a glossary of relevant terms for the study of the LXX (pp. 397–406). This feature is especially helpful since the vocabulary of LXX scholarship is often precise and technical. Readers will turn to it often, not only when reading the articles in this handbook, but also when reading across the sub-disciplines of the entire field.

Third, the work is concise. Most of the chapters average ten to twenty pages. Moreover, they have a limited number of footnotes, and sources are often referenced as in-text citations. Overall, each author has provided a concise introduction to his or her sub-discipline.

Fourth, the inclusion of chapters on two contemporary commentaries is a welcome addition. Robert Hiebert provides an overview of the Society of Biblical Literature Commentary on the Septuagint (SBLCS [pp. 345–62]), while Stanley Porter provides a defense and overview of the approach adopted by the Brill Septuagint Commentary Series (SEPT [pp. 363–77]). These commentaries take different approaches. The SBLCS is based on a critically restored text, while the SEPT series is based on a diplomatic text, using Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, or Alexandrinus. Providing the reader with independent discussions of these commentaries is helpful, given the differences between them.

Perhaps one drawback to the handbook, unless it is outside its scope, is the absence of a discussion of the manuscripts themselves. Students reading from facsimiles or digitized manuscripts have a plethora of questions on paragraphing, marginal notes, paleography, and corrections. Including a chapter on the current state of research on these topics would have been an added strength. Similarly, the survey of literature contains a section on textual editions and software programs, but nowhere lists digitized manuscripts. It would have been helpful to know where to find LXX manuscripts digitized on the internet.

In any event, the editors have provided readers with an overview of the current state of research of several sub-disciplines of the Septuagint in a single accessible and concise volume. They and the authors are to be commended for accomplishing this important task.

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Jason A. Staples. *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism: A New Theory of People, Exile, and Israelite Identity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. xxii + 426 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1108842860. $29.50.

In his preface to *The Idea of Israel,* Jason Staples reports that this book is the fruit of twenty years of research, beginning in a master's course, later serving as the first part of a dissertation, and then reaching its final form after several years of polishing. In our context, where publishing more and sooner is so often incentivized, the author's choice to give this project the time it deserved is richly rewarded by a level of thoroughness, significance, and clarity to which religious and theological scholarship is simply not accustomed.

In sum, Staples argues that there is a clear distinction between the terms "Jew" (*Ioudaios*) and "Israelite" in the Second Temple Period. While the term *Ioudaios* refers to those descended from the southern kingdom of Judah, "Israel" refers historically to all the people from the twelve tribes of Israel. Eschatologically, it also refers to that same twelve-tribe community, which will be regathered from exile as promised by the prophets of the Old Testament. The Jews, therefore, are a subset of the Israelites, but not wholly constitutive of Israel.

After the introduction, the book is divided into three major parts. Part 1 consists of two chapters, the first of which draws the problem into clearer focus by demonstrating that the dominant scholarly view about the distinction of "Jew" and "Israelite" in this period, is not only incorrect, but also anti-semitic. This view holds that "Israelite" is the term preferred by those included in the community, while "Jew" is a pejorative term used by outsiders. Staples shows how little evidence has been marshaled for this view, and that its originator, Karl G. Kuhn, was a passionate Nazi, who was known to lecture on rabbinic texts while wearing an SA uniform and an *Ehrendolch* (honorary Nazi dagger). By demolishing this widely-held view Staples is then free to propose the view sketched above, based on Josephus (esp. *Ant.* 7.102–3; 11.173). The next chapter investigates the data concerning the Samaritans—a community who claim to be Israelites but not Jews, which is good evidence for Staples's thesis.

With the definition of Jew and Israel determined, in Part 2, the author shows how the roots of these terms are used in the Hebrew Bible. In Chapter 3, he focuses on the narrative materials of Deuteronomy, the Former Prophets, and Chronicles to demonstrate that while the Hebrew Bible was collected and shaped by Jews (that is, descendants of Judah) and for Jews, they consistently construct "a biblical Israel larger than the

Jews alone" (p. 89). He argues that each of these texts places the reader within a "liminal space" in the story of judgment, exile, and restoration, in which one is meant to look forward to the day when the Israel which used to exist will be fully restored. Chapter 4 continues with an eschatological reading of the Latter Prophets before Chapter 5 shows that according to Ezra-Nehemiah, Daniel, 1 Enoch, and 2 Maccabees, the historical return from Babylon narrated in Ezra-Nehemiah was not regarded as the promised restoration of the Torah and Prophets. In contrast, 1 Maccabees differs from these other texts by propagandistically asserting that the Hasmonean (Jewish) state is "Israel," which activates the eschatological hopes included in the term.

Part 3, over half of the book, is devoted to showing that the distinction of Jew/Israelite, along with the restoration eschatology implicit in the difference, holds throughout the Second Temple period. Chapter 6 argues that the exile was in fact regarded negatively by Jews of this period (even by those authors, such as Josephus and Philo, who had landed in places of privilege in the Diaspora). Chapters 7, 8, and 9 trace this theme through Josephus, Philo, and the Dead Sea Scrolls respectively. Chapter 10 is devoted to analysis of other narrative texts of the period such as Tobit and Jubilees, and Chapter 11 examines the remaining apocalyptic and eschatological texts, which is followed by a final Chapter 12 of summary and conclusion.

The ground covered in this book could have been overwhelming were it not for the author's excellent organization and clarity of writing. Although thoroughly rigorous and technical, the writing is accessible and even entertaining, aided by numerous apt illustrations (e.g., the book of Judith's imaginative reversal of past tragedy is akin to a Quentin Tarantino movie). Furthermore, *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism* is convincing and significant: it will affect everyone working in this field for decades and will likely be cited as a watershed moment for the topic. Finally, as a good academic work should, it constantly stimulates new questions for the reader, especially regarding its relevance for New Testament studies, which Staples mentions only in passing. For those interested in biblical studies, history, or theology, this book is an important read.

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Andreas J. Köstenberger. *1–2 Timothy and Titus*. Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021. xxviii + 605 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1683594314. $49.99.

This volume is part of the Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary series recently launched by Lexham Academic, written by one of the series editors. It is important to know, however, that it was previously published in the now defunct B&H series Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation. This information is not included in the publisher's preface. The series is outstanding though, and I am grateful that Lexham Press has taken over its publication. But to avoid unintentional duplication, readers need to be aware that the first three volumes (this one, David Peterson on *Romans*, and Thomas Schreiner on *Hebrews*) were previously published by B&H. That being noted, I highly recommend the series as a whole, and this volume by Andreas Köstenberger in particular, as a valuable contribution to academics and pastors alike.

The first 54 pages provide a thorough introduction to the New Testament books concerned. Köstenberger designates them as the Letters to Timothy and Titus (LTT), partly as a corrective to the traditional, but potentially misleading, Pastoral Epistles title. He rightly notes that the recipients were not elders or office holders in the early church. Instead, they functioned as Paul's representatives in his place, and the content of these letters was intended for the churches as well (p. 1).

Köstenberger provides a thorough defense of the authenticity of these letters as genuinely Pauline, interacting with relevant scholarship. Over half of the content of this section consists of footnotes, engaging scholarly arguments on this important issue, and guiding the reader for further research. This is followed by a discussion of the historical context for the writing of these letters, helpfully presenting in several charts the textual data for identifying false teachings and aligning this data with Paul's specific refutations thereof (pp. 34–35, 37–39).

The second section of this work is a verse-by-verse commentary on each letter, beginning with a discussion of the purpose and occasion, the opponents, and the structure of each letter. Köstenberger's commentary, as to be expected by those familiar with his exegetical work, is careful, thorough, and extensively engages relevant scholarship. The format makes the commentary accessible, while allowing the reader to explore a variety of exegetical issues, providing valuable bibliographic sources for further research.

A unique feature of the commentary section, reflecting the biblical theological purpose of this series, is how Köstenberger frames the discussion of each portion of the text. He begins each discussion with a

section entitled "Relation to Surrounding Context," helpfully connecting the passage to what has preceded and what follows it in the text, a feature too often neglected by interpreters and preachers. He ends the discussion of each portion with a section labeled "Bridge" which includes both practical insights on the text and a connection to parallel content throughout the canon of Scripture.

If this work ended here, it would be a worthy addition to anyone's interpretive library on these letters. But what sets this commentary apart and makes it uniquely valuable is the final portion of the work, a 188-page section entitled Biblical and Theological Themes. Köstenberger discusses a variety of categories in Paul's LTT and shows how he contributes to the overall biblical teaching on each. Under the heading "Mission," the author explores Paul's understanding of his own mission, the mission of Timothy and Titus as his delegates, and the mission of the church. Under "Teaching," he examines the various terms for teaching in the letters, then focuses on Paul's use of Scripture. His third category is very broad, "God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and Salvation," giving almost as much space to his discussion of the latter, "Salvation," as to the first three combined. His next section is a lengthy discussion of the "Church," covering the roles of various groups within the church and its leadership. His final two categories are "The Christian Life" and "The Last Days."

At the end of the biblical and theological themes section, Köstenberger looks at the place of these letters within the whole canon of Scripture, highlighting interesting Old Testament parallels. These include the promise to Abraham and Paul's Gentile mission, suffering in the Psalms and Paul, the Moses to Joshua leadership succession and Paul's relationship with Timothy, and Adam and Eve and the role of women in the church. He concludes by discussing the LTT's place in the New Testament among Paul's other letters, alongside the narrative of the early church in Acts, and among the non-Pauline letters.

Köstenberger's contribution to the Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary is an excellent resource for academics, students, and pastors. It avoids the error of many technical commentaries that fail to apply the text adequately or connect it to the grand narrative of Scripture. It also avoids the mistake of many popular commentaries which give limited attention to important exegetical issues for the sake of getting quickly to a practical application for contemporary believers. This commentary commendably fills a void in the library of any serious interpreter of Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus.

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Jovan Stanojević. *Orthodox New Testament Textual Scholarship: Antoniades, Lectionaries, and the Catholic Epistles.* Texts and Studies (Third Series) 26. Piscataway NJ: Gorgias Press, 2021. xvii + 207 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1463242671. $114.95.

Since 1904, the Greek Orthodox Church has utilized the Antoniades edition as its basic Greek New Testament text, despite its known deficiencies. Jovan Stanojević, a Serbian Orthodox auxiliary bishop and associate at the Institute of Septuagint and Biblical Text Research, states that "Antoniades' edition cannot be justified as a distinctively Orthodox edition, which suggests that the Orthodox Church needs another edition" (p. 176). He thus offers suggestions towards establishing a superior textual standard for Orthodox ecclesiastical purposes.

In contrast to modern critical editions (NA/UBS) that represent a predominantly Alexandrian eclectic mixture of various readings, the Antoniades text, despite its deficiencies, represents a *general* Byzantine type of text, even if not that of the dominant Byzantine majority reflected among Greek continuous-text manuscripts or lectionaries. As Stanojević demonstrates, the Antoniades text is itself an eclectic mixture of Byzantine readings taken from those sources. Various Orthodox writers have thus addressed the need to remedy this deficiency by replacing Antoniades with a text more reflective of the Byzantine manuscript consensus to better serve liturgical practice and scholarly study.

However, the Byzantine editions published during the past forty years (e.g., HF, RP, Pickering) remain unacceptable to the Orthodox, even though these texts are superior to that of Antoniades. As Stanojević summarizes, "Foreign textual critics would never be able to offer to the Orthodox Church the proper ecclesiastical text; the Orthodox edition should be prepared by Orthodox scholars according to purely Orthodox criteria of Church tradition" (p. 44). Further, Ioannes Karavidopoulos (one of the UBS editors!) argues "for the superiority of the ecclesiastical text, based upon the presupposed non-historicity of the critical text as an eclectic text not witnessed by manuscript tradition in contrast to the historicity of the Byzantine ecclesiastical text" (p. 48; cf. also Konstantinos Nikolakopoulos, p. 50).

Nevertheless, Stanojević's key (and repeated!) objection to the Antoniades edition is that it was not "distinctively independent" from the printed Textus Receptus editions previously utilized by the Orthodox Church (pp. 6, 21). His claim, however, is overstated since Antoniades noted "about 2,000 readings and 1,400 passages" (p. 185) that differed from *any* printed TR edition. Although Eberhard Nestle claimed that "despite the 2,000 differences … Antoniades' edition does not differ

significantly from the *Textus Receptus"* (p. 58), from this perspective, *all* Byzantine-related editions would fall under the same condemnation. Stanojević's key objection is therefore more a straw man that would surely lead to rejection by the very Orthodox he desires to assist: The "solutions" are worse than the problem. His assumption (p. 175) is that the Orthodox might willingly abandon the Antoniades standard edition and then replace it with a text resembling the critical CBGM-based *Ausgangstext*—but not with anything representing a Byzantine-based edition. In fact, Stanojević expressly proposes: "In cases in which [the] original or earliest variant readings are not ambiguous … the earliest reading should be adopted" (p. 177).

Numerous tables are provided to support his proposals; these furnish data for the advanced scholar and generally point toward a critical text conclusion. In addition, Stanojević discusses 12 variant units in the General Epistles that affect meaning (pp. 154–67), primarily accepting the critical text. Table 8 (pp. 77–84), perhaps the most important, identifies the manuscripts Antoniades used for his edition.

Unfortunately, some terms in the tables are not defined—the reader apparently is expected to know these. In addition, the numerous secondary readings printed in smaller type in the Antoniades edition receive too little emphasis. Further, the spuriousness of the Johannine Comma appears in *both* smaller type *and* italics, but this is not mentioned. Although Acts 8:37 is sporadically mentioned in relation to Antoniades' use of GA 1739, its actual variants are never discussed. The Scripture index also is deficient (e.g., a variant reading at Acts 10:6 is mentioned several times [pp. 20, 39, 89] but is absent from the index).

While the scholarly Orthodox community likely will not care, I doubt Stanojević's proposals will gain support among the general Orthodox population since his suggested improvements undermine their textual preferences. So why does Stanojević think they would accept his proposals? Apparently because "in the Orthodox Theological Schools" the NA/UBS critical editions "are now widely accepted" (p. 40). However, this confuses the *scholarly* community with those who comprise and serve the Orthodox *churches*.

Actually, Stanojević's case represents a postmodern concept which he terms "originality and pragmatism" (p. 156), arguing, "There are no universal principles for an objective interpretation and evaluation of textual differences" since this "always depends on the observer and their [*sic*] overall purpose." Moreover, "While we should not doubt that the original form of the text is indispensable … changes are sometimes necessary to make the texts meet the needs of users in different contexts" (pp. 153–54). This echoes David Parker's view that we create the "texts

we need to create," where the "original" text falls by the wayside. Stanojević further suggests that any Byzantine readings utilized "for the sake of better understanding and more effective reception" should "be adopted with an indication that those variant readings are secondary" (p. 176).

In sum, acceptance of his proposals is highly dubious, because (as Stanojević acknowledges), the Orthodox population "regards the Byzantine or ecclesiastical text as an ideal" (p. 6). As Markos Siotes observes,

> The ecclesiastical text is witnessed by the majority of majuscule manuscripts, almost all minuscules, all versions since the third century, and the Greek Fathers from the end of the fourth century onward …. The core of that type derives from the end of the second century and it represents essentially the original text … [while] the editors of critical editions introduced their own changes and corrections according to their own judgments. (p. 44)

Despite the wealth of data presented in this volume, it is unlikely that Stanojević's proposals will make headway among those very Orthodox he is attempting to reach.

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Matthew Barrett. *Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021. 364 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1540900074. $24.99

Current trends in Systematic Theology present contours in the relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit that are not in step with the orthodox Trinity of the Great Tradition (see Bruce Ware's *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance*, 2005, Chapter 2, and Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2d. ed., 2020, p. 292). In *Simply Trinity*, Matthew Barrett, Associate Professor of Christian Theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, is on a mission back in time to retrieve "the Son who is both distinct and equal to the Father because he is begotten from the Father's essence" (p. 44).

The first three chapters of the book (Part 1) introduce the problem we face in the current milieu of Trinity exposition. Modern scholarship has "*manipulated* the Trinity of the Bible, our Trinity, beyond recognition." In fact, "We are the victims" of a real "Trinity drift" (pp. 70–71). Barrett asserts there are three culprits to blame. First, the trend in liberalism places priority on ethics and values, which depreciates the doctrine

of the Trinity and appreciates a Trinity that contributes to the moral advancement of society. Next, modernism has endeavored to fit the Trinity into current social programs. Finally, God's activity in history explains who he is, so there is no need for dogma that only complicates our understanding of the Trinity. The product is a Trinity made in the image of man.

The balance of the book (Part 2) is dedicated to Barrett's two-part defense of the way back to confessing the *unmanipulated* Father, Son, and Spirit. The first and most fundamental position of his defense is the divine attribute, simplicity. Theologically, a simple God has one divine essence that is not divisible or composed of parts. The simple nature of God allows him to be three persons and at the same time protected from the heresies of Sabellianism (modalism), subordinationism, and tritheism (pp. 57–60). In contrast, the social Trinity is in real danger of falling into any of these.

Barrett's second source of defense is, "*we need help*" (p. 35). The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is built on the concurrent affirmation that there is only one God, and that this God exists eternally in three persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. These three are equal in divinity and possess the same essence. According to Barrett, the Bible is our final *infallible* authority where the Trinity is revealed. Still, *we need help* from the Great Tradition and the Nicene Creed to assemble the orthodox doctrine correctly. Barrett defines the Great Tradition as "those great church fathers who battled with heretics and even put their lives on the line to ensure the church remained faithful to the Scriptures" (p. 35). The Great Tradition is deeply grounded in the Scriptures and maintains the Nicene Creed as a ministerial authority.

Confessing simplicity and relying on help from the Great Tradition led the church to three phrases that define the orthodox Trinity of the Bible. Barrett describes them as "strange but essential." They are modes of subsistence (existence), eternal relations of origin, and personal properties (p. 59). Together, these three allow the church to maintain the existence of one God while simultaneously defining the distinction of the three persons without fear of heresy.

Three strengths can be noted in Barrett's effort, along with one area for improvement. First, this work provides the evangelical church with a concrete connection between the orthodox Trinity and the gospel. In Chapter 8 the soteriological weight of the Son, in Jesus, is cast on eternal generation as explained by the three "strange but essential" statements above. Through the subsistence of the divine essence in the Son, the incarnation retains the ability to give life to the lost.

Second, Barrett firmly separates the orthodox Trinity from a social

Trinity and from Eternal Functional Subordination (EFS). In Chapter 8, he takes aim at the supporters of EFS, charging them with creating "a society of hierarchy" inside the immanent Trinity (pp. 217–18). Division and hierarchy in the relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit, opens the door to doubt the saving ability of the incarnation.

Third, the presentation of the Trinity is a technical process driven by technical terminology. Barrett's work is a resource the average church attendant and seminary student can utilize and understand. The parts and chapters of *Simply Trinity* are well organized and build on one another. Text boxes are offered throughout the book for clear and succinct definitions of complex terms and concepts, and the back matter includes a glossary for the benefit of any level of study.

To conclude, one improvement might be made. In the discussion on Inseparable Operations (Chapter 10), Barrett presents the value of "communion with the Trinity in the Christian life" (p. 313). While it may be outside the book's scope, adding a concrete application of the orthodox position to pastoral ministry and discipleship would benefit the church. In any event, *Simply Trinity* is a helpful resource for the evangelical church and for the retrieval of the orthodox Trinity. Overall, this book is recommended for a broad level of study.

Chris Gibson
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Gregg R. Allison. *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021. 272 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1540900053. $19.99.

Gregg R. Allison, Professor of Christian Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, writes *Embodied* as a manifesto against a contemporary cultural obsession with "physical appearance" and the heretical teaching of Gnosticism (pp. 23–29). These cultural mentalities seem to be infiltrating the church—if they have not been there all along. Allison has spent over two decades writing about the embodied state of human beings (cf. pp. 14–15). However, his latest work seeks to develop "a theology of human embodiment," together with all that this implies (p. 17). When he uses the term "embodiment," he means that human beings are bodily creatures that physically engage their surroundings (p. 16).

The author's work can be broken down into two interrelated categories, a (biblical) theology of the body and ethical reflections concerning the body. Allison begins by providing a brief exegesis of the creation

account. He articulates not only the goodness and image bearing nature of embodied human beings but also the blessings humans experience in this form (pp. 30–36, 151–54). Furthermore, he reviews human embodiment through the lenses of creation, Christology, and eschatology to identify the goodness of the body after creation, the redemption of the body through Christ, and the hope of a resurrected body when Christ returns (pp. 23–40, 115–26, 249–62). His biblical evaluation of the body asseverates that the body exists as a visible representation of the *imago Dei*.

Allison's theology of the body propels him to consider the moral implications of human embodiment (i.e., sexuality, community, sanctification, suffering, worship, clothing, self-discipline, and death, pp. 41–60, 61–86, 87–114, 127–48, 149–248). For example, he argues that a proper theology of the body remains foundational for understanding the morality of cosmetic and plastic surgery, which he questions (p. 231). The author rightly asserts that a biblical view of the body effects a positive resolution to the myriad of ethical issues associated with how one ought to treat or view one's own body and the bodies of other people.

The organization of each chapter contributes to the book's purpose, which is to refute Gnostic heresy and vanity. Allison's methodological approach provides the "topic, big idea, and application," followed by a "For the Curious" section for those readers who want a "deeper dive into the topic" under discussion (pp. 18–19). This makes the contents of this book not only accessible to a wide-ranging audience, but also strengthens the author's arguments about human embodiment.

While the book excels in providing a biblical theology and ethic, two areas of weakness deserve mention. First, Allison's overall structure would have been strengthened had he divided his work into two separate sections, biblical theology, and biblical ethics. The first could have majored on creation, Christology, and the resurrected body, which are foundational to the ethical norms he presents about the body. To put it another way, a theological structure prior to the ethical discussion would have allowed his audience to understand how his theological convictions drive his ethics on how humans ought to treat their bodies.

Second, Allison argues that discoveries in neuroscience prove his dualistic view of human beings. In a footnote, he affirms "some type of dualism and rejects all forms of monism" (p. 16). However, while he states that body and soul are interconnected, he doesn't acknowledge that the neurosciences have also been used to promote Christian physicalism. It would have helped to note the incidence of recent debates between Christian physicalists and those who hold to a dualistic view of human nature. At a minimum, he could have informed the reader that

some scholars are utilizing neuroscience to argue against dualistic interpretations.

Despite these critiques, Allison's work is commendable. He rightly addresses the pragmatic Gnosticism that has infiltrated the church, namely an elevation of the immaterial soul over the material. His work is timely, not only for theologians, but also as a rebuttal to the pluralistic and secular philosophies of contemporary culture. While some might be tempted to critique an apparent overemphasis on the body, this would be a mistake. The author correctly places his theology of the body into a broader understanding of biblical anthropology. Thus, Gregg R. Allison's *Embodied* is highly recommended for those who would like to develop a more biblical understanding of human embodiment and its implications for Christian living.

Jeremy Kyle Bell
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Andrew T. Walker. *Liberty for All: Defending Everyone's Religious Freedom in a Pluralistic Age*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2021. 272 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1587434495. $19.99.

Religious freedom has been a fundamental principle for Baptists throughout their history. They have associated several distinctive teachings with the doctrine of religious freedom, including soul freedom and soul competency, Christ's lordship over the conscience and the church, separation of church and state, and the freedom of the church in a free state. The historic Baptist confessions of faith express these beliefs, and Baptists celebrate forebearers like Thomas Helwys, John Bunyan, Roger Williams, Isaac Backus, and John Leland, who contributed to the legacy of religious freedom both through their suffering of persecution and their defense of religious freedom.

With his book *Liberty for All*, Andrew T. Walker, a Christian ethics professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, joins the long line of Baptist defenders of religious freedom. His work, however, is more than a defense, for he presents a framework for understanding the doctrine that is intended to appeal broadly to Baptist and non-Baptist Christians, as well as to non-Christians. Although the framework he offers is composed of three key theological elements—eschatology, anthropology, and missiology—these elements afford him places to tie a wide range of related theological components into the structure. Ultimately, Walker seeks to offer a public theology of religious liberty (i.e., a theology of religious freedom done for the public that consciously ad-

dresses issues of concern in the public square). This aim reflects his experience serving at several institutions engaged in public policy work, including the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

The book begins with an introduction that briefly explores the importance of religious liberty to the issues of authority, adoration, and authenticity in the Christian life. Chapter 1 then presents religious freedom as a pillar of Christian social ethics, offers a definition of religious liberty, and identifies the book's central concern, which is connecting religious freedom to its biblical and theological grounding. From these introductory matters, Walker proceeds into an extended discussion of the three theological elements, and this discussion constitutes the body of his work.

In Chapters 2 and 3, Walker focuses on authority as he explores eschatology (the kingdom of God) as an essential foundation of his framework. According to Walker, eschatology teaches that Jesus Christ is the king with ultimate authority over all, that civil government has limited and penultimate authority, that government's authority extends to temporal matters and the common good (but not to the soul or the conscience), that civil government is accountable to God under the moral order he established, and that the church (also of limited authority) has a mission that pertains to spiritual matters and the eternal good. Accordingly, the doctrine of religious freedom is predicated upon a recognition that God's authority has priority and sets limits on civil government authority. Additionally, religious freedom is a temporal doctrine for this present, secular age, which is marked by a plurality of religious beliefs and conflicting ideas. In the light of Christ's kingdom, Christians understand God to providentially sustain this present social order, accept contestability of beliefs and ideas as a mark of this period, hope for conversion as the church carries out its mission, and patiently wait for the coming judgment when God's rule is finally established.

After addressing authority, Walker turns in Chapters 4 and 5 to anthropology (the image of God). He seeks to provide an anthropological account of religious freedom founded upon the image of God. He begins by exploring some of the principal interpretations of the image of God, and he then highlights the issues of personhood and moral agency and links the capacities of human reason, freedom, and conscience to moral responsibility to God. He asserts that humanity's unique divine image-bearing nature is foundational to understanding religious freedom as a human right. Social institutions must honor this right, he contends, so that human individuals may, as rational, moral, and religious beings, worship God and live lives authentically in accordance with the truths

they believe have a claim on them.

In Chapters 6 and 7, Walker discusses missiology (the mission of God). He presents religious liberty as an interim social ethic stemming from God's common grace, a penultimate right safeguarding the pursuit of God, a temporal good for advancing God's glory and enlarging Christ's kingdom, a missiological ethic facilitating the church's mission of freely proclaiming the gospel and making disciples, and a means and a tool for accomplishing God's mission of salvation. Because of her confidence in the gospel, the church desires neither the coercive power of the state nor the privilege of official approval to accomplish her mission. Walker also expresses hope that the moral faculties of the image of God and the moral content of the natural law (both manifestations of common grace) will promote the common good and produce a moral ecology of liberty and contestability that yields social tranquility and stability.

The book ends with a series of concluding chapters. The conclusion highlights social benefits of religious freedom. The epilogue offers reflections on the relationship between liberal democracy and religious liberty. The appendix presents an autobiographical account of how religious freedom led Walker to a Baptist ecclesiology, with its emphasis on individual assent to faith, regenerate church membership, and the church's institutional distinctiveness from other social structures.

All in all, Walker's thought-provoking book deserves a wide readership. Readers will appreciate the insights he draws from a wide range of theological and philosophical writers from the distant past (e.g., Tertullian and Augustine), the recent past (e.g., Baptist Carl F.H. Henry and Methodist J. Philip Wogaman), and the present (e.g., Baptists Russell D. Moore and Jonathan Leeman, Presbyterian David VanDrunen, Anglican Oliver O'Donovan, and Roman Catholics John Finnis and Robert P. George). Readers will be enriched by his extended treatment of the doctrine of religious freedom that offers a sturdy theological framework and a social ethic for our pluralistic age.

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David Bentley Hart. *Roland in Moonlight*. Brooklyn, NY: Angelico Press, 2021. 386 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1621386933. $24.95.

The music of modern theology seldom breaks with well-worn strains. In his latest work, David Bentley Hart sings a rare and different tune. *Roland in Moonlight* takes readers on a genre-bending journey into the mind of Hart, his Great Uncle Aloysius, and especially his dog, Roland. These three fictionalized characters each disclose a facet of Hart's inner world. His philosophical proclivities, religious intuitions, and even physical and emotional pathos, all come to light in what amounts to a memoir and a manifesto.

The key ideas of the text emerge during dreamlike dialogues between Hart and Roland. In these sessions, Roland elegantly reveals his views on consciousness, the unified web of all reality, and the utter enchantment of the latter by the former. Hart humbly sits at Roland's feet, sipping the wellspring of canine sagacity. Readers of the book are rewarded with an intimate spiritual chronicle, featuring rich reflections on mind, metaphysics, and mysticism, conveyed through the medium of Hart's refined literary style.

Among the many topics explored, the main theme appears to be philosophy of mind and, specifically, the question of consciousness. Through the medium of Roland's unflinching expertise, Hart plots the points of a historical genealogy, noting that philosophers and theologians since the early modern period have increasingly locked themselves inside a purely mechanistic paradigm of nature. The upshot of this approach is the choice between two unfortunate options concerning the relation of mind and materiality (pp. 140–42).

The first option seeks to salvage soul by means of Cartesian dualism; the second conjectures a physicalist account of soul, emerging spontaneously from the clockwork of mechanistic causality. According to Hart, these options forsake the more venerable premodern sensibility in which mind and matter exist by means of, and *as*, an ontological participation in their divine source and end (pp. 150–53). Hart espouses the classical view of nature, and this allows him to navigate the Scylla and Charybdis of late modern philosophies of mind.

Hart posits the presence of a universal mind attending every and all material reality (p. 222). Lying open to a deeper life, creation swarms with enchantment. Woodland spirits, mostly hidden from the eyes of Hart, are manifest clearly to Roland (p. 11). By intentionally attending to reality, moreover, rational consciousness (of dogs, of humans, etc.) shares in creation's passage from potency to act. Put more simply, classical metaphysics reveal an ever-relevant anthropology: God creates human beings to act as his co-creators in the world (pp. 265–66).

Hart is also an unabashed syncretist. He revels in the metaphysical and mystical confluence of various religious traditions. On several occasions, Roland levels the accusation that Hart is really a Hindu. Although Hart rejects the title, he does so humorously and half-heartedly, clearly suggesting a sympathetic attitude. Roland himself is elaborately portrayed as a Buddhist bodhisattva (pp. 209–12). Likewise, Uncle Aloysius

affectionately embodies the full-bore pagan practitioner, righteously reacting—mainly through his quite exquisite poetry—against the mechanistic materialism of modernity (pp. 53–55).

These characterizations imply that Hart aims to give allegiance to Truth alone, rather than to any particular religious tradition. This pluralistic approach is common among academic philosophers of religion, but some traditionalist believers could be put off. Readers should know that Hart brooks no exclusivity in his evaluation of religious and dogmatic truth claims. Indeed, his treatment of imperial Christendom—excepting "Christianity in its most original forms" (p. 185)—is mainly critical (p. 269).

Unfortunately, the book's political aspect leaves a distasteful flavor. Hart dedicates several pages to lambasting Donald Trump, both his public policy and his personal character, in what amounts to a vitriolic paroxysm (pp. 228–31). Perhaps Trump merits this load of brimstone; perhaps not. As an avowed pacifist, Hart perhaps could have directed his critiques more in a mode of restorative justice rather than the tongue lashing of retributive reproach.

Yet the moral of this story is that Roland is remarkably bright. His conversations with Hart are radiant with insight and punctuated with humor. In all but a few respects, *Roland in Moonlight* offers a potent elixir, served up for a culture that generally doubts the underlying spiritual fundament (i.e., consciousness) of all nature. This truly may be the book's most stimulating thesis, namely, that a panpsychist approach best solves the problem of consciousness and best characterizes the mystery of all reality.

Panpsychism deems that "mind is the ever more eminent fullness in which all things live and move and are" (p. 185). The world's substance shines with soul. Even amid its "purulence and waste and dissolution and ceaseless decay," an "evanescent flicker of enchantment inveigles and beguiles us" (p. 191). This reviewer certainly stands mesmerized. Philosophers of mind and of religion, as well as all "mystical" theologians, are strongly encouraged to join Hart on this narrative journey of rigorous logic, visionary wisdom, poetic imagination, and luminous spiritual epiphany.

Owen Kelly
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Dale C. Allison, Jr. *The Resurrection of Jesus: Apologetics, Polemics, History*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2021. 416 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0567697578. $150.00.

Dale Allison serves as the Richard Dearborn Professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary and has authored more than twenty books. In this detailed study, he engages in what he claims is a historical and critical investigation of Jesus's resurrection, considering different possibilities for understanding the event and its extenuating circumstances.

The book is divided into four parts. The first ("Setting the Stage," chapters 1–2) serves as an extended introduction to the issue and distinguishes Allison's approach. The second ("Historical and Critical Studies," chapters 3–8) analyzes the content of the biblical texts themselves. The third ("Thinking with Parallels," chapters 9–14) discusses historical and psychological issues related to resurrection beyond Scripture. The fourth ("Analysis and Reflections," chapters 15–18) critiques arguments for and against Jesus's resurrection, including a conclusion and overview.

The first chapter begins with a discussion of the way scholars usually write about Jesus's resurrection, adding the hope that Allison's contribution will function as middle ground. He defines this effort as "an exercise in the limits of historical criticism" (p. 3). In fact, he admits that some will be frustrated because of his unwillingness to offer "a candid, crystal clear answer" on many issues related to the resurrection, classifying his convictions as "idiosyncratic" (p. 4). He then discusses how beliefs about the resurrection changed throughout history in Chapter 2, organizing views on the topic into nine categories.

The second part begins with Allison considering the place of the resurrection in biblical passages often classified as early creeds, moving from there to the earliest Pauline texts. He then explores the accounts of Jesus's post-resurrection appearances, assessing possible explanations. While he grants credence to critical views, he does argue for the trustworthiness of some aspects of the appearance narratives, like Jesus's appearance to Mary. His detail is exhaustive and his sources plenteous. However, he complains that the scriptural sources for Jesus's appearances are "laconic" and suffer from a "dearth of detail," making him "unable to determine what particulars in this or that episode preserve historical memories" (p. 92).

Chapters 5 and 6 examine details surrounding the empty tomb. In both chapters Allison covers the gamut of scholarly perspectives, beginning with the more skeptical. He then reviews external sources sur-

rounding crucifixion deaths and burial practices, making a case for the basic historicity of the events relayed in Mark 15:42–46. Afterward, he expands on theoretical explanations for how the events surrounding Jesus's resurrection could have happened, noting problems like the lack of Pauline references to Jesus's tomb being empty. While he offers detailed arguments on the presence of women at Jesus's tomb and suggests that accounts of Jesus's appearance are incomprehensible without an empty tomb, he denies the veracity of other details, like the angelic appearances.

The second part concludes with chapters 7 and 8, the former dedicated to the extraordinary passage in Matthew 27:51–53 about tombs opening at Jesus's resurrection and people experiencing visitations. After a literature review, Allison classifies this as a "haggadic tale" (p. 170) that was preserved and historicized, but ultimately is legendary. Chapter 8 concludes with an exploration of a theory associated with Rudolf Pesch, suggesting that Jesus's disciples embraced an Old Testament-inspired idea of a dying and rising prophet and applied it to Jesus.

The third part begins with a discussion of apparitions in Chapter 9, with Allison surveying sources on experiences with the dead to nuance early Christians' experiences of Jesus. His tenth chapter engages with the idea of visions, with a perusal of visionary experiences from various eras which notes similarities and differences with the New Testament. Chapter 11 has an interesting discussion on the psychology of bereavement, and how understanding this might illumine the disciples' post-crucifixion experience. Chapter 12 includes a unique assessment of claims made by non-Christians about resurrection, as in some Tibetan traditions, noting legendary aspects as well as elements similar to the accounts of Jesus. The thirteenth chapter explores the idea of post-New Testament testimonies of those who have claimed to see Jesus. Lastly, Chapter 14 engages with the claims of those purporting to have seen the Virgin Mary, exploring how the possibility of such occurrences could help or hurt the credibility of the scriptural episodes.

In the fourth part, Allison examines what he sees as ineffectual apologetic arguments in favor of the resurrection, elaborating on six. Then, in Chapter 16, he evaluates more skeptical arguments against the resurrection. In Chapter 17, he consolidates his conclusions, expressing some confidence that he can reconstruct a historical outline from the biblical testimony. Although conservative evangelicals would typically reject his conclusion that the Gospels have both legends and "some genuine experiences" (p. 337), the current reviewer found this chapter the most helpful. However, the study closes with a capitulation to uncertainty: "the purely historical evidence is not, on my view, so good as to make

disbelief unreasonable, and it is not so bad as to make faith untenable" (p. 353).

Allison's work is commendable in many respects. Its strength is its treatment of sources, along with the author's respect for a range of positions. While his conclusions go beyond a conservative evangelical consensus, he is mostly fair to different viewpoints. Even so, many of his arguments fail simply because of his immovable resignation to agnosticism: His few conclusions are so saturated in tenuousness it seems he prefers to conclude nothing. The book may have been improved with a section on methodology, where he articulated precisely what criteria are necessary for evidence to be credible. Unfortunately, his agnosticism detracts from his work, even when his discussions are excellent. Allison remains a formidable scholar though, and while his book opens the interpretive door far wider than many will accept, it certainly deserves to be read.

William Bowes
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John Dickson. *Bullies and Saints: An Honest Look at the Good and Evil of Christian History*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021. xxiv + 328 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0310118360. $15.00.

As if covering 2,000 years of church history in less than 300 pages is not a tough enough task, purporting to offer "an honest look at the good and evil of Christian history" is bound to generate strong responses from some readers. Yet John Dickson gives himself to this task in *Bullies and Saints*. He does so having served as an Anglican minister (pp. xvii, 264), while he currently teaches New Testament and Church History at Ridley College in Australia.

On the surface, *Bullies and Saints* offers a history of Christianity with particular attention to the good and bad done in the name of Christ. However, beneath this focus lies a deeper goal, considering whether society would be better off without Christianity (p. xix). Dickson examines this question through a largely chronological retracing of specific elements in the history of Christianity, primarily its Western variant (p. xxiii). The book's overarching thesis, to which the author returns repeatedly, is that "Christ wrote a beautiful tune" in the moral commands he gave his followers. However, "the church has often performed [this tune] well" through its good deeds, but also "badly" through its atrocious behavior (p. xxiv).

Dickson opens his book with a protracted discussion of the Cru-

sades. He transitions in Chapter 3 to elucidating "two of Christ's most distinctive" teachings, love of enemies and the *Imago Dei*. In Chapter 4, he explains Jesus's teaching on self-judgment to encourage Christians to reflect critically on their history. Then, from Chapter 5 onward, the book progresses in a largely chronological fashion, beginning with persecution in the early church and ending with the social benefits of contemporary Christianity.

A few recurring themes deserve brief mention: (1) Christians committed many acts of violence. In addition to discussing the Crusades at length, Dickson highlights the lesser-known aggression of Ambrose of Milan, violence against Roman pagan religion, and compelled conversion of non-Christians. (2) Christians helped birth the concept of religious liberty, and generally (though inconsistently) promoted it. His writing contains substantial overlap with Robert Louis Wilken's work here. (3) Christians have brought about significant humanitarian benefits. Beginning in the patristic period, the author chronicles Christian efforts to build hospitals and care for those largely abandoned at the margins of society. Contrary to the perception of the "Dark Ages" as a period of decline, he highlights ways Christians proffered social good and preserved critical scholarly texts.

Dickson's work has much to commend it. *Bullies and Saints* is eminently readable. The prose is lucid and enjoyable. He is sympathetic to skeptics and frequently critical of both himself and Christian history. In fact, he writes in a way that an open-minded skeptic could appreciate. However, some readers will inevitably think his recounting of church history is too positive while others will regard it as too negative. Similarly, some readers will object that he covers a specific topic with too much or too little detail or does not cover another topic at all. This reviewer thinks that given the challenges of compressing so much history into so little space, the author provides a generally balanced and beneficial summary. To be fair, he offers more than a summary. While he rejects the term "apologist," the book rather clearly evinces an apologetical bent (p. xxii). He demonstrates that some keen non-Christian intellectuals have observed the culturally important role Christianity has played in bequeathing human rights and the salubrious part Christianity can play in helping a commonwealth thrive.

Despite these positives, several small errors occur through the book. For example, Dickson inaccurately speaks of the "Patriarch of Constantinople" as "the eastern equivalent of the Catholic Pope," even though the two positions are profoundly different on multiple levels (p. 199). Elsewhere, he holds up Augustine as opposing compelled conversion (and indeed Augustine, at times, wrote along these lines, p. 151). However, he omits a crucial fact: In writing against the Donatists, Augustine used the phrase "compel them to come in" from the Parable of the Wedding Feast to justify forced conversion, and many Christians would later turn to Augustine to defend this practice. Similarly, the author writes, "Luther certainly insisted that Christians should do good works, but the *logic* of doing the deeds was not clear" (p. 242, emphasis original). In fact, Luther provided a detailed logic for doing good deeds on multiple occasions in his corpus.

Nonetheless, *Bullies and Saints* succeeds in providing an honest (and readable) look at the good and bad in church history and is highly recommended.

Eric Beach
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Timothy Larsen, ed. *Every Leaf, Line, and Letter: Evangelicals and the Bible from the 1730s to the Present*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2021. 316 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0830841752. $36.00.

For a generation, historian David Bebbington has argued that biblicism, understood as a high regard for the inspiration and authority of Scripture, is one of the defining features of evangelicalism. Few scholars would question this contention, at least in principle, though the proverbial devil is in the details. This collection of essays finds its genesis in a 2020 conference at Baylor University. At that meeting, and in this work, historians honor Bebbington's influence upon the field by taking a closer look at some of the details of evangelical biblicism.

The contributors to *Every Leaf, Line, and Letter* include a diverse group of former Bebbington students, some of his longtime peers, and colleagues from Baylor, where Bebbington was a distinguished visiting professor for many years, in addition to his full-time faculty appointment at the University of Stirling in Scotland. The chapters themselves are best understood as case studies that offer snippets that touch up both the geography of the English-speaking world and the centuries identified with modern evangelicalism.

If there is a recurring theme across most of the chapters, it is that a high view of Scripture has never entailed any single approach to biblical interpretation. Evangelical ministers during the American Revolution applied the biblical exodus to their own break from English rule. In that same century, evangelicals often embraced allegorical interpretation for the sake of spiritual formation, despite their alleged commitment to grammatical-historical interpretation. Leading eighteenth-century theo-

logians with similar views of biblical authority arrived at very different understandings of free will in human salvation precisely because of hermeneutical differences. Moving into the nineteenth century, American biblical literalism was reinforced through children's Sunday School, though even then that did not guarantee uniformity in biblicism among evangelical children as they became adults. In our current era of global evangelicalism, it is even more evident how much biblicism—as well as other evangelical distinctives—are influenced by contextualization.

A second recurring theme is that not all evangelicals have teased out biblical inspiration, authority, and truthfulness in quite the same way. Whereas most fundamentalists and many evangelicals have used words like *inerrancy* or *infallibility* to summarize their views, there have also been more progressive evangelical traditions that tried to maintain a high view of Scripture by accommodating the insights of historical criticism. In other cases, there were mystics and charismatics within the wider evangelical movement who affirmed biblicism in principle but in practice were more concerned with how the Spirit was moving outside of Scripture.

A final recurring theme is the reality that one's ethnicity and/or perspective on race also affects evangelical approaches to Scripture. While the nineteenth century seemed to be an era dominated by commonsense biblicism, believing slaves and their enslavers interpreted Scripture's teaching about masters and slaves in very different ways. In later generations, black evangelicals would often draw upon their biblicism to critique social injustices such as lynching from the Scriptures, even though white evangelicals rarely made this connection. However, white evangelicals were far more apt than black evangelicals to make a biblical case for American nationalism, in part because that case was closely tied to hermeneutical tendencies and patriotic traditions that reinforced white evangelical assumptions about both Christianity and American history.

As with any collection of essays, *Every Leaf, Line, and Letter* is uneven at points. There is little coherence other than the fact that all the contributors discuss evangelical views of Scripture. Furthermore, the chapter on the global evangelical mind seems like an odd fit, since it deals with Bebbington's wider thesis about evangelical identity and only partly touches upon biblicism. Nevertheless, this volume makes a helpful contribution to the history of evangelicalism. Historians will appreciate studies that demonstrate varied evangelical views on Scripture. Historically, there is no such thing as "the" evangelical understanding of Scripture. It is impossible to fully separate convictions about the Bible and its teachings from cultural considerations that shape those convictions, as

this volume helps make clear.

Theologians and pastors will also benefit from greater awareness of evangelical theological diversity, though they may find this knowledge less than satisfying. What is true *descriptively* might be less than ideal *prescriptively*. As various evangelicals make a prescriptive case for their understandings, the very diversity of those cases will further evidence the themes this volume has highlighted so ably. This should not discourage theological reflection about Scripture and its interpretation, though hopefully it will add a degree of intellectual humility to that reflection.

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Crawford Gribben. *Survival and Resistance in Evangelical America: Christian Reconstruction in the Pacific Northwest.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. 224 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0199370221. $29.95.

Evangelicalism has been defined broadly and narrowly, both in popular culture and the academy. However, as historians such as David Bebbington, Thomas Kidd, and Mark Noll describe and evaluate the identity of evangelicalism, more attention should be given to its specific expressions. Crawford Gribben, professor of history at Queen's University, Belfast, does just this in his recent work, *Survival and Resistance in Evangelical America: Christian Reconstruction in the Pacific Northwest.* Here he describes the arguments and complexities of religious ideas found in Christian Reconstruction, particularly as they emerged in Idaho, Montana, eastern Oregon, eastern Washington, and Wyoming from the latter half of the twentieth century.

Gribben begins by orienting the reader to Christian Reconstruction. The proponents he features share common convictions in the areas of Reformed Theology, theonomy, an optimistic view of the future through a postmillennial eschatology, and an increasing submission to Old Testament law in the political landscape. These conservative evangelicals have established and advanced their own subcultures in response to America's changing political and religious climates. As Gribben traces the movement's beginnings in the Pacific Northwest and its distinct expressions, he examines five major categories.

First, he surveys those engaged in the "American Redoubt," a migration movement to the Pacific Northwest. Such migrants, influenced by R.J. Rushdoony, Gary North, James Wesley Rawles, Douglas Wilson, and others, relocated due to "their concern to escape, resist, and ultimately survive an impending crisis in American politics and society" (p. 29). This pursuit comes with challenges though. They are faced with

communicating and clarifying their alternative to the modern experience in America, and some groups have fared better than others.

Second, Gribben examines Christian Reconstruction's eschatology. Those involved in the movement maintain a hopeful expectation of reconstruction while critiquing the current climate. Dispensational premillennialism may decrease evangelical political engagement due to its pessimism concerning social conditions, but postmillennialism tends to encourage political activism due to its optimistic view of the future. These Reconstructionists strategize how to renew culture, rather than plan revolution.

Third, Gribben describes Christian Reconstructionists' shared views of government. While various narratives have been developed on the decreasing influence of Christianity in American culture, Reconstructionists have persisted in advocating for limited government, the importance of Old Testament law, and the limits of politics for cultural change. The largest and most successful Reconstructionist communities, such as the one in Moscow, Idaho, have emphasized the importance of individual change through personal evangelism, over cultural change through political force. At the same time, those seeking to survive and resist have found themselves at the margins of society.

Fourth, Gribben shows how Christian Reconstructionists utilized education as a strategy for survival and resistance. Due to secularization, early Reconstructionists in the 1960s and 1970s began to advocate for distinctly Christian education, mainly through private schools and homeschooling. The first generation of Reconstructionists experienced some level of success here, while many of the second generations excelled, including the community in Moscow, Idaho. The author notes the success of Douglas Wilson and others, who first developed a private Christian school built around a classical education and a Christian worldview. Notably, Wilson established New Saint Andrews College, with its proven "institutional stamina" (p. 111). Through these educational endeavors, Reconstructionists have expanded their cultural influence.

Fifth, Gribben describes how Christian Reconstructionists have utilized the media for calling and equipping others to survive and resist. In the fight against the larger American culture, Reconstructionists sought to produce distinctly Christian media, primarily in print and online. Such Reconstructionists often separated themselves from traditional evangelical publishing houses by developing their own or publishing with large, secular publishers. From novels and how-to guides to videos on Amazon Prime, they developed a keen sense for explaining how to survive, resist, and reconstruct.

In this book, the author shows "that Christian Reconstruction is not dead anymore," despite the suggestions of Molly Worthen, Michael McVicar, and others (p. 139). Christian Reconstruction has many streams, and Gribben excels in maintaining distinctions between groups. Through personal interviews and engagement with primary sources, he offers fair portrayals of Christian Reconstructionists to exhibit their commonalities and complexities. He overturns accusations raised against them, such as racism and propensities toward violence, and redirects the reader to consider the central texts of the movement. Whether familiar or unacquainted with those involved in Christian Reconstruction in the Pacific Northwest, readers will be equipped and prepared to think carefully about the movement and the relationship between faith, politics, and culture. This book should also prove influential in the landscape of the history of early modern religion and evangelicalism.

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Chase R. Kuhn and Paul Grimmond, eds. *Theology Is for Preaching: Biblical Foundations, Method, and Practice.* Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021. 343 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1683594598. $29.99.

Chase R. Kuhn is the coordinator of the John Chapman Preaching Initiative and a lecturer in theology and ethics at Moore Theological College in Sydney, Australia. Paul Grimmond is dean of students and lecturer in ministry, also at Moore College. In *Theology Is for Preaching*, they attempt to address a specific lacuna within the practical theological discipline of preaching. Preachers typically recognize the importance of theology, but not many can articulate why or how it impacts the task of preaching (p. xix). The aim of the book is to lay the theological foundations for preaching so that readers will be faithful preachers (p. xx). It also seeks "to argue for the importance of systematic theology and to reflect on the significance of dogmatics for the preaching task" (p. 296).

The editors divide the book into five parts: Foundations, Methodology, Theology for Preaching, Preaching for Theology, and Theology Preached. Part 1 highlights some theological and exegetical foundations for preaching. Claire Smith's chapter explores Greek words used in conjunction with preaching in the New Testament. Scholars like C.H. Dodd have made much of the difference between words the New Testament authors use to describe the nature of preaching. Rather than highlighting the differences between teaching and preaching through word studies

on *didaskō* and *kēryssō* though, Smith argues that no hard and fast distinction between these terms exists and that "the many and varied words used alert us to the richness and diversity of biblical preaching" (p. 49).

Part 2 focuses on various aspects of the methodology of preaching. Graham Beynon's chapter has much to commend, particularly as he presents the implications of the preacher as a personality (p. 189–93). Building his chapter around the person of the preacher, Beynon cites the oft-used statement of Phillips Brooks, "Preaching is truth through personality" (p. 179). Though many take the Brooks quote at face value, more preachers could benefit from reading Charles Fuller's *The Trouble with Truth through Personality: Phillips Brooks, Incarnation, and the Evangelical Boundaries of Preaching* (Wipf & Stock, 2010). What Brooks meant is less than clear, but Fuller's work helps evangelicals articulate faithfully the relationship between personality and preaching.

Part 3 of *Theology Is for Preaching* highlights important doctrines that have a direct bearing on how one conceives preaching. Peter Jensen's chapter is instructive for preachers who recognize the importance of biblical theology for their task. Jensen argues, "In recent days a misunderstanding of biblical theology has arisen," which results in preachers failing to acknowledge "the eschatological essence of the gospel" (p. 226). For Jensen, biblical theology properly applied results in a forward orientation to preaching that reminds the listener of heaven, hell, and the judgment to come.

Part 4 focuses on how the task of preaching makes use of theology. Jane Tooher offers a helpful chapter arguing that preachers must educate their congregations "to attend faithfully and humbly to God as he speaks" in the preaching event (p. 269). After highlighting humanity's listening problem from Gen 3 to Heb 3–4, Tooher diagnoses different types of sermon hearers and various reasons why people struggle to listen. She also provides several ways preachers can encourage and equip their churches to listen well. Part 5 then consists of sermons from two contributors.

The recursive nature of theology, hermeneutics, and preaching is a theme that connects many of the chapters. David Starling highlights how hermeneutics operates in these "recursive movements" between our previous understandings and present encounters with the Scriptures (p. 85). The editors argue the same relationship exists between the disciplines of theology and preaching. This emphasis corrects the image of theology as a mere foundation for preaching—or preaching as a mere product of biblical and theological study. The book also presents good examples of how systematic and biblical theology inform a theology of preaching. For example, Mark Thompson is careful to draw the distinction between God's internal communication (*relatio ad intra*) and his external operations (*opera ad extra*) to demonstrate its relevance for a theology of preaching (p. 19).

In sum, the authors add a valuable contribution with this work, narrowing the "ugly ditch" between theology and the practical discipline of preaching. While the book's format as an edited volume with various contributors does not allow for sustained development on any one topic, the structure presents the work's usefulness. At the same time, the editors could have aided the reader by including an explanation and rationale for each section of the book in the preface. In any event, it would function well as a text in a graduate or doctoral level seminar on hermeneutics or homiletics, designed to introduce students to the variety of ways theology and preaching intersect. The book is also accessible enough to encourage and strengthen pastors in their task of expounding the word of God for the people of God.

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David M. King. *Your Old Testament Sermon Needs to Get Saved: A Handbook for Preaching Christ from the Old Testament.* Chicago: Moody, 2021. 156 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0802423276. $15.99.

Preaching from the Old Testament has experienced a revival in the last fifty years. David M. King, a seasoned pastor at Concord Baptist Church in Chattanooga, TN, seeks to further the Christ-centered preaching discussion by giving readers "a practical handbook for preaching Christ from the Old Testament" (p. 11). King's book joins two other preaching works in the 9Marks series, *Preach: Theology Meets Practice* by Mark Dever and Greg Gilbert (2012) and *Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God's Word Today* by David Helm (2014), which uniquely champion the necessity of preaching the gospel in every sermon.

King notes that most literature on Christocentric preaching falls into one of three categories: (1) academic books tending toward the abstract, (2) general preaching books offering tips without a method, or (3) study books giving the fruit of Christ-centered hermeneutics but lacking an explanation of the necessary process. He says, "The need remains for a simple and practical guide for preaching Christ from the Old Testament" (p. 11). While his intended audience is the busy pastor, as well as Sunday School teacher and Bible Study leader, his aim is clear: "The heart of this handbook is practical methodology. I want to help pastors know *how* to preach Christ from the Old Testament" (p. 18).

To accomplish this task, King's book is divided into three parts with an introduction and conclusion. In his introduction, he seeks to convey a challenge he received from Sidney Greidanus, Graeme Goldsworthy, and Bryan Chapell, to whom he dedicates the book. That challenge is for each pastor who has not "yet perceived the Christocentric nature of the Old Testament" (p. 9). However, those who accept the challenge and preach from the OT must avoid two errors: First, failing to interpret and apply the OT in the light of Christ is sub-Christian. Second, carelessly applying a Christocentric hermeneutic that slights the Trinity, twists the Scriptures, or minimizes the Bible's imperatives, is sub-biblical (p. 10).

In Part 1, King answers a crucial question: "Why should I preach Christ from the OT?" Here he identifies a common problem in evangelical pulpits: "Too many preachers make little or no effort to understand the connection of the text to the person and work of Jesus. The text serves a utilitarian purpose rather than a Christological one. Simply put, these Old Testament sermons need to get saved" (p. 19). He offers an exegetical and theological solution to this problem. Exegetically, he advocates an approach like Dennis E. Johnson's in *Him We Proclaim* (2007): Interpretive cues are gleaned from how Jesus and the apostles interpreted the OT in a Christ-focused way. Then, theologically, King explains the concepts of progressive revelation, the new covenant, the canonical context, Christ's mediatorial role, and the goal of preaching—which is a congregation's maturity in Christ.

In Part 2, the author provides practical answers to the question, "How do I preach Christ from the OT?" He offers three simple steps for interpreting every OT text in the light of Christ: text, Christ, us (p. 49). In step one, the preacher selects a text and derives the main point. In step two, the preacher asks how the main point of the OT passage finds its fulfillment in Christ. Here King offers six ways to Christ: (1) prophetic promise, (2) ethical instruction, (3) fallen humanity, (4) typological revelation, (5) narrative progression, and (6) theological theme. Provocatively, he asks us to imagine Jesus reading the OT over our shoulders, interpreting the text in light of himself. Step three concludes the interpretive process by applying the Christ-informed text to the modern listener.

Part 3 then answers a final question: "What happens when I preach Christ from the OT?" Here King gives three problems to avoid, Christomonism (which excludes the Father and the Holy Spirit), moving too quickly from the text to Christ, and ignoring imperatives. However, with those warnings in place, he offers numerous benefits to enjoy.

The author's tone is pastoral, and he communicates well to those charged with shepherding God's flock. His candor and transparency

throughout the book are also commendable, especially his confession of his "sub-Christian" preaching during some of his early ministry. In sum, in the broader Christ-centered preaching discussion, there are a variety of advocates of Christocentric preaching, but with little uniformity in methodology. However, King contributes helpfully to the discussion by explaining *why* and *how* preachers should preach Christ from the OT. Paired with a book on expository preaching, this concise handbook would be a useful addition to an introductory preaching course or to a pastoral internship program. It is certainly designed to raise up much-needed Christ-centered expositors for the nurture of the Lord's body.

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Matthew D. Kim. *Preaching to People in Pain: How Suffering Can Shape Your Sermons and Connect with Your Congregation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021. xv + 223 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1540961297. $24.99.

In *Preaching to People in Pain*, Matthew Kim tackles a highly relevant and enduring topic—pain. He discusses the opportunities and challenges of preaching to people in pain as a preacher who feels pain himself. He does so with the sincerity and sensitivity of one who has endured, and intentionally contemplated, personal pain.

Part 1 is entitled "Naming the Pain." In the first chapter, Kim reflects upon the preacher's own pain. In the second chapter he turns the preacher's attention to the pain of his listeners. In the third chapter he introduces a plan for preparing sermons and preaching on pain. This process begins with deciding which passage the preacher will expound. Then he must discern what type of pain or suffering is revealed in the text. Next the preacher investigates how the Bible character, or the biblical author, deals with that pain. Then he asks how the pain in the text could relate to the pain of his listeners. He considers what this pain says about God and his allowance of pain. He explores how God helps us in our suffering. He asks how our preaching can show care and empathy. Finally, he considers how God might use suffering to transform his people and glorify his name.

Kim also offers seven principles for preaching on pain and suffering. First, the preacher must diagnose the source of the pain. Second, he must preach on pain when the text addresses it. Third, he must preach on pain when the occasion calls for it. Fourth, the preacher must help his listeners receive comfort from the triune God. Fifth, he must encourage his listen-

ers to comfort others in their pain. Sixth, he encourages his listeners to give thanks to God amidst their pain. Seventh, the preacher urges listeners to glorify God through their pain. He then suggests two reminders for the preacher: pain typically comes in waves, and one should "preach" among the people as well as formally from the pulpit.

Part 2 is entitled "Preaching on Pain." Here Kim highlights six categories of pain (in chapters 4 through 9): decisions, finances, health issues, losses, relationships, and sins. He includes sample sermons for each category, while discussion questions at the end of each chapter give readers an opportunity to reflect. These questions would also benefit a discussion group. Additionally, the appendix to the book presents a helpful "Worksheet for Understanding Pain," which the preacher can use during sermon preparation.

The inherent value of this book lies in its undeniable relevance—everyone hurts, and preachers dare not ignore their people's pain. Kim's method is thorough and thoughtful. He delivers on both theory (contemplating the reality and essence of pain among the congregation) and practice (sketching a clear path toward faithfully and effectively preaching on pain). Wonderfully, Kim has touched on a felt need that is real, biblical, and urgent.

However, two potential pitfalls await pastors who rightly and sincerely take his message to heart. One is the possibility of a preaching imbalance. The other is weak exposition. These pitfalls are especially noticeable for one who preaches a series of expository, consecutive sermons. Preaching through books of the Bible surely provides the healthiest nourishment for a congregation, while a consecutive series offers a robust and rounded diet of topics for application. The preacher must find the right balance: addressing pain enough, without focusing on it too often. This warning is pertinent if pain does not arise directly from the preaching text (which may occur while employing Kim's methods). Without doubt, pain must be addressed from the pulpit. Furthermore, the preacher should be specific and talk about actual pain dealt with directly or indirectly in the text. Nevertheless, the alert preacher must remain vigilant not to build topical sermons on pain when the text does not warrant it. If vigilance wanes here, weak exposition could result. As always, letting the text drive the message remains paramount.

Matthew Kim has blessed pastors (and students of preaching) with this book. *Preaching to People in Pain* is a most worthwhile read. It is an essential addition to bookshelves and bibliographies.

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