

# SOUTHEASTERN THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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## Introduction

**Benjamin L. Merkle**

*Editor*

As is our normal plan for the journal, the Spring issue of *STR* is unthemed. This particular issue includes essays in the fields of Old Testament, New Testament, Greek grammar, ecclesiology, and philosophy.

The first essay is by David Firth, tutor at Trinity College, Bristol, and University of the Free State. His essay, “Some Reflections on Current Narrative Research on the Book of Samuel,” provides a wealth of information on the current state of studies on the book of Samuel. Focusing specifically on narrative criticism, Firth examines how the narrative poetics of Samuel have largely defined the poetics of narrative within the Old Testament. Furthermore, he demonstrates how narrative criticism has become the dominant model for interpreting Samuel.

In the second essay, David Seal, adjunct professor at Cornerstone University, offers an essay on “Communication in the Lukan Birth Narrative.” Seal contends that the oral culture of the first-century Mediterranean world is on display in Luke 2:1–20 where information is transmitted by various means that were typical of an oral society. This is seen in (1) the decree issued by Caesar, (2) the declaration by an angel that a Savior has been born, (3) the victory cry shouted by the divine army, and (4) the narrative of visiting the Christ child by the shepherds. Seal then explores the implications of these oral modes of communication, highlighting how they help us understand Luke’s birth narrative.

In the third essay, Alexander Stewart and Jacob Ott from Tyndale Theological Seminary team up to demonstrate how first-century coins can be a valuable tool in teaching the New Testament. Specifically, they explain how Roman imperial and provincial coins can instruct us about the religion, politics, and culture of the New Testament world. In their essay, they (1) provide a brief introduction to ancient coins, (2) demonstrate how coins can aid in our understanding of the New Testament and its world, and (3) offer practical advice for acquiring ancient coins as well as how to effectively use them in the classroom.

The fourth essay is by David Moss, ThM student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He discusses the influences of tense-form choice with infinitives using Ephesians as a test case. He seeks to explain why an author, in this case Paul, chooses one tense-form over another.

Moss demonstrates that tense-form choice for infinitives was neither arbitrary nor fully subjective but involved lexical, contextual, and aspectual influences. Moss concludes by noting that, for infinitives, contextual and syntactical constructions often have the largest role in determining which tense-form an author will use. He also maintains that for infinitives not in such constructions, the procedural characteristics of the lexeme (i.e., the lexical meaning) is the primary factor that influences an author’s tense-form choice.

The fifth essay, by Jesse Payne (PhD student at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary), explores the ecclesiology of Carl F. H. Henry. Payne maintains that although Henry rightly emphasized regenerate church membership and the church’s mission, he often downplayed key aspects of the local church. This distinction, according to Payne, was due to Henry’s unique historical context and his own personal calling. Such an approach, though helpful in offering a unified evangelical voice against secularism, tended to neglect the full value of the local church for discipleship.

The final essay, “An Epistemically-Focused Interpretation of C. S. Lewis’s Moral Argument in Mere Christianity and an Assessment of Its Apologetic Force,” is by Zachary Breitenbach, adjunct professor at Lincoln Christian University. Breitenbach contends that Lewis’s moral argument is often misunderstood, and he makes the case for an interpretation of the argument that focuses on moral epistemology. Breitenbach also argues that Lewis’s argument culminates in a more modest conclusion than it should have. While Breitenbach acknowledges that Lewis’s moral argument makes a valuable contribution to Christian apologetics, because Lewis was writing for a popular audience, his argument was philosophically less precise than it could have been. Breitenbach thus explains how Lewis could have strengthened his argument as well as his conclusion. Nevertheless, he affirms that Lewis offers a sound argument that has apologetic value.

## Some Reflections on Current Narrative Research on the Book of Samuel

David G. Firth

Trinity College, Bristol / University of the Free State

*The development of narrative criticism as a discipline within Old Testament studies and study of the books of Samuel are integrally related. This essay examines the significance of Samuel for the ways in which narrative criticism has developed, arguing that it is the narrative poetics of Samuel that have come to be largely definitive for our understanding of the poetics of narrative within the Old Testament. At the same time, the developing understanding of narrative criticism has shaped the ways in which Samuel is interpreted, with narrative criticism becoming a dominant model. This development is explored through major studies of Samuel published as and since this shift took place, showing the fruitfulness of this approach for contemporary study, while also showing that issues left unaddressed in the rise of narrative criticism leave important questions about their interpretation unresolved.*

*Key Words:* ethics, historiography, narrative criticism, poetics, postcolonial criticism, Samuel, textual criticism

The books of Samuel have been the focus of an expanding body of research for some time. Given the explosion of such work in recent years, it is not possible in any one paper to address all the issues that have emerged in research on the book. This paper is therefore selective. In it, I offer reflections on studies which are focused on the Book of Samuel since the 1970s. Although for some this date might not seem especially “current”, it is chosen because it was a time that marked a significant change in how the Bible was interpreted with the rise of narrative methods. It is my contention that issues left unresolved at the point of this development continue to impact the interpretation of Samuel. Within this period, it is also argued that the narrative quality of Samuel means it became a central text in developing narrative approaches. Narrative criticism will thus emerge as the key tool for interpreting Samuel, but problems with this interpretative shift will be highlighted. It should be made clear that these criticisms come from someone who regards himself as a narrative critic, but hopefully situating these reflections in this setting means that we can reflect self-critically on what this means.

As a selective study, commentaries on Samuel are not considered. This limitation is because the form of the commentary forces a high level of

summary which other forms, especially the monograph, do not require. Monographs are accordingly the main focus of the paper. As my concern is with Samuel as a discrete text, works on the Deuteronomistic History are also excluded. This limitation is not because I no longer regard it as a viable model for interpreting the block of texts found in Joshua – 2 Kings (though I don’t), but because methodologically this approach is concerned with Samuel only to the extent that it is part of a wider text. Nevertheless, studies which examine Samuel as a component within the Deuteronomistic History, but which focus only on Samuel are included. However, even with these limits in place it is not possible to include everything, so what is offered is also a personal list of those works which I judge to represent the issues best.

### The Development of Narrative

#### Samuel and Narrative Studies

The 1970s marked a significant change how the Old Testament was studied. Several factors influenced this shift, and the changes that we observe were also evident in a range of other disciplines in the humanities. But we can note that this change occurred when Biblical Studies took a literary turn. Prior to that point, academic study had been primarily concerned with what is now described as diachronic interpretation, with the text approached through well-established methods such as source, form and redaction criticism, even as more synchronic approaches began to develop. Although it was conceived as an extension of form criticism, and thus something that was initially diachronic, James Muilenberg’s famous SBL Presidential address advocating the development of rhetorical criticism was an important contributing factor.<sup>1</sup> More important from our point of view is the arrival of *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, which is now one of the key Old Testament journals. Launched in 1976, its concern with the interpretation of the texts as we now have them was apparent from the start, and David J. A. Clines, for many years the driving force behind *JSOT*, has demonstrated this concern in a number of his publications even as he has also moved more towards the world of the reader. Nevertheless, *JSOT* remains one of the most important places for publishing such studies, and it continues to foster an interest in synchronic studies as well as more traditional diachronic ones.

The mid-1970s were a time of rapid change in Old Testament hermeneutics, though not many textbooks fully reflect that. Muilenberg’s proposal, coupled with the forum provided by *Semeia*, and even more so by

<sup>1</sup> James Muilenberg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 1–18.

*JSOT*, opened the door for a serious study of the whole of the Hebrew Bible from a synchronic viewpoint. However, making the study of the text's current form acceptable did not mean that issues associated with narrative were properly addressed. It is probably true to say that the Muilenberg school was generally more effective in its treatment of the prophets, wisdom, and poetic texts, which have a more obvious rhetorical function, than narrative. They had paved the way, but the road was not yet open in terms of Hebrew narrative.

A year before, *JSOT*'s first issue of two significant publications appeared, both of which were specifically concerned with matters related to Hebrew narrative. The first of these was J. P. Fokkelman's *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis*.<sup>2</sup> In it, Fokkelman analyzed selected passages from Genesis in terms of the literary techniques employed by the narrators. As such, matters of source criticism, which had for so long dominated Pentateuchal study, were pushed to one side. Instead, Fokkelman provided an extraordinarily detailed analysis of the Hebrew text of these passages. In particular, Fokkelman was concerned with the literary artistry of these passages as they now stand. Instead of determining a series of historical questions about what lay behind the text, Fokkelman attempted to interpret the text alone. It was thoroughly synchronic, or text immanent. Since then, he has also published both a four-volume literary interpretation of Samuel and an introduction to Old Testament narrative, both of which will feature in this essay.<sup>3</sup>

Because Fokkelman largely eschewed formal method, a more significant publication (at least in English) was probably Robert Alter's essay, "A Literary Approach to the Bible,"<sup>4</sup> an initial published probe that is a clear pointer to his later *The Art of Biblical Narrative*.<sup>5</sup> Alter is a literary critic. Coming from this background, he argued that consideration of such issues as plot, scene, characterization, and the like had a valid and relevant role to play in the interpretation of the biblical narratives. After the initial essay, Alter published several others, and these, though heavily re-written, form the basis of his 1981 book, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. More than

<sup>2</sup> J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975).

<sup>3</sup> J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*, 4 vols. (Assen: van Gorcum, 1981–1993); Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Robert Alter, "A Literary Approach to the Bible," *Commentary* 60 (1975): 70–77.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

many other books in the history of Old Testament study, this truly was a watershed work. Here, Alter gave shape to the interpretive program he was proposing, providing the necessary literary and intellectual coherence. Alter was building on both a tradition of studying narrative in English departments and also a growing movement in works published in Modern Hebrew by scholars such as Shimon bar-Efrat and Meir Sternberg, which was beginning to influence some strands of Old Testament studies. But Alter is pivotal because it was his work that established the importance of understanding the Old Testament's narrative on its own terms. After Alter, more substantial works were published by Adele Berlin,<sup>6</sup> Sternberg,<sup>7</sup> and bar-Efrat<sup>8</sup> (among others). So rapidly did this become an established method in Old Testament studies that it took less than a decade for scholars to begin producing introductory texts that explained narrative criticism to students<sup>9</sup> and survey articles examining the interpretative possibilities of such approaches.<sup>10</sup>

My purpose in outlining this change is not to focus on narrative studies in and of themselves so much as to point to how influential Samuel was in the formation of this approach. To do this, we will take some soundings from each of Alter, Berlin, Sternberg, and bar-Efrat. The intention is not to give a comprehensive survey, but hopefully the examples chosen will be illustrative of the point. In Alter's *Art of Biblical Narrative*, he entitled one chapter "Characterization and the Art of Reticence."<sup>11</sup> Alter's primary examples are taken from the presentation of David in Samuel, focusing in particular on his "unfolding relationship with his wife Michal."<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, he takes us from Michal's introduction in 1 Sam 18:14–30, her

<sup>6</sup> Adele Berlin, *Poetics and the Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983).

<sup>7</sup> Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

<sup>8</sup> Shimon bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> E.g., Jean Louis Ska, "Our Fathers Have Told Us": *An Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1990); Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative*; Jerome T. Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative: A Guide to Its Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009). The time-pressed can now read Tod Linafelt, *The Hebrew Bible as Literature: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 27–49.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., Joe M. Sprinkle, "Literary Approaches to the Old Testament: A Survey of Recent Scholarship," *JETS* 32 (1989): 299–310.

<sup>11</sup> Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 114–30.

<sup>12</sup> Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 115.

assisting of David's escape in 1 Sam 19:11–17, her being taken from David in 1 Sam 25:44, her forced return to David in 2 Sam 3:12–16, and finally to her encounter with David in 2 Sam 6:20–23. In filling this theme out, Alter also mentions David's other wives in 1 Sam 30<sup>13</sup> and Bathsheba.<sup>14</sup> The predominant influence of Samuel in Alter's development of the Old Testament's narrative poetics is not restricted to this chapter. We might also note that all the key examples in his fourth chapter, an exploration of the relationship between narration and dialogue,<sup>15</sup> are taken from Samuel. So, although his starting point is the Judah and Tamar narrative,<sup>16</sup> it is Samuel that has been most influential in his understanding, or at least his demonstration, of the narrative techniques of the Old Testament.<sup>17</sup>

We can note a similar pattern in other pioneering studies. In Adele Berlin's work, it is notable that about 40 percent of all biblical citations are taken from the books of Samuel.<sup>18</sup> Like Alter, when she discusses characterization, her examples are almost all taken from Samuel, the only variation being her inclusion of 1 Kings 1–2 as a means of concluding her treatment of Bathsheba.<sup>19</sup> Sternberg's work is by far the most detailed of the earlier works on Old Testament narrative, but although he has differences in approach to Alter and Berlin, he is united with them both in providing a particular focus on Samuel. So, when he examines gaps and ambiguity in the reading process,<sup>20</sup> his central example is taken from 2 Sam 11.<sup>21</sup> Even his other text, the story of Abimelech and the woman from Judges 9, appears only because it is referred to in 2 Sam 11.<sup>22</sup> Sternberg draws on a wider range of texts than the other works considered here, but Samuel (along with Genesis) provide his key sources, comprising

<sup>13</sup> Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 121.

<sup>14</sup> Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 128.

<sup>15</sup> Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 63–87.

<sup>16</sup> Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 3–22.

<sup>17</sup> This is true even of points where one might think that Samuel would not feature so significantly, as for example his treatment of the type scene, where even here Samuel appears (Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 60–62).

<sup>18</sup> As is easily seen in the Index of Biblical Passages in Berlin, *Poetics*, 171–73.

<sup>19</sup> Berlin, *Poetics*, 23–33.

<sup>20</sup> Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 186–229.

<sup>21</sup> Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 186–219.

<sup>22</sup> Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 219–22.

about 40 percent of his texts.<sup>23</sup> Shimon bar-Efrat's text is similarly influenced by Samuel, and again about 40 percent of his texts are taken from Samuel.<sup>24</sup> Not only are many of his examples are taken from Samuel, but when he presents an analysis of a text to draw together all the elements he has explained in the preceding chapters, he chooses the story of Amnon and Tamar from 2 Sam 13.<sup>25</sup> We can also note in passing that bar-Efrat would go on to write a commentary on Samuel that was expressly concerned with its narrative elements.<sup>26</sup>

What conclusions can we draw from this overview? Obviously, we cannot know why these scholars selected the texts that they did to illustrate the points that they wished to make. But it is striking that Samuel has provided so many examples of the narrative art of the Old Testament—only Genesis comes close to it in terms of influence and citations. Yet time and again it is Samuel that provides the key text for examining how narrative works. Because of this textual selection, the generation that has learned the poetics of Old Testament narrative through these studies (and they have been hugely influential) have particularly been exposed to Samuel. The narrative techniques of Samuel have, in effect, come to be seen as the standard model through which to read the narrative texts of the Old Testament. Other books in the Former Prophets feature considerably less and in a much lower ratio relative to their length. For example, Joshua and Judges combined (to achieve a text closer in length to Samuel and so make the ratios more relevant) appear only about one third as often as Samuel in Sternberg, one sixth as often in bar-Efrat, and one tenth as often in Berlin and Alter. For whatever reason, these books have not been as influential in developing our understanding of narrative, leading to the occasional complaint that these texts are overlooked in narrative studies of the Old Testament.<sup>27</sup> Samuel's narrative quality has particularly shaped our understanding of the Old Testament's narrative poetics, and this understanding in turn has encouraged more focused narrative studies of Samuel.

<sup>23</sup> See the index in Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 576–80.

<sup>24</sup> See the index in bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 287–92.

<sup>25</sup> bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 239–82.

<sup>26</sup> S. bar-Efrat, *Das Erste Buch Samuel: Ein narratologisch-philologischer Kommentar* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007); and bar-Efrat, *Das Zweite Buch Samuel: Ein narratologisch-philologischer Kommentar* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2009). The same, of course, is true of Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: Norton & Co, 1999). However, in spite of his subtitle, his commentary does go on to include 1 Kings 1–2.

<sup>27</sup> Sarah Leebhar Hall, *Conquering Character: The Characterization of Joshua in Joshua 1–11* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 4.

### Early Narrative Studies of Samuel

Alongside the pioneering works on the poetics of Old Testament narrative, a number of early works on narrative began to appear. What is again notable is that Samuel dominated such studies, even if other texts like Esther, which had previously been on the margins of Old Testament studies, moved more into the mainstream. So, Samuel's narrative qualities were being recognized quite early in the literary turn, though as we will note, the level of formal methodological reflection that has informed this recognition has risen over time.

Pride of place for this movement, not least in that his earliest works predated Alter's *Art of Biblical Narrative*, and to some extent even his *Commentary* essay, must go to David M. Gunn, who published two studies on Samuel employing narrative methodology. Gunn's earlier volume examined the story of David,<sup>28</sup> almost immediately distinguishing itself from the then-dominant approaches to Samuel, which had been shaped by Rost's source critical analysis.<sup>29</sup> He managed this change by reading the story of David as king, reaching back to 2 Sam. 2 rather than following the more or less agreed structure of the so-called Succession Narrative.<sup>30</sup> However, Gunn did follow Rost (and indeed many others) in continuing to read through to 1 Kings 2 on the basis that this concluded David's story. That is, the canonical boundary between Samuel and Kings was not deemed significant by Gunn. But what was more important was that Gunn's concern was with the story quality of the narrative,<sup>31</sup> something he argued would enable a better appreciation of the narrative's genre and purpose. This is not to say that Gunn rejected the existence of Rost's source, but that he refocused the way it was read.

In *King David*, Gunn does not devote much attention to the theoretical underpinnings of his task, his introduction largely being given over to an outline of what follows. But in his second major study, looking at Saul,<sup>32</sup> Gunn provides some initial reflection on the task of the literary critic

<sup>28</sup> David M. Gunn, *The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978). In his preface (p. 9), Gunn notes that aspects of the book had appeared in journal articles, some as early as 1974.

<sup>29</sup> See Leonhard Rost, *The Succession to the Throne of David* (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1982). German original, 1926.

<sup>30</sup> Although it was generally agreed that this putative source began before 2 Sam 9, exactly which verses should be included was not settled.

<sup>31</sup> Gunn, *King David*, 13.

<sup>32</sup> David M. Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul: An Interpretation of a Biblical Story* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980).

(which we might now call a narrative critic). He is particularly concerned with what it means to read this material as a work of serious entertainment, something that requires attending closely to its presentation as story.<sup>33</sup> He makes it clear that his goal is to provide an interpretation of the story, but he also indicates his own reservations about providing theoretical foundations for his reading.<sup>34</sup> He was more concerned with *what* he offered than *how* he offered it. Without taking time to explore the detail of his readings, it is notable that a key motivation for Gunn was to take stories that he judged to be well-known and interpret them for a wider range of readers. His approach was to examine these as embedded stories, rather than as part of a final form, but method as such did not play a significant role.

About the same time as Gunn's work on David, another narrative study of more or less the same story was published by Charles Conroy.<sup>35</sup> Conroy's study differed from Gunn's in staying within Samuel but was still largely a study of the Succession Narrative, albeit approaching it from the perspective of its narrative form. Since 2 Sam 13–20 forms a particular narrative segment, it was possible for Conroy to narrow his focus, so he does not comment on the place of 1 Kings 1–2. Like Gunn, Conroy does not give much attention to method, his methodological comments serving more as a summary of what will happen in the balance of his study.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps more importantly, he starts from the position that the literary excellence of Samuel is such that, beyond brief citations from Gunkel and Whybray, there is no need to justify this aspect of Samuel, thus permitting his study.<sup>37</sup>

Something similar can be said of Fokkelman's massive four-volume study of the books of Samuel, a work that took seriously its subtitle as a "full interpretation based on stylistic and structural analyses."<sup>38</sup> Fokkel-

<sup>33</sup> Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul*, 11–19.

<sup>34</sup> Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul*, 16–17.

<sup>35</sup> Charles Conroy, *Absalom! Absalom! Narrative and Language in II Sam 13–20* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978).

<sup>36</sup> Conroy, *Absalom!*, 6–12.

<sup>37</sup> Conroy, *Absalom!*, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Fokkelman is careful to note that a "full interpretation" is not to be confused with "the impossible pretension of having the last word about Samuel." See J. P. Fokkelman, *King David*, vol. 1 of *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1981), 7. Calling this particular volume *King David* represents Fokkelman's nod to the importance of Gunn (p. 427).

man had already begun exploring the possibilities of narrative interpretation with his earlier studies in Genesis, but it is in his work on Samuel that this approach bears full fruit. Again, methodology plays a comparatively small role in his study. He is clear that his goal is to read the text, asking questions that arise from within it.<sup>39</sup> This is not to say that he is methodologically naïve, and indeed he mentions bar-Efrat's original work in Modern Hebrew as an influence,<sup>40</sup> though he does not make much reference to it in the work itself. Part of the reason for this lack of methodological reflection, as he engages in both micro-textual and macro-textual studies, is his desire to identify those features of the text that most clearly require comment rather than feeding his interpretation through a specific grid, while also aiming to provide an interpretation of the whole. This is why each volume concludes with an integrating synthesis for the portion of text covered save for his third covering 2 Sam 5–8 and 21–24.<sup>41</sup> However, this section is then integrated into his conclusions on the whole book in his fourth volume.<sup>42</sup> Fokkelman is thus more concerned with a deep appreciation of the text than with offering a sustained reflection on method.

Apart from their lack of conscious reflection on method, these early narrative studies are also notable for the fact that they are not directly concerned with Samuel, but rather draw on the source-critical paradigm offered by Rost. Conroy, of course, is explicit that he is interpreting a part of the Succession Narrative, and although Gunn does not agree with Rost's boundaries for this source in *King David*, he was still working with this model as a basic structure. Although Fokkelman would go on to provide a detailed interpretation of the rest of Samuel, his decision to include 1 Kings 1–2 and to include 2 Sam 21–24 with 2 Sam 5–8 in his study shows that although he was not particularly persuaded of the source critical analysis, it was still a significant factor in shaping his reading. That is, these early narrative works are, to some extent, studies of sources which have been more or less taken over whole into Samuel but not consciously studies of the book of Samuel itself.

<sup>39</sup> Fokkelman, *King David*, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Fokkelman, *King David*, 1–12.

<sup>41</sup> J. P. Fokkelman, *Throne and City (II Sam. 2–8 & 21–24)*, vol. 3 of *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1990).

<sup>42</sup> J. P. Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire (I Sam. 1–12)*, vol. 4 of *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1993), 540–49. It should be noted that 2 Sam 5–8 and 21–24 fit awkwardly in his final structure, with 2 Sam 21–24 brought back to follow immediately on 5–8 (p. 542).

## From Narrative Studies to Narrative Criticism

It is notable that at about the same time as Fokkelman's first volume appeared, Alter's *Art of Biblical Narrative* was also published. One cannot draw an immediate cause and effect conclusion, but it is notable that later narrative studies of Samuel have been more focused on method than the early studies. Alter's work is largely descriptive, though clearly well-informed about wider discussions in poetics, something that can also be said of the other works on narrative in the Old Testament that appeared shortly thereafter. But what Alter established was that it was possible to define the major features of narrative in the Old Testament, and from this it was then possible to establish testable methods in narrative. So, where the early studies in narrative found Samuel to be an attractive text for understanding narrative poetics, and the early narrative studies on Samuel emerged because of the interest the text generated, it now became important to provide a methodological foundation for what was done. Along with this growing methodological awareness, and in dialogue with wider movements in Old Testament studies that can largely be traced to Brevard Childs's pioneering work at about the same time,<sup>43</sup> there emerged a greater interest in reading the text as a final form. This shift has considerable importance for how we regard 2 Sam 21–24 in particular, though it also affects how large parts of the text are read. However, as we shall see, there remains an unresolved tension over the nature of the text even as a greater focus on method has emerged. Even so, a shift had begun from narrative approaches to narrative criticism.

To understand this shift, we need briefly to turn aside from studies focused on Samuel to consider Polzin's *Moses and the Deuteronomist*.<sup>44</sup> Although the reference to the "Deuteronomist" might lead one to think of this as a work indebted to Martin Noth,<sup>45</sup> it quickly becomes clear that in this work "the Deuteronomist" is largely used as a means of referring to the authors of the text. This early work established the importance of reading the text's final form and that tensions within it may be creative

<sup>43</sup> Most obviously in Brevard S. Childs, *An Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (London: SCM Press, 1979).

<sup>44</sup> Robert Polzin, *Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges*, vol. 1 of *Moses and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980). This was intended to lead to a study of the whole of Deuteronomy to Kings, though at this point no work on Kings has appeared.

<sup>45</sup> Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991). The German original was published in 1943.



parts of a narrative. Rather than looking to sources, Polzin wanted to read the whole of Deuteronomy to Kings as part of a narrative that should be judged on its own terms rather than by the historical-critical methods that had previously been applied.<sup>46</sup> In this early work, Polzin begins to build on several literary critics, notably Wayne Booth and Mikhail Bakhtin, though Alter's influence is also felt.

But before Polzin published his works on Samuel, Lyle Eslinger issued a narrative reading of 1 Sam 8–12.<sup>47</sup> Although long considered a text that contained conflicting sources that could be analyzed as either pro- or anti-monarchical, Eslinger set out to provide a reading of these chapters that understood the text as a unity, albeit a unity where the phenomena that had previously led to source-critical analysis still needed to be understood.<sup>48</sup> Eslinger draws on the work of Seymour Chatman in explaining his "close reading" (even if not fully convinced by aspects of it), though like Polzin he devotes more of his methodological attention to explaining why the older historical-critical approach was unsatisfactory. Although neither outlined their methodology in any detail (if understood as a positive statement of approach), these two works are crucial because they introduce a significant methodological discussion to the process while then reading the finished text rather than focusing on the sources which lay behind it.<sup>49</sup>

Polzin developed this approach further in his studies of Samuel.<sup>50</sup> To the extent that he provides any further introduction to these further volumes, they are focused on why the dominant scholarly paradigms and their focus on features behind the current text were inadequate.<sup>51</sup> His approach retained a focus on the final form of the text, but in these readings (which were much fuller than in his first volume) it becomes clear that he

<sup>46</sup> Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist*, 16–18.

<sup>47</sup> Lyle M. Eslinger, *Kingship of God in Crisis: A Close Reading of 1 Samuel 8–12* (Sheffield: Almond, 1985).

<sup>48</sup> Eslinger, *Kingship of God*, 40–43.

<sup>49</sup> For a methodologically related approach, see also Donald F. Murray, *Divine Prerogative and Royal Pretension: Pragmatics, Poetics and Polemics in a Narrative Stretch about David* (2 Samuel 5.17–7.29) (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

<sup>50</sup> Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History. Part Two: 1 Samuel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), and Polzin, *David and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History. Part 3: 2 Samuel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

<sup>51</sup> Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, 1–17.

was particularly influenced by the literary models of Mikhail Bakhtin, routinely referring to classical Bakhtinian elements such as "dialogic contrasts" or "double voiced language." More particularly, the importance of Bakhtin as a major methodological partner becomes apparent as early as the discussion of the interplay between Elkanah and Hannah in 1 Sam 1:1–8, where Polzin draws on Bakhtin and his concept of a character zone.<sup>52</sup> This focus is continued in his examination of 2 Samuel, where Bakhtin and his literary concepts remain important.<sup>53</sup> What is perhaps surprising is that Polzin makes no sustained attempt to justify the use of Bakhtin, though this work and its use of Bakhtin would influence numerous later narrative-critical interpretations of Samuel.

Polzin's focus on the final form of the text also means that his work attempts to read Samuel as a complete text: his division of his studies into two volumes being a matter of convenience. This focus means that rather than reading the narrative of 1 Kings 1–2 as the natural continuation of 2 Sam 20, with 2 Sam 21–24 essentially an appendix made up of miscellaneous pieces, he focuses on how 2 Sam 21–24 work within the book, noting that the careful structure of these chapters requires a more careful reading of them.<sup>54</sup> Of course, since he has not written a volume on Kings, we cannot know how he would have treated 1 Kings 1–2, but the focus on Samuel as a complete text represents an important step in studying the final form, albeit one that is still debated.<sup>55</sup>

Although numerous narrative-critical studies of Samuel have appeared since Polzin, we will note only three others. This restriction is because the pattern that was emerging in the earlier narrative-critical studies, with their developing approach to methodology, has been extended in subsequent works. That is, although focus on the final form is not the only way narrative-critical readings of Samuel have developed, such readings have increasingly reflected on the appropriate use of literary theory and its application to Samuel. The first of these is Barbara Green's reading of Saul in Samuel, which expressly develops a Bakhtinian focus.<sup>56</sup> Given her earlier

<sup>52</sup> Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, 22.

<sup>53</sup> E.g., Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, 2.

<sup>54</sup> Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, 202.

<sup>55</sup> Although not employing Bakhtin, Timothy F. Simpson, *Not "Who is on the Lord's Side?" but "Whose Side Is the Lord On?": Contesting Claims and Divine Inscrutability in 2 Samuel 16:5–14* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014) is a more recent work which stands very much in the model of Polzin.

<sup>56</sup> Barbara Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen? A Dialogical Study of King Saul in 1 Samuel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003). She also published a more

work on the importance of Bakhtin for reading the Bible,<sup>57</sup> this approach is not surprising, but Green's work is consciously a development of Polzin. What is perhaps most remarkable is the shift that has taken place within this, with methodological concerns now brought to the foreground. As well as providing a helpful introduction to Bakhtin (with awareness of problems that derive from some aspects of his work),<sup>58</sup> Green introduces relevant parts of Bakhtin's work for each section of 1 Samuel, which she sets in dialogue with Polzin's contribution before moving to her own reading. Her focus on the final form also means that she considers any assessment of the time of Saul through this text to be "off the table"<sup>59</sup> for her approach. Where Polzin and Eslinger largely employ narrative criticism because of their dissatisfaction with the existing models of reading Samuel, Green now makes narrative criticism something that is itself as firmly grounded in method as the older source and redaction critical approaches.

Although Bakhtin has been a major dialogue partner for narrative-critical treatments of Samuel, other options are also present. But just as with Green, these other approaches have also focused much more on method than the earlier narrative critics. One unusual approach is developed by Grenville Kent in his treatment of 1 Sam 28.<sup>60</sup> Kent's decision to use film narrative theory was shaped by his interest in repetition as a particular aspect of the books of Samuel, demonstrating that repetition was not adequately covered by literary approaches.<sup>61</sup> As a newer approach to a narrative text of the Old Testament, it was natural that he should give ample attention to method, but it is still notable that about two thirds of his book is focused on method. Like Green, his approach is concerned with the final form of the text, with the questions of history largely bracketed.

A similar focus on method can be seen in Andreas Käser's study of 2

Sam 11–12,<sup>62</sup> though unlike other narrative critics he is also concerned with the relationship between the historical development of the text and final form interpretations. As with Kent, his work is largely a case study of how this relationship is worked out in a particular text. But where Kent had drawn on film narrative theory, Käser makes more use of the French narrative critic Gerard Genette,<sup>63</sup> finding in his work (though not only his) a mechanism for comparing and contrasting more literary approaches with historically focused work. Käser's work is important because although he develops the sort of model for reading the text that has characterized final-form approaches, he has also demonstrated that such approaches to Samuel need not ignore the fact that the text itself has developed in various ways while remaining communicative literature (*mitteilende Literatur*). This insight is something recognized only when one appreciates that Samuel is more than just a literary artifice; it is something that intends to refer to things outside itself and so requires an interdisciplinary approach,<sup>64</sup> though without failing to attend to the literary dimensions of the text.

The move to narrative criticism has thus been central to the interpretation of Samuel, but it is also clear that as narrative criticism replaced narrative approaches, key questions have remained unanswered. What text should we interpret? Are there earlier stages that are valid to study or is it the final form? What are the boundaries of the text? And in narrative criticism, who should our dialogue partners be?<sup>65</sup> These issues are central to the other dimensions of research on Samuel that we now survey more briefly.

## Themes and Issues in Narrative Criticism of Samuel

### The Structure of Samuel

The questions that have impacted narrative criticism have also shaped the question of the structure of Samuel, an issue that cannot be separated from the issue of sources. Most fundamentally, can we read Samuel as a

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popular version of the same study, Green, *King Saul's Asking* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2003).

<sup>57</sup> Barbara Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship: An Introduction* (Atlanta: SBL, 2000).

<sup>58</sup> Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen?*, 19–29.

<sup>59</sup> Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen?*, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Grenville J. R. Kent, *Say It Again Sam: A Literary and Filmic Study of Repetition in 1 Samuel 28* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2011). In the interests of full disclosure, I should point out that Kent was a student of mine and completed this work as his PhD under my supervision.

<sup>61</sup> Kent, *Say It Again Sam*, 9–47.

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<sup>62</sup> Andreas Käser, *Literaturwissenschaftliche Interpretation und historische Exegese: Die Erzählung von David und Batseba als Fallbeispiel* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016).

<sup>63</sup> Käser, *Literaturwissenschaftliche Interpretation und historische Exegese*, 49–55.

<sup>64</sup> Käser, *Literaturwissenschaftliche Interpretation und historische Exegese*, 267.

<sup>65</sup> To the options noted already, one can also add speech-act theory, as developed by Steven T. Mann, *Run, David. Run! An Investigation of the Theological Speech Acts of David's Departure and Returns (2 Samuel 14–20)* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013).

text in its own right, or is the division of Samuel from Kings (and indeed the rest of the Former Prophets) simply an accident of history, a literary convenience rather than an interpretative datum?<sup>66</sup> As we noted, the early literary studies of Samuel continued (more or less) to read Samuel as part of a story that was to be read through into 1 Kings, resulting in the treatment of 2 Sam 21–24 as an “Appendix” even though its own careful structure had long been noted.<sup>67</sup> Equally, it is often suggested that the division of the books in the so-called “Deuteronomistic History” is largely an accident of history. If so, does this mean that the relationship of Samuel to Judges as the text immediately preceding it is also open to question?<sup>68</sup> Has the literary turn resulted in a different appreciation of the structure, and therefore literary integrity, of Samuel? For the sake of brevity, we will address this question only through the place of 2 Sam 21–24 since this text illustrates the issues.

Because of the continuing influence of Rost’s model, it would be fair to say that many studies of Samuel have continued to treat the book’s boundaries as irrelevant for interpretation. In any case, David’s story demonstrably continues into 1 Kings 1–2. It would be fair to say, therefore, that on this issue the dominant approach has been to read the sources behind Samuel.<sup>69</sup> But should we read 1 Kings 1–2 as a continuation of David’s story, as the source model might suggest? Or should it be read as a separate story which knows of the account in Samuel and therefore uses it to launch its own narrative? If, as Keys has argued using a mixture of source and narrative criticism, 1 Kings 1–2 comes from a separate source, then it becomes possible to read 1 Sam 9–20 (or 10–20 in Keys’s case) as a discrete narrative portion within Samuel.<sup>70</sup>

The possibilities that emerged from this analysis were recognized by Koorevaar<sup>71</sup> and Klement,<sup>72</sup> both of whom presented similar proposals

for the structure of Samuel as a whole. Although Koorevaar’s essay was published earlier, his proposal is actually a slight reworking of Klement’s doctoral thesis, which was subsequently published. There are small variances between them, but it is notable that both see Samuel as an integral unit that is made up of a range of chiasmic units.<sup>73</sup> For Klement, this structure emerges from a narrative approach to the text, one that builds on the turn to narrative criticism leading to a proper focus on the finished text.<sup>74</sup> The key result that emerges from this analysis is that rather than 2 Sam 21–24 being treated as a miscellany in the appendix, he argues that it should rather be seen as an intentional conclusion to Samuel.<sup>75</sup>

This sort of approach has been taken much further in the recent thesis of James E. Patrick.<sup>76</sup> Although rejecting the terminology of “chiasm” as inadequate and opting instead for “concentrism” as a more appropriate term that reflects the patterns of parallelism found in Hebrew poetry,<sup>77</sup> Patrick argues that a study of the final form of Samuel leads to the conclusion that the work as a whole is an inverted parallelism with an unparalleled center. It is this structure, Patrick argues, that allows the book’s key theological themes to be developed. Patrick’s conclusions cut across much of the traditional source analysis of the book and in the case of 2 Sam 21–24 places these chapters within the second major section of the book as an integrated component within it (on his analysis, 2 Sam 7–24).<sup>78</sup> Moreover, by taking the final shape as his starting point and working back from there, he concludes that his narrative-critical rhetorical analysis requires that Samuel be treated as a cohesive work in its own right, meaning that its relationship to Kings (and indeed Judges) needs to be reassessed.<sup>79</sup>

These studies have not yet broken the hold that the source-critical model has long held over these chapters, but they suggest that narrative criticism is leading to a re-evaluation of the relationship between the levels

<sup>66</sup> For a slightly fuller discussion of this topic, see David G. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel: A Kingdom Comes* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 18–29.

<sup>67</sup> Going back at least to Karl Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel erklärt* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1902), 304.

<sup>68</sup> See David Jobling, *1 Samuel* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 27–37.

<sup>69</sup> See, e.g., S. Seiler, *Die Geschichte von der Thronfolge Davids (2 Sam 9–20; 1 Kön 1–2): Untersuchungen zur Literarkritik und Tendenz* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998).

<sup>70</sup> Gillian Keys, *The Wages of Sin: A Reappraisal of the ‘Succession Narrative’* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1996), 43–70.

<sup>71</sup> H. J. Koorevaar, “De macrostructuur van het boek Samuël en de theologische implicaties daarvan,” *Acta Theologica* 17 (1997): 56–86.

<sup>72</sup> H. H. Klement, *2 Samuel 21–24: Context, Structure and Meaning in the Samuel*

*Conclusion* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000).

<sup>73</sup> Klement, *2 Samuel 21–24*, 157–60; Koorevaar, “De Macrostructuur,” 58–62.

<sup>74</sup> Klement, *2 Samuel 21–24*, 53–60.

<sup>75</sup> Though not making the case as strongly as Klement, a not dissimilar position is developed by László T. Simon, *Identity and Identification: An Exegetical and Theological Study of 2 Sam 21–24* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 2000).

<sup>76</sup> James E. Patrick, *The Prophetic Structure of 1–2 Samuel* (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2016).

<sup>77</sup> Patrick, *Prophetic Structure*, 33–38.

<sup>78</sup> Strictly speaking, Patrick, *Prophetic Structure*, 204, regards the closing section of the book as 2 Sam 20:23–24:25. He sees 2 Sam 20:23–26 as an intentionally displaced unit, creating a structural imbalance for emphasis.

<sup>79</sup> Patrick, *Prophetic Structure*, 285–86.

of composition within the book. This emerging pattern therefore raises the question of whether it is possible to interpret Samuel as a specific text in its own right, an issue that is still unresolved. Nevertheless, as is apparent in Patrick's work in which compositional issues frequently raise their head, such narrative critical approaches do not abandon the question of layers within the text, but they do ask us to reconsider the boundaries of the text that we interpret.

### Samuel and Historiography

If the possibility exists that Samuel is to be treated as an independent text, then this possibility in turn raises questions about the independence of its witness to a range of themes. Whether one places Samuel in the "Former Prophets" or "Historical Books" (as per either the Hebrew canon or the LXX), it is still literature that presents itself as representing Israel's past. How reliable that representation might be is a disputed matter (whether judged by ancient or modern standards), though this issue is seldom something rooted only in the study of Samuel. However, several studies have explored the issue of Samuel and historiography, and these too have been marked by a gradual move towards narrative criticism.

Clear evidence for this shift can be seen in the work of V. Phillips Long.<sup>80</sup> Long studies 1 Sam 13–15 in light of earlier issues that arise in 1 Sam 9–11, which have resulted in a general lack of confidence in the historical reliability of these accounts.<sup>81</sup> As is well known, there is a long established view that 1 Sam 9–12 contains a mixture of source materials, some pro- and some anti-monarchic. Furthermore, Saul is seemingly rejected twice, once in 1 Sam 13 and again in 1 Sam 15. For Long, the means of resolving this seeming duplication is through application of narrative criticism, arguing that these problems can be addressed through the interplay of synchronic and diachronic methods.<sup>82</sup> Although interested in narrative art, a central claim of Long's work is that this art can also contribute to a better understanding of the history represented in the text. Indeed, it seems for Long that the very things that had caused earlier critics to raise questions about these chapters in Samuel are now understood as a skillful means of communicating the past.

<sup>80</sup> V. Phillips Long, *The Reign and Rejection of King Saul: A Case for Literary and Theological Coherence* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

<sup>81</sup> Long, *The Reign and Rejection of King Saul*, 1.

<sup>82</sup> Long, *The Reign and Rejection of King Saul*, 10–14.

Another key early voice in this regard is found in the work of Edelman.<sup>83</sup> Although operating with a model of Samuel as part of the Deuteronomistic History, her work on the place of Saul within Judah's historiography is shaped by a commitment to narrative criticism, offering a sequential (as if) first-time reading of the text.<sup>84</sup> Her reading also sees Samuel as providing historiographical material that would be taken up by the Deuteronomistic History, and she regards the material about Saul as having most probably been composed in the seventh century, although she is open to an eighth-century date.<sup>85</sup> Perhaps more importantly, she looks at the structuring devices within the text that would most probably have been recognized by an ancient Israelite reader, regarding these as tools for communication.<sup>86</sup> As a result, Edelman's study is in large measure an example of narrative criticism that is specifically concerned with the issue of how Saul is characterized and therefore the lessons that an ancient audience would have derived from this characterization.<sup>87</sup> There is, however, an important distinction between her study and Long's in that while Edelman sees her work as something rooted in the past, her main concern is not so much with the reliability of the account as the lessons ancient readers might have derived from it.

Klaus-Peter Adam then takes this approach further,<sup>88</sup> though in doing so he situates the text of 1 Sam 16—2 Sam 5 much later than Edelman, pushing it well into the post-exilic period. However, he is prepared to concede that the traditions began to be written up earlier, although how we might recover these is difficult as he regularly finds evidence of continued rewriting (*Fortschreibung*).<sup>89</sup> Perhaps more importantly, drawing on

<sup>83</sup> Diana Vikander Edelman, *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991). Methodologically related is Simcha Shalom Brooks, *Saul and the Monarchy: A New Look* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

<sup>84</sup> Edelman, *King Saul*, 14.

<sup>85</sup> Edelman, *King Saul*, 20–22.

<sup>86</sup> Edelman, *King Saul*, 27–36. Although Patrick also seeks such structuring devices he does not interact with Edelman's work on this.

<sup>87</sup> Edelman, *King Saul*, 312–21, focuses specifically on aspects of characterization in her conclusions.

<sup>88</sup> Klaus-Peter Adam, *Saul und David in der jüdischen Geschichtsschreibung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007). Although differing on numerous points, John van Seters, *The Biblical Saga of King David* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009) is methodologically related.

<sup>89</sup> See especially, Adam, *Saul und David*, 169–205.

aspects of Paul Ricoeur's work,<sup>90</sup> he largely regards the narrative as fiction. However, he still employs aspects of a narrative-critical approach as he then reads this narrative (more or less) backwards, since he believes it emerged in that order and could ultimately address a much later audience, with these narratives largely dependent on later texts in Kings. I am not concerned here with whether or not Adam's conclusions are correct. Rather, I wish to note that apart from reading the text in reverse (which is because of the need to present his conclusions clearly), Adam's deployment of narrative criticism agrees with Edelman. For both, the main concern is the issue of how the past was represented so as to persuade a later audience (something with which Long agrees), though Adam differs from Edelman in his dating and understanding of the historical value of the text. Long applies narrative criticism to demonstrate the historical plausibility of Samuel, whereas for Adam it is a tool (though not the only one since Adam draws on a range of ANE materials too) which demonstrates the fictional nature of Samuel.<sup>91</sup>

Adam's work might be contrasted with the more recent study of Gilmour.<sup>92</sup> She too recognizes that Samuel's historiography addresses a later audience, though the relative timing of the two works meant that Gilmour was not able to interact with Adam. What is distinctive in Gilmour's work is that the narrative form of the text is her express starting point. Furthermore, attention to the book's narrative features shape her research, with her narrative explorations shaped by the pioneering works on narrative studies noted above.<sup>93</sup> More particularly, she explores the ways in which attention to narrative form enables a better understanding of how causation of events is expressed and also how it is to be evaluated.<sup>94</sup> From this perspective, she is able to explore how Samuel can contribute to a better

<sup>90</sup> Adam, *Saul und David*, 22–28.

<sup>91</sup> Given the substantial variants between his work and theirs, it is unfortunate that Adam does not engage with the substantial works of either Long or Edelman. A surprisingly similar mode of argument (though reading the text forward) by J. Randall Short, *The Surprising Election and Confirmation of King David* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2010) comes up with conclusions that are radically different from those of Adam and more consistent with those of Long.

<sup>92</sup> Rachele Gilmour, *Representing the Past: A Literary Analysis of Narrative Historiography in the Book of Samuel* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

<sup>93</sup> Gilmour, *Representing the Past*, 2.

<sup>94</sup> Gilmour, *Representing the Past*. One chapter is subsequently addressed to each of these issues, exploring relevant portions in the book.

understanding of Israel's history, albeit recognizing that the Israel presented in the book is a literary construct. In light of her approach, it is also interesting to note her attention to how the final shape of the book contributes to the understanding of Samuel.<sup>95</sup> Gilmour's conclusions about the value of Samuel for historical reconstruction are then more positive than those of Adam, arguing that within the model of historiography employed it was acceptable to approximate, but facts should not be invented.<sup>96</sup>

More than the others considered here, Gilmour attends to the ways in which narrative criticism can be employed to identify the poetics of historiography rather than attending to the narrative form of the text in order to read through it to discover the actual history that lies behind it. She is still interested in this history, but the important point is that narrative criticism becomes a tool not just for understanding how the text presents its story, but the means by which this story can be employed to represent (within limits) an actual past. But at this point, we face a significant contrast with the work of Adam, whose use of narrative criticism leads him to believe that much of the historiography of Samuel does indeed represent an invented past. Hence, although all agree that Samuel uses narrative to convince a later audience, exactly how we determine the identity of this audience remains uncertain. Narrative criticism has thus opened up our understanding of the historiography of Samuel, but important questions about how this works remain.

### The Text of Samuel

Narrative criticism has also begun to impact the study of the text of Samuel in recent years. In some ways, this development is relatively surprising since for many years textual criticism was viewed as the process of comparing manuscripts to identify an original, or at least something like an original, text. But although the influence of narrative criticism is perhaps less marked than in other areas, even here its impact is seen as differing textual traditions have been seen to have value in their own right, often giving insight into the scribal traditions behind them.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Gilmour, *Representing the Past*, 99–102.

<sup>96</sup> Gilmour, *Representing the Past*, 291.

<sup>97</sup> Philippe Hugo, "Text History of the Books of Samuel: An Assessment of the Recent Research," in *Archaeology of the Books of Samuel: The Entangling of the Textual and Literary History*, ed. Philippe Hugo and Adrian Schenker (Leiden: Brill,

Although aspects of a narrative-critical approach are evident in some earlier works,<sup>98</sup> a key development can be found in the work of Benjamin Johnson.<sup>99</sup> Johnson examines the well-known variants in the story of David and Goliath in both Greek and Hebrew, explicitly taking a literary approach. The details of the variants need not detain us here<sup>100</sup> because the more important point is that the “literary approach” Johnson signals is in fact a narrative-critical treatment of the text, one that involves a careful reading of each tradition as something of value in its own right.<sup>101</sup> This approach provides a marked contrast with the earlier study of this text best exemplified in the work of Barthélemy, Gooding, Lust, and Tov for which the deployment of a range of literary critical techniques was still principally focused on the identification of an original text.<sup>102</sup> Rather, Johnson recognizes that both LXX and MT represent narrative texts in their own right, though LXX presents particular interpretative challenges because it is both a telling of the story in its own right and also a translation. This fact means that it is possible to see in it both the tendencies of the translator and also the “nuanced emphases of the Greek story.”<sup>103</sup> Moreover, it enables him to demonstrate that variances between these text forms often represent different narrative strategies.<sup>104</sup> Rather than seeing variants as a problem to be solved, Johnson sees textual plurality as an opportunity to explore what each version has to offer.<sup>105</sup> As

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2010), 11–13. This development should not be taken to mean the more traditional work of textual criticism, long regarded as crucial for what is often a difficult text, has been left aside. For a recent example, see Tuukka Kauhanen, *The Proto-Lucianic Problem in 1 Samuel* (Göttingen; Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012).

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, Robert Rezetko, *Source and Revision in the Narratives of David's Transfer of the Ark: Text, Language, and Story in 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 13, 15–16* (London: T&T Clark, 2007). In this case, narrative criticism is related to a particular source-critical approach which makes the narrative critical elements less distinctive.

<sup>99</sup> Benjamin J. M. Johnson, *Reading David and Goliath in Greek and Hebrew: A Literary Approach* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

<sup>100</sup> Johnson (*Reading*, 2–4) lays the principal issues out clearly.

<sup>101</sup> Johnson, *Reading*, 9–17.

<sup>102</sup> D. Barthélemy, D. W. Gooding, J. Lust, and E. Tov, *The Story of David and Goliath: Textual and Literary Criticism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986).

<sup>103</sup> Johnson, *Reading*, 222.

<sup>104</sup> Johnson, *Reading*, 225.

<sup>105</sup> Johnson, *Reading*, 228.

a relatively recent contribution, it remains to be seen how Johnson's contribution will be developed in Samuel studies, but there are certainly other passages which could be explored.

### Theological and Ethical Themes in Samuel

The move to narrative criticism has also affected the ways in which particular theological and ethical themes are treated within Samuel. These works accept that Samuel should be read through narrative criticism, but the key questions that have affected other aspects of the study of Samuel remain. That is, to what extent do we read Samuel through its final form as opposed to attending to its sources? Going further, to what extent do we read it as part of a larger canonical unit? There is also the additional question of how narrative is to be related to ethics.

An important theological work is Michael Avioz's study of the reception of 2 Sam 7 through the rest of Samuel and then Kings and Chronicles.<sup>106</sup> As with all the works considered in this section, his work engages with a range of interpretative elements, but his fundamental approach is shaped by narrative criticism and intertextuality, in particular author-centered intertextuality.<sup>107</sup> In a manner reminiscent of the earlier narrative studies, and perhaps reflective of the work of his doctoral supervisor Moshe Garsiel,<sup>108</sup> Avioz does not give much attention to questions of method, focusing instead on a close reading of 2 Sam 7 in its final form and particular key words within it, though this reading is also informed by comparative ANE sources. He then notes the way this chapter's themes are taken up elsewhere in Samuel, arguing that the integration of these themes and motifs across the whole of Samuel points to the book being a consciously planned composition whose parts are integrally linked to one another.<sup>109</sup> Moving from elements within Samuel, he explores the Davidic covenant's reception in Kings and Chronicles, showing the different emphases in these texts relative to Samuel. For Avioz, therefore, narrative criticism, in dialogue with intertextuality, becomes a key mechanism for discerning the different ways in which a key theological theme is

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<sup>106</sup> Michael Avioz, *Nathan's Oracle (2 Samuel 7) and Its Interpreters* (Bern: Peter Lang 2005). To some extent, Avioz's work is also a study of historiography through a particular theme, so it could also have been considered in the previous section.

<sup>107</sup> Avioz, *Nathan's Oracle*, 6.

<sup>108</sup> See especially Moshe Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies and Parallels* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1990).

<sup>109</sup> Avioz, *Nathan's Oracle*, 68.

developed and received.<sup>110</sup>

Avioz's work is to be contrasted with two recent studies that employ narrative criticism but do so through attention to redactional layers within the text. The first of these is Samuel Han's study of the Spirit in 1 Samuel.<sup>111</sup> His approach is shaped by narrative concerns, tracing the various narrative portions containing the word רוח through 1 Samuel and exploring the means by which it serves to legitimize or delegitimize rulers. But although Han is familiar with narrative criticism, he also seeks to date different layers within the text, identifying an early layer associated with David and a later layer associated with Saul.<sup>112</sup> Something similar can be seen in Lee's study of royal symbols in Samuel.<sup>113</sup> Like Han, Lee's work is often shaped by the use of a particular lexeme (though in his case, the lexeme varies depending on the royal symbol under investigation), and he is methodologically broader than Han in that he also considers the way the same symbols are used in other ANE sources and occasionally other parts of the Old Testament.<sup>114</sup> It is also notable that Lee is prepared to let contradictory readings of the text stand rather than seeing them within the more integrated model of composition that Avioz proposes. For example, Lee regards the two accounts of Saul's death as containing different views of how he died as opposed to the more typical narrative move of noting that 1 Sam 31 represents the narrator's own account whereas 2 Sam 1 is an account of a character within the narrative and therefore possibly less reliable.<sup>115</sup> As with Avioz, both Han's and Lee's work can be considered as a species of historiography, though it is notable that their assessment of the integration of Samuel's components is less cohesive

<sup>110</sup> His approach therefore stands in marked contrast to Petri Kasari, *Nathan's Promise in 2 Samuel 7 and Related Texts* (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 2009), who divides the chapter into various redactions from DtrG through DtrH, DtrP, DtrN<sup>1</sup>, DtrN<sup>2</sup>, which in turn becomes DtrS. His work is distinctive because of its steadfast move away from narrative criticism, but as something that is primarily concerned with the Deuteronomistic History, albeit focused on Samuel, is not considered in depth here.

<sup>111</sup> Samuel Han, *Der »Geist« in den Saul- und Davidsgeschichten des 1. Samuelbuchs* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015).

<sup>112</sup> Han, *Der »Geist«*, 199–202.

<sup>113</sup> Keung-Jae Lee, *Symbole für Herrschaft und Königtum in den Erzählungen von Saul und David* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2017).

<sup>114</sup> E.g., Lee (*Symbole*, 112–16) traces anointing through references in 1–2 Kings.

<sup>115</sup> Lee, *Symbole*, 124–25.

than that of Avioz, or indeed of Gilmour. It would, perhaps, be instructive to see their approach in dialogue with the work of Käser, though as these works all appeared more or less at the same time this is a step that will need to be taken with future works that need to integrate narrative criticism with understanding the text's development.

Alongside the treatments of specific themes, it is notable that studies of the ethics of Samuel have also been shaped by narrative criticism, though once again the question has been one of identifying the dialogue partners that enable this development. Narrative approaches to ethics in the Old Testament are only a recent development, but just as Samuel stood at the forefront of the initial turn to narrative criticism, so it has also been a vital text in pioneering initial works on narrative ethics.

Two pioneering studies in this regard were published by Jonathan Rowe in 2012.<sup>116</sup> In these studies he integrated a Bakhtinian approach to narrative with wide-ranging anthropological studies through which he sought to understand the ways ancient readers might have understood the moral choices made by characters within the narrative, though in his concluding reflections he does point to ways these might inform contemporary readers in discerning what might be appropriate moral choices.<sup>117</sup> For Rowe, it is vital to approach texts in some depth rather than taking a model, whether literary or anthropological, and applying it to the text. This depth approach is needed because a model on its own can never convey the complexity present in the text and so too easily fall prey to anachronism. Although not employing the work of Geertz to any significant extent,<sup>118</sup> it is a good example of "thick description," which is attentive to the importance of a proper dialogue between narrative criticism (as the means by which we access the story) and anthropology (as a tool which might enlighten it). In his case, anthropology plays a role not dissimilar to Lee's use of ANE sources since in both cases the idea is to shed light on parts of the narrative that are not explained, presumably on the basis that initial readers would have understood them without explanation, something not true for modern readers. Through this approach, Rowe opens up the moral goods that would have been perceived within Israel as something significant for moral reflection today, though by so

<sup>116</sup> Jonathan Y. Rowe, *Michal's Moral Dilemma: A Literary, Anthropological and Ethical Interpretation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012); and Rowe, *Sons or Lovers: An Interpretation of David and Jonathan's Friendship* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

<sup>117</sup> See Rowe, *Michal's Moral Dilemma*, 208–12.

<sup>118</sup> There is only a passing reference in Rowe (*Michal's Moral Dilemma*, 1).

doing he also contributes to the understanding of Samuel as historiographical literature.

A work that shows some crossover with Rowe is Matthew Newkirk's study of deception in Samuel.<sup>119</sup> However, where Rowe uses narrative criticism in conjunction with anthropology to explore the nature of Michal's moral conundrum when she deceived Saul in 1 Sam 19:10–18a, Newkirk deploys it to understand how Samuel develops a theology of deception. His conclusions are somewhat more nuanced than a simple statement like "one should always tell the truth" because examining all instances of deception in Samuel leads to the conclusion that where the motivation of a character was just, then the deception could be viewed positively.<sup>120</sup> This conclusion is achieved by looking for the clues of how the implied author evaluates an act of deception, in part by noting significant features in how the story is told.<sup>121</sup> Although Newkirk draws only on studies of Old Testament poetics rather than Bakhtin,<sup>122</sup> his reading of Michal (for example)<sup>123</sup> coincides well with that of Rowe.

Michal also appears as a significant figure in the work of April Westbrook,<sup>124</sup> though in her study Michal's deception is not a significant feature. This distinction is because both Rowe and Newkirk are concerned with the particular moral issue of deception, whereas Westbrook explores broader ethical concerns. Westbrook, by comparison, uses the presentation of women as key characters in Samuel's presentation of David (something absent from the parallels in 1 Chronicles) as a means of demonstrating the complexity of David's characterization and from this analysis the ethical evaluation of the monarchy in David's story. Staying with the example of Michal, rather than focusing only on one passage, she traces Michal's story through the whole of David's life. Like Newkirk, her narrative criticism is shaped by existing works of Old Testament poetics. She uses them as a key tool for identifying the evaluation which the narrative

<sup>119</sup> Matthew Newkirk, *Just Deceivers: An Exploration of the Motif of Deception in the Books of Samuel* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2015).

<sup>120</sup> Newkirk, *Just Deceivers*, 204.

<sup>121</sup> Newkirk, *Just Deceivers*, 14.

<sup>122</sup> Principally the works discussed in "Samuel and Narrative Studies" above, though in his methodological summary (*Just Deceivers*, 11–13) the work of Wayne Booth also appears briefly.

<sup>123</sup> Newkirk, *Just Deceivers*, 60–68.

<sup>124</sup> April D. Westbrook, *'And He Will Take Your Daughters...': Woman Story and Ethical Evaluation of Monarchy in the David Narrative* (London: Bloomsbury, T&T Clark, 2015).

offers, an evaluation that stays within Samuel, even though Bathsheba (another important figure) continues her story (and presumably her evaluative function for David) into 1 Kings 1. For Westbrook, every female character becomes a means of asking whether David is as good as he is successful,<sup>125</sup> and so questioning the value of monarchy itself. Each "woman story" calls into question the ability of the monarchy to do justice, pointing instead to the degenerative nature of monarchy itself. Only in her closing comments does Westbrook point to the possibility of the ethical significance of this reading for modern readers, showing that her ethical reading is concerned with the world of the text alone.

These theological and ethical studies thus continue to demonstrate the potential and the problems that face narrative critical readings of Samuel. Indeed, in many ways they encapsulate the issues noted above. At heart, there remain the questions that narrative criticism has not yet resolved—what are the boundaries of the text we are reading? In particular, do we take the shape of Samuel as a work seriously? But even if we do, this decision does not resolve the question of how we integrate this final shape with earlier levels in the text which can still be recognized. The contrast between Avioz on the one hand and Han and Lee on the other makes this issue clear. And although all of the ethical readings noted focus on the final text without straying into Kings, the question of how narrative criticism can shape ethics remains unsolved—for Rowe, it enables readers to understand a character's moral challenge, whereas for Newkirk it is a means of addressing questions asked by modern readers. Westbrook does not really address the contemporary question, focusing only on the world of the text. But the issue of how these ethics address us as modern readers who assign theological value to this book remains unresolved.

### Postcolonial Readings

The issue of how modern readers engage with this ancient text is not limited to ethical readings of Samuel but is also present in postcolonial readings since these are, by definition, about claiming the text for a group that has previously been marginalized in some way. Given the relatively recent development of this approach, the range of contributors here is still small, though the issues that we have noted above continue here.

An early contributor to this discussion is found in the work of Uriah Kim.<sup>126</sup> His study of the David Story is part of a wider program of devel-

<sup>125</sup> Westbrook, *'And He Will Take Your Daughters...'*, 225.

<sup>126</sup> Uriah Y. Kim, *Identity and Loyalty in the David Story: A Postcolonial Reading* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008).



oping a postcolonial reading of the Deuteronomistic History, so it is perhaps not surprising that he also moves through to 1 Kings 1–2. Kim undertakes his approach as a Korean-American who draws on the Korean concept of *jeong* as a means of representing 정. Kim's conception of narrative criticism focuses on the goals of the narrator, starting from the perspective that this person was more "an apologist than an objective historian."<sup>127</sup> Not all those we examined when thinking about Samuel and historiography would agree with that, but Kim's approach is representative of at least one strand of narrative criticism. More importantly, he brings a select range of postcolonial critics to the table as dialogue partners with Old Testament poetics, aiming to read from the margins as someone with multiple identities.<sup>128</sup> Kim's reading focuses both on how David used 정 to forge his kingdom and also how the scribes subsequently undercut this process by making him a nativist, losing his own openness to hybrid culture.<sup>129</sup> The David that Kim constructs is a reader's David, neither the David of the final text nor the David of his enemies. It is this figure that Kim wants to fashion for those with hybrid identities in North America, starting with the (then) newly elected Barack Obama.

Like Kim, Kabama Kiboko also wants to recover parts of Samuel for her own culture in her study of the woman of Endor.<sup>130</sup> Where Kim's theorists are postcolonial critics who are combined with a fairly stock range of narrative studies, Kiboko works with a mixture of Bakhtinian, feminist, postcolonial, and contextual translation theories since her primary goal is to produce a new translation of 1 Sam 28:3–25.<sup>131</sup> Like Kim, Kiboko reads the text of Samuel in order to recover elements that she believes are beneficial for her African context while rejecting what she sees as colonial factors that have hitherto sought to repress features of that culture. A vital component of this approach is to show that certain key terms have been misunderstood, and that these misunderstandings lead to distortions in the reading of the narrative.<sup>132</sup> Because Kiboko focuses only on one story within Samuel it is not possible to see how she

<sup>127</sup> Kim, *Identity and Loyalty*, 1.

<sup>128</sup> Kim, *Identity and Loyalty*, 15–26.

<sup>129</sup> Kim, *Identity and Loyalty*, 214–15.

<sup>130</sup> J. Kabama Kiboko, *Divining the Woman of Endor: African Culture, Postcolonial Hermeneutics, and the Politics of Biblical Translation* (London: Bloomsbury, T&T Clark, 2017).

<sup>131</sup> Kiboko, *Divining the Woman of Endor*, 217–21, provides this translation in English (as the language of discourse in North America where she is now based), in French (as the colonial language in her native Democratic Republic of the Congo), and Kisanga, her mother tongue.

<sup>132</sup> Kiboko, *Divining the Woman of Endor*, 127–90.

has answered a range of narrative questions, though she does offer a final form reading of the text from which she seeks to recover a more positive view of divination than is typically reflected in interpretation of the woman of Endor.

Although Kim and Kiboko both offer retrievalist readings using narrative criticism, their approaches differ at key points. Kim is clear that there are different layers in the text, an approach similar to Lee and Han, though without the sort of integration offered by Käser. For Kim, certain layers can be retrieved by a postcolonial reader and applied to the modern world. Kiboko does not consider such layers, though they have certainly been suggested for this story, preferring instead to read the text synchronically.<sup>133</sup> Where Kim focuses on the narrator, Kiboko is more interested in lexical stock. Admittedly, these focus points are in part a function of their projects, but it also points to unresolved tensions in what narrative criticism of Samuel is able to do, as well as the larger question of exactly where it is that something which can be retrieved is to be found.

## Conclusion

It is my contention that narrative criticism has opened up our understanding of Samuel as a literary, historical, theological, and ethical work. It has provided real gains in our interpretation of the book. However, this survey also points to unresolved issues. The presence of these issues means that what is seemingly the same method (at least more or less) is applied in such diverse ways that important questions about the interpretation of Samuel have been either marginalized or left with contradictory conclusions.

In light of these contradictory conclusions, we need to recognize that the book of Samuel was a crucial text in the development of narrative criticism as a discipline in its own right. Earlier narrative studies reflected this interest, while the works that have defined narrative criticism for a generation of critics were shaped to a remarkable degree by Samuel. One result of this process is that discussions of narrative poetics in the Old Testament are largely discussions of Samuel's narrative poetics. This discussion thus points to the richness of Samuel as a text to explore through narrative criticism, and to some extent it is the richness of this text which leads to some of the varied conclusions we have noted.

However, because narrative criticism emerged in the midst of wider discussions about "canonical" approaches or "synchronic versus diachronic" debates, there are important questions about it as a method that have not been resolved. It may be that they cannot be resolved, though

<sup>133</sup> Kiboko, *Divining the Woman of Endor*, 191.

part of the challenge that faces us is determining whether or not such a resolution is possible. From the earliest narrative approaches to the more developed narrative criticism, there is uncertainty about what text we are interpreting. Are we interpreting the final form, and if so, what might that mean for Samuel, especially as it has a textual basis that might encourage more pluralistic approaches? Even if we regard textual criticism as the search for an *Ur*-text, and it is far from clear that we should, this decision does not resolve the question of whether we should interpret Samuel in terms of sources (such as a putative Succession Narrative), or at some other level. Postcolonial criticism has taken this issue further by requiring us to determine which level we employ in what is retrieved, so although one might focus either on a specific level of Samuel or the final form, it is possible to work with both synchronic and diachronic readings at the same time. Some works, such as Käser's, are beginning to wrestle with this issue in Samuel, and 2 Sam. 11–12 is a good example for this because layers in the text are clearly visible, but what the presence of such layers might mean for the wider interpretation of Samuel is not clear. Equally important, if we are to read Samuel for its theological and ethical themes, or its historiography, we need to determine how it is that narrative criticism opens up this reading for us. Closely related to this point is the question of whether or not we can read Samuel as a discrete text, a matter that is of great importance for a narrative critical approach since determining a text's boundaries is vital to the method. The diversity of approaches at the moment means that scholarly readings of Samuel can seemingly approach the book with the same tools and reach contradictory conclusions.

That we have not reached definitive conclusions should not be taken as evidence that this enterprise has failed. Samuel is a rich text, and rich texts will almost invariably produce a range of readings that need to be tested against one another, something I have tried to avoid here in order to highlight the methodological questions. But it does mean is that we have plenty of work to do.

## Communication in the Lukan Birth Narrative (Luke 2:1–20)

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*The Gospel of Luke was written in an oral culture and it documents events that transpired in the same first-century Mediterranean world. This is apparent in chapter 2 where there are references to various means of information being transmitted that were typical of an oral society. First, the chapter opens by recounting a decree issued by Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1–3). Second, the declaration by an angel that a Savior has been born (2:11) was also proclaimed to the shepherds by word of mouth. Third, the victory acclamation recited by the divine army (2:13–14) mimics acclamations vocalized by the Roman army. Finally, the narration by the shepherds of their experience visiting the Christ child and of the angel's message was conveyed to others by word of mouth (2:17–18). This essay will explore each of these modes of communication and discuss their implications for understanding the birth narrative.*

*Key Words:* birth narrative, communication, Luke 2, media, oral cultures

Most public communication in the first-century Mediterranean world was oral. This would have included speeches (in the assembly, in the council, and in the law courts), public announcements, imperial edicts, lectures, invitations to banquets, acclamations, gossip, slander, oaths, hymns, curses, prayers, confessions, and advertisements in the market, just to mention a few.<sup>1</sup> The Gospel of Luke was written in an oral culture and it documents events that transpired in the same first-century Mediterranean world. This is apparent for example in chapter 2 where there are implied and direct references to various means of information transmission that were typical of an oral society. First, the chapter opens by recounting a decree or edict (Latin *edictum*, pl. *edicta*; Greek *δῶγμα*) issued by Caesar Augustus that “all the world should be registered” (2:1).<sup>2</sup> It is likely that the edict was promulgated to the provinces of the empire through the voice of a herald or town crier (Latin *praeco*; *praecones*, pl.;

Greek *κῆρυξ*). Second, the declaration by an angel that a Savior (*σωτήρ*), who is the Messiah (*χριστός*), the Lord (*κύριος*) has been born (Luke 2:11) was also proclaimed to the shepherds by word of mouth in the fashion of a herald. Third, the victory acclamation recited by the divine army (2:13–14) mimics acclamations vocalized by the Roman imperial army in support of the emperor, and the acclamation exhibits features indicative of an underlying oral tradition. Finally, the narration by the shepherds of their experience visiting the Christ child and of the angelic herald's message was conveyed to others by word of mouth—the obvious means for transmitting news in an oral culture (2:17–18). Following a brief survey of the nature of oral societies, we will explore each of the modes of communication present in Luke 2 and discuss their implications for understanding the birth narrative.

### The Nature of Oral Societies

The oral nature of the ancient world was due in part to the low literacy rate. In his extensive study of ancient literacy, William V. Harris concludes that the overall level of literacy in the first-century ancient eastern Mediterranean world was below 15 percent.<sup>3</sup> Catherine Hezser believes that the literacy rate among Jewish individuals may have been as low as 3 percent, depending on how one understands and defines “literacy.”<sup>4</sup> Supporting the view that the ability to read appears to have been rare in antiquity are the remarks of the character Trimalchio in Petronius's *Satyricon*, who mentions the unusual talent of a servant who could read books by sight (75).<sup>5</sup> Some merchants of long-distant trade may have had a limited capacity to read and write for their work, or they hired literate employees to

<sup>3</sup> William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 267.

<sup>4</sup> Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, TSAJ 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 496. Based on his study of first-century communal reading events, Brian J. Wright contends that written texts were experienced broadly by people of various social and educational levels. This might suggest that the low percentages of literacy among the Roman and Jewish population in the first century was higher than has been previously assumed (*Communal Reading in the Time of Jesus: A Window into Early Christian Reading Practices* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017]).

<sup>5</sup> Lee A. Johnson, “Paul's Letters Reheard: A Performance-Critical Examination of the Preparation, Transportation, and Delivery of Paul's Correspondence,” *CBQ* 79 (2017): 67.

<sup>1</sup> Angelos Chaniotis, “Listening to Stones: Orality and Emotions in Ancient Inscriptions,” in *Epigraphy and Historical Sciences*, ed. J. Davies and J. Wilkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 302, 307.

<sup>2</sup> All scriptural quotations are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.

carry out these functions.<sup>6</sup> Further, practical matters such as the absence of eyeglasses and the presence of eye diseases with minimal remedies would have prevented many from reading regardless of their literacy level.<sup>7</sup> While low literacy rates contributed to the popularity of oral recitation, even highly literate persons were accustomed to listening to passages read out loud, especially when the availability of texts was limited (e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 9.34). Seneca articulated the benefit of listening to something recited, even if a person was fully literate, when he asked and answered, “Why should I listen to something I can read? Because the living voice contributes so much” (*Ep.* 33.9).<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the low literacy rate, the spoken word was preferred because texts were enormously expensive to produce—things such as papyrus, ink, and scribes were costly.<sup>9</sup> During the first century, it cost two drachmas to get a letter copied, which was the amount it cost to hire a foreman or industrial worker for two to three days.<sup>10</sup> In the second century CE, one sheet of papyrus cost two obols, about one third of the average daily wage for an Egyptian worker.<sup>11</sup> Since documents and reading material were scarce, people were adept at remembering what they heard—memory was the storehouse of information rather than books.<sup>12</sup> Seneca the Elder boasted that he could repeat two thousand names in the order they were given to him and recite from memory numerous lines of poetry (*Controversiae* 1, 2, Preface).<sup>13</sup> In oral societies, memory was trained more vigorously than it is today, and orality and memory were built into a written text. For example, in the Hebrew culture, literature

<sup>6</sup> Joanna Dewey, *The Oral Ethos of the Early Church Speaking, Writing, and the Gospel of Mark*, ed. David Rhoads, *Biblical Performance Criticism* 8 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013), 10.

<sup>7</sup> Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 463.

<sup>8</sup> Rex Winsbury, *The Roman Book: Books, Publishing and Performance in Classical Rome*, ed. David Taylor, *Classical Literature and Society* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 2009), 112.

<sup>9</sup> Ben Witherington III, *What's in the Word: Rethinking the Socio-Rhetorical Character of the New Testament* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 7.

<sup>10</sup> Pieter J. Botha, *Orality and Literacy in Early Christianity*, ed. David Rhoads, *Biblical Performance Criticism* 5 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), 48.

<sup>11</sup> Robert A. Derrenbacher, “Writing, Books, and Readers in the Ancient World,” *American Theological Library Association Summary of Proceedings* 52 (1998): 207.

<sup>12</sup> Margaret Ellen Lee and Bernard Brandon Scott, *Sound Mapping in the New Testament* (Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2009), 92.

<sup>13</sup> Winsbury, *The Roman Book*, 121.

used in worship, such as Psalm 119, utilized an acrostic, where the first letter of each line was a particular letter in the Hebrew alphabet. This assisted the faithful in memorizing large amounts of material and allowed them to more fully participate in public worship. We will now explore the instances in Luke 2 where modes of communication indicative of an oral society are implied or directly stated.<sup>14</sup>

### The Edict of Caesar Augustus

An initial example of this ancient media form in the Lukan birth narrative (2:1–5) is the reference to the edict of Caesar Augustus (27 BCE–14 CE).<sup>15</sup> The edict was carried out by Quirinius, legate of Syria (6–7 CE), requiring all the world (πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην) to register (ἀπογράφεσθαι) in their ancestral hometowns.

The edict calling for the registration was a type of written public announcement from an emperor or by a Roman magistrate who possessed the authority to assemble the citizens.<sup>16</sup> In addition to mandating a registration, the content of an edict could include other types of decrees, political proclamations (cf. Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 55.34.2), or general declarations (cf. Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 56.25.5).<sup>17</sup> As noted by J. A. Loubser, writing allowed emperors the ability to exert control over subjects in the outlying provinces of the empire.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For more on oral societies and its relation to the Bible, see John H. Walton and D. Brent Sandy, *The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and Biblical Authority* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion on the problems with the dating of the registration, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, 2 vols., *Anchor Yale Bible* 28 (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2008), 1:400–405. Analyzing the structure of Luke’s preface, John Moles identifies certain elements of a Greek decree (“Luke’s Preface: The Greek Decree, Classical Historiography and Christian Redefinitions,” *NTS* 57 [2011]: 464–69). He identifies three fundamental elements: the initial “since” clause (1:1), the phrase “it seems good” (1:3), and the final “so that” clause (1:4). However, the more overt indication of the Roman decree is found in the opening verses of Luke 2.

<sup>16</sup> Margareta Benner, *The Emperor Says: Studies in the Rhetorical Style of Edicts in the Early Empire*, *Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia* 33 (Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1975), 25.

<sup>17</sup> Benner, *The Emperor Says*, 28.

<sup>18</sup> J. A. Loubser, *Oral Manuscript Culture in the Bible: Studies on the Media Texture*

The written text of the edict could be disseminated over vast distances using a herald. In a world lacking modern forms of mass communication, heralds were civil servants, employed by the state for the official business of orally communicating the content of imperial edicts.<sup>19</sup> The herald conducted his work in a prescribed populated location to reach the widest possible audience, whether in Rome or in the provinces. In addition to informing the majority of the citizens, a reading of the emperor's announcements gave populations living outside the center of Roman administration a chance to hear the actual words of their ruler. Through these recitations the emperor not only demonstrated his ability to command, instruct, and forbid over vast geographic expanses, but he also used these modes of communication to portray an image of himself as a benefactor.<sup>20</sup>

To gain the most public attention, heralds very likely borrowed some of the tactics of the orator's craft and adapted them for their official business on noisy street corners.<sup>21</sup> The techniques of the orator set the standard for all kinds of public speech. Thus, a herald's voice was loud (Cicero, *Quint.* 3.13; Plutarch, *Cic.* 27.3), strong, audible (Josephus, *Ant.* 19.145), and had the capacity to bring crowds together (Horace, *Ars* 419).<sup>22</sup> Further, in a crowded and noisy public environment it would have been difficult to hear and understand what a speaker said. If heralds utilized the kinds of gestures that the orators employed, it would have provided a visual aid to help overcome these conditions. While the gestures described in the ancient rhetorical handbooks were used by orators, many of them were widespread in Roman society, even among the poor.<sup>23</sup> The gestures were likely utilized in a variety of modes of oral performance. Given the constant exposure to orators, the public would have been well-equipped

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of the New Testament—Explorative Hermeneutics, 2nd ed., Biblical Performance Criticism Series 7 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013), 89–90.

<sup>19</sup> Steven Muir, "Vivid Imagery in Galatians 3:1—Roman Rhetoric, Street Announcing, Graffiti, and Crucifixions," *BTB* 44 (2014): 81.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Edmondson, "The Roman Emperor and the Local Communities of the Roman Empire," in *Il princeps romano: autocrate o magistrato? Fattori giuridici e fattori sociali del potere imperiale da Augusto a Commodo*, ed. J. Ferrary and J. Scheid, Pubblicazioni del CEDANT 14 (Pavia, Italy: IUSS Press, 2015), 148.

<sup>21</sup> Muir, "Vivid Imagery," 81.

<sup>22</sup> Nicholas K. Rauh, "Auctioneers and the Roman Economy," *Historia* 38.4 (1989): 460.

<sup>23</sup> Gregory Aldrete, *Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1999), 50. For examples of the discussion of gestures in rhetorical handbooks see *Rhet. Her.* 3.14–15; Quintilian, *Inst.* 11.3.92–102.

in remembering and understanding them.

After the edict was spoken orally, it was more permanently published on a whiteboard (*album*) in black writing with red headlines and was posted for a fixed time, usually thirty days (Josephus, *Ant.* 19.291).<sup>24</sup> This offered the opportunity for those not present at the time of the announcement to learn about the information. It could be posted in popular places such as the bathhouses, temples, and marketplaces. Public posting occurred, for example, in Alexandria in 41 CE when L. Aemilius Rectus, prefect of Egypt, decided to post a copy of a letter of Claudius to the city, because the size of the municipality meant not all could be present at the reading out of the letter.<sup>25</sup>

An additional means for the emperor to communicate edicts as well as other news to his subjects was through the *Acta Diurna* (Daily Acts). The *Acta Diurna* was a written account of the news of the empire. Launched in 59 BCE by Julius Caesar (Suetonius, *Jul.* 20.1), the *Acta* provided details of government business—edicts, proclamations, and resolutions. Further, information such as marriages, births, deaths, crimes, trials, executions, legal decisions, and military battles were also included. In Petronius's parody the *Satyricon* (53), many of the above topics are mentioned by a character reading the Roman newspaper.<sup>26</sup> The *Acta* likely was either read aloud in public places so even the illiterate could know its contents, or the illiterate person would listen as a person at the posting read the news out loud.

The official language of the Roman administration was Latin. In media such as the *Acta*, or the text of edicts read by heralds, Latin was the preferred language, which served to emphasize the authority of Rome.<sup>27</sup> Language is not a neutral tool of communication between people, nor simply a system of signs for exchanging information. The Latin vernacular of the Roman conquerors served as an assertion of power and domination over the ruled where the spoken word in many cases was incomprehensible to those listening. In the Lukan narrative, through writing and an official herald, the power of the emperor was felt even by the illiterate.

It is possible that Joseph became aware of Caesar's edict requiring his

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<sup>24</sup> Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*, Classics and Contemporary Thought 6 (Berkeley: University of California, 2013), 110.

<sup>25</sup> Edmondson, "The Roman Emperor," 148.

<sup>26</sup> Brian J. Wright, "Ancient Rome's Daily News Publication with Some Likely Implications for Early Christian Studies," *TynBul* 67 (2016): 153.

<sup>27</sup> For examples of edicts in Latin see Benner, *The Emperor Says*.

subjects to register either through a herald, by word of mouth, or by the daily news publication the *Acta Diurna*. The purpose of the registration, in part, was to certify the number of an emperor's subjects so he would have an accurate account of the population for taxation purposes (*The Digest of Justinian* 50.15.1–8).<sup>28</sup> Rome required that subjected people pay a tribute or tax to their conquerors. With the conquest of Jerusalem by the military leader Pompey in 63 BCE, the Jews became subject to Roman taxes (Josephus, *J.W.* 1.154; *Ant.* 14.74). The Roman historian Tacitus (56–117 CE) acknowledged that the tax was burdensome for the Jewish people (*Ann.* 2.42). However, there were those opposed to the tax not only because it was onerous, but also because paying the tax amounted to submitting to mortal men when in fact they were to submit to God as their lord (*J.W.* 2.118).

The edict brings an obedient Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem, his ancestral town to register (2:4–5). Augustus's edict demonstrated an exercise of Roman authority. However, in relocating Mary and Joseph, the edict also enabled Jesus's prophetic birth in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2; Luke 2:4–7), thereby making Augustus an agent of God's authority.

### The Divine Herald

Following the narration about the edict and the response of Mary and Joseph to the decree, a mere two verses recount the actual birth of Jesus (2:6–7). Luke is more interested in communicating the effect of Jesus's birth than the actual birth itself.<sup>29</sup> A heavenly herald proclaiming the good news of the birth to shepherds becomes the focus of the narrative. The herald announces and interprets the significance of the redemptive moment.

The heavenly herald is introduced as an ἄγγελος κυρίου (2:9). As an angel of the Lord, this messenger hails from the divine realm and his message possesses divine authority.<sup>30</sup> It is noteworthy that the angelic messenger is not described as appearing in the sky. Instead, the herald takes a

<sup>28</sup> Alan Watson, *The Digest of Justinian, IV* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2009), 445–47.

<sup>29</sup> François Bovon and Helmut Koester, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 86.

<sup>30</sup> The word “angel” indicates a role. The word can mean someone carrying a message from God, but this someone could still be a human being. Thus, the apostle Paul said of himself, “you did not scorn or despise me, but welcomed me as an angel of God” (Gal 4:14; see David Albert Jones, *Angels: A History* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010], 54–55).

standing (ἐφίστημι) position near the audience of shepherds. A standing position also indicates the messenger's authority (e.g., Deut 18:5; 1 Sam 19:20; Acts 7:55).

Representations on ancient vases of the emissaries of Greek and Roman gods are depicted with wings or winged shoes.<sup>31</sup> The wings signify that these messengers could transport their communiqué over vast distances, even bridging the expanse between the realm of the gods and the people.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, conversation between God and humanity could transpire through an angel, where there is little distinction between God and his messenger (e.g., Gen 21:17). In Exod 23:20–22, the angel is described as one who should be listened to by the patriarch, since the angel speaks in God's name. Angels are described in the New Testament as speaking to individuals, while the Old Testament describes God as the one speaking (Acts 7:30, 35, 38, 53; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2).

Further support for the divine origin of the herald and the authority behind his message is the appearance of the divine glory (δόξα) along with the angel (2:9).<sup>33</sup> Occasionally in the Bible, God is perceived as being in or present with the angel (e.g., Gen 18:22–23; Judg 6:12–16). In the birth narrative, it is obvious then that God appears along with the divine messenger (“the glory of the Lord shone around them”).

The emperor often would be accompanied by a herald, who would do the speaking for him (e.g., Suetonius, *Dom.* 13; *Aug.* 82). When an emperor visited a community, it gave his subjects an opportunity to see their ruler, to celebrate his virtues at the elaborate ceremonies of the emperor's arrival (*adventus*) and departure (*profectio*).<sup>34</sup>

With God present when the message was delivered to the shepherds, the angel's words were even more authoritative. Further, as noted by Mark Coleridge, “with the birth of Jesus, the presence of God becomes more

<sup>31</sup> Kristina Dronsch and Annette Weissenrieder, “A Theory of the Message from New Testament Writings or Communicating the Words of Jesus: From Angelos to Euangelion,” in *The Interface of Orality and Writing: Speaking, Seeing, Writing in the Shaping of New Genres*, ed. Annette Weissenrieder and Robert B. Coote, *Biblical Performance Criticism* 11, ed. David Rhoads, Holly E. Hearon and Kelly R. Iverson (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015), 214.

<sup>32</sup> Dronsch and Weissenrieder, “A Theory of the Message,” 214.

<sup>33</sup> In the Septuagint, δόξα translates the Hebrew *kabôd*, as the “splendor, brilliance,” which is associated with Yahweh's perceptible presence to his people (Exod 16:7, 10; 24:17; 40:34; Ps 63:2; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, 409).

<sup>34</sup> Edmondson, “The Roman Emperor,” 146.

overt.”<sup>35</sup> God’s presence was not only experienced by Mary, with the child in her womb, or by Mary and Joseph, as parents of a newly born baby, but with the appearance of the herald and the divine glory to the shepherds, the presence of God was felt outside the family—by the common people.

In addition, the abrupt switch from the human focus of the birth (2:6–7) to the divine focus (2:8–14) reminds the audience that God did not merely set things in motion with the Spirit’s conception (1:35) and then depart from the scene. God is still portrayed as exerting his presence and authority. Since God is present for the proclamation and the angel of the Lord belongs to the divine realm, then the angel’s forthcoming announcement about Jesus’s birth suggests that the newborn is no mere child but is deity and hails from the divine realm as well.

### The Divine Edict

Having described the divine messenger, we will now examine the herald’s message. The divine edict spoken by the angelic herald is characteristic of royal decrees. The text of edicts were written in the first person while the addressees were referred to in the second person plural.<sup>36</sup> The herald’s words follow this format: “I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord” (εὐαγγελίζομαι ὑμῖν χαρὰν μεγάλην ἥτις ἔσται παντὶ τῷ λαῷ, ὅτι ἐτέχθη ὑμῖν σήμερον σωτὴρ ὃς ἔστιν χριστὸς κύριος ἐν πόλει Δαυὶδ; Luke 2:10–11). The pronoun “you” immediately following ἐτέχθη (is born) indicates that this proclamation is not intended as an ordinary birth announcement, but as a declaration of the birth’s significance for the shepherds (2:11) and all people (2:10).<sup>37</sup>

The angel informs the shepherds that he is bringing them good news (εὐαγγελίζομαι). In the ancient world, the term εὐαγγελίζω was used in reference to positive proclamations about the emperor (e.g., Philo, *Embassy* 231; Josephus, *B.J.* 4.618). The word was also utilized in relation to reports about military victories (e.g., Pausanias, *Descr.* 4.19.5). It could also

be applied when speaking about more mundane news as well (e.g., Aristophanes, *Eq.* 644–7).<sup>38</sup> For the ancient world, εὐαγγελίζω was something of a “media” term, meaning the announcement of a message of (usually) good news that was previously unknown to its recipients.<sup>39</sup>

The content of the announcement of the birth to the wider public has parallels with other imperial notifications. It was not unusual for the imperial household to announce important family matters. The emperor Nerva convened an assembly on the Capitolium, announcing he would have a new son, a successor to the throne (Pliny, *Pan.* 8.3). Augustus announced in an assembly that he had adopted Tiberius as his son, for the common good of the people (Suetonius, *Tib.* 21.3).

The titles ascribed to the newborn also have political connotations. The designation σωτήρ (“savior,” 2:11), which conveys the benefit Jesus’s birth brings for all people, was a title frequently applied to emperors (Josephus, *J.W.* 3.9.8). According to H. S. Versnel, a σωτήρ was originally someone, who by military action, has saved a town and people from danger—the people have been liberated.<sup>40</sup> An inscription found at Priene, celebrating the birthday of Augustus in 9 BCE, hails him as a savior.<sup>41</sup>

The nature of the salvation announced by the herald can be determined by considering what has previously been communicated in the Lukan narrative by Mary’s song of praise. Her song indicates that God is acting on the side of the marginalized in situations of oppression by scattering the proud (1:51b), bringing down the powerful (1:52a), and sending the rich away empty (1:53b). At the same time, God is lifting the lowly (1:52b) and filling the hungry with good things (1:53a). Through Mary’s song, God as savior is to be understood in the sense of material well-

<sup>38</sup> As noted by John P. Dickson, “Gospel as News: εὐαγγελ- from Aristophanes to the Apostle Paul,” *NTS* 51 (2005): 214.

<sup>39</sup> Dickson, “Gospel,” 213, 230.

<sup>40</sup> H. S. Versnel, *Triumphus: An Inquiry into the Origin, Development and Meaning of the Roman Triumph* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 386.

<sup>41</sup> Mark Reasoner, *Roman Imperial Texts: A Sourcebook* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 30. In the spring of 307 BCE, upon entrance into the harbor of Athens, Demetrius Poliorcetes proclaimed the freedom of Athens. As a result, the Athenians invited Demetrius ashore and they called him “benefactor” and “savior” (Plutarch, *Demetr.* 9.1). Nero was called savior and benefactor (OGIS no. 688; Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005], 312). Julius Caesar was called savior of human life (SIG no. 760) and of the inhabited world (IG no. 12.5, 556–57; Evans, *Ancient Texts*, 312).

<sup>35</sup> Mark Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative: Narrative as Christology in Luke 1–2*, JSNTSup 88 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 138.

<sup>36</sup> For examples of Roman edicts in this form, see Benner, *The Emperor Says*.

<sup>37</sup> Gary Yamaski, “Shalom for Shepherds: An Audience Oriented Critical Analysis of Luke 2:8–14,” in *Beautiful Upon the Mountains: Biblical Essays on Mission, Peace and God’s Reign*, ed. Ivan Friesen and Mary H. Schertz (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 152.

being. There is also a sense the salvation had a political dimension. Mary speaks of God as one who brings down the powerful from their thrones (1:52), connoting a state of political liberation for the people. Finally, the phrase “by the forgiveness of their sins” (1:77) conveys that God’s salvation also entails a sense of spiritual well-being. The titles “savior” and “messiah” applied to Jesus highlights the active expression of his authority—he saves God’s people.<sup>42</sup>

The designation κύριος (“lord”) also had political relevance as some emperors were given this title as well (e.g., Suetonius, *Cal.* 21–22.4; *Dom.* 13.2; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 67.4.7). However, Augustus declared his displeasure with this designation for himself (Suetonius, *Aug.* 53). The label “Lord” ascribed to Jesus stresses the passive connotation of his authority—he is to be obeyed and honored.<sup>43</sup>

It would seem for Luke that the angel’s announcement of Jesus’s birth to the shepherds was meant to be juxtaposed with the notification of the emperor’s edict for all to be registered. In contrast to Caesar’s exercise of authority, which was oppressive and self-serving, the authoritative heavenly messenger brings the good news of God’s exercise of authority, which was liberating and self-giving. Augustus’s edict represents the Roman claim to world power. God’s edict announcing Jesus’s advent overturns worldly powers. It will pull Caesars down from their thrones and exalt the lowly (1:52). Importantly, the advent does not immediately institute a system collapse of the Roman Empire or even validate human revolutionary activity.

### The Divine Army

Following the messenger’s announcement to the shepherds, the heavenly host voice an acclamation, praising God and proclaiming the results of the savior’s arrival (2:13–14). Prior to discussing the acclamation, it is necessary to note Verlyn D. Verbrugge’s observation concerning the term στρατιᾶς (2:13), translated as “host” (NRSV).<sup>44</sup> Verbrugge observes that in classical Greek, the term στρατιᾶς often denoted an army or a company of soldiers. The word στρατιά occurs twenty-eight times in the Septuagint

<sup>42</sup> David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 268.

<sup>43</sup> Pao and Schnabel, “Luke,” 268.

<sup>44</sup> Verlyn D. Verbrugge “The Heavenly Army on the Fields of Bethlehem (Luke 2:13–14),” *CTJ* 43 (2008): 302.

and the majority of these instances refer to human armies.<sup>45</sup> A company of soldiers was likely what Luke desired to portray as appearing alongside the herald in the fields outside of Bethlehem.<sup>46</sup>

Depending on the importance of a message, a herald was often accompanied by an armed cohort for protection while in route to his destination (Josephus, *Life* 301).<sup>47</sup> In the Greek world, heralds were sacred and under the divine protection of Hermes, the divine herald (Hesiod, *Theog.* 939; Homer, *Od.* 12.390).<sup>48</sup> The sacred and protected nature of heralds was respected among the Romans who recognized the essential nature of the protection (*The Digest of Justinian* 50.7.18).<sup>49</sup> For Luke, the sudden appearance of the multitude of heavenly soldiers proclaiming praise likely represents the herald’s defending armed regiment.

### The Army’s Acclamation

In addition to protecting the angelic messenger, the heavenly host also demonstrates another popular style of media in the ancient world. Through an acclamation, the angelic army is depicted as supporting and honoring the divine commander by declaring glory to God and the ensuing peace following a military victory.<sup>50</sup> Acclamations are public acts of

<sup>45</sup> E.g., Exod 14:4, 9, 17; Num 10:28; Deut 20:9; 1 Chron 12:14, 22, 23; 18:15; 19:8; 20:1; 28:1; 2 Chron 32:9 (see Verbrugge, “The Heavenly Army,” 303).

<sup>46</sup> Behind the notion of a divine army stands the idea of Yahweh as a military commander. When waging his wars, Yahweh was helped by an army of warriors (e.g., 2 Kgs 6:17; 7:6; Isa 13:4–5; Joel 4:11; Hab 3:8). Such heavenly armies appear in 2 Macc 10:29–32 and are indicated as a widespread popular vision during the great revolt by Josephus: “Before sunset throughout all parts of the country chariots were seen in the air and armed battalions hurtling through the air and encompassing cities” (*J.W.* 6.298–299). As noted and cited by Richard Horsley, *The Liberation of Christmas: The Infancy Narratives in Social Context* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 77.

<sup>47</sup> Hezser, “Oral and Written Communication,” 90.

<sup>48</sup> Andrew S. Brown, “The Common Voice of the People: Herald and the Importance of Proclamation in Archaic and Classical Greece with Special Respect to Athens” (PhD diss., Wadham College, 2011), 164.

<sup>49</sup> Watson, *The Digest of Justinian*, 436.

<sup>50</sup> In biblical literature, heavenly beings sometimes celebrate future events as though they already transpired (e.g., Rev 5:9–10; 11:17–18; 18:2–3; 19:1–2, 6–8). The angels’ words proclaim the benefits that are to ensue (Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel*, 3rd ed. Reading the New Testament 3 [Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2013], 34).



oral performance. They entail the unified chanting of words or phrases, which express an opinion or a request. Notice the words αἰνούντων (praising) and λεγόντων (saying) do not convey that the heavenly troops were singing but rather speaking (2:13). Further, both αἰνούντων and λεγόντων are present active participles conveying a continuous action.<sup>51</sup>

The idea of Roman legions publicly proclaiming a commander's worth is recounted by Josephus who asserts that the emperor Vespasian and his son were honored with joyous acclamations by the assembled troops, celebrating their leader's gallantry (*J.W.* 7.126).<sup>52</sup> On another occasion, Roman soldiers on the battlefield recited a popular acclamation when they hailed their commander as "imperator" (Josephus, *J.W.* 6.317; Suetonius, *Tit.* 5).<sup>53</sup>

Acclamations could consist of a simple praise, various titles, rhythmic sentences, rhythmic formulas, or phrases that could be shouted or sung. Raymond Brown offers two possible structures of the angelic army's acclamation (2:14). However, he prefers a colon structure because the arrangement exhibits better parallelism:

δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις θεῷ  
καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας

Glory in the highest to God,  
And on earth peace among people toward whom he manifests his good pleasure.<sup>54</sup>

In this layout, there are three elements in each line, a noun, a localization phrase, and a directional phrase. So "glory" and "peace" are parallel;

<sup>51</sup> In a similar fashion, it was believed that Enoch witnessed armed troops in heaven worshiping God with unceasing voices (2 En. 17).

<sup>52</sup> It was crucial for the emperor to have devoted troops, for Gaius Caligula was killed by his own praetorian guard in 41 CE. Men from the praetorian guard also took the initiative to find and acclaim Claudius, the uncle of Caligula, as the next emperor (Reasoner, *Roman Imperial Texts*, 67). Consequently, support and loyalty from a critical mass of the legions became essential for a potential new ruler as well as a reigning emperor because imperial power rested on force and the threat of force. Thus, in an oral society, positive acclamations served as a spoken vote of confidence by the army in support of the soon to be or reigning emperor.

<sup>53</sup> The English term "emperor" comes from the Latin *imperator*.

<sup>54</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, 2nd ed. AYBRL (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 405.

"in the highest" and "on earth" are parallel; and "God" parallels "people toward whom he manifests his good pleasure."<sup>55</sup> To ascribe glory to God does not signify that the angels were adding something to God that was currently not a part of his nature, but instead it acknowledged his existing divine attribute of glory (δόξα).<sup>56</sup> The locational phrase ἐν ὑψίστοις (in the highest), which is parallel with the location "on earth," does not refer to degree, but to God's abode in biblical cosmology (i.e., the heights of heaven; cf. Job 16:19; Ps 148:1; Sir 26:16; 43:9; Pss. Sol. 18:10).

The two parallel lines create a thought pattern or thought rhythm, which is characteristic of Semitic poetry.<sup>57</sup> This rhythmic nature provided appeal and the parallelism aided in recall.<sup>58</sup> The parallel format and rhythm are helpful factors for memorizing and recalling words by those only hearing the acclamation recited. Consequently, they could be easily learned and chanted in unison by large groups of people.

The parallelism also suggests an underlying oral tradition of the acclamation. Robert Miller reminds us that "the parallelism of Hebrew poetry has regularly been considered a sign of its oral origin."<sup>59</sup> A basic method for assisting the memory of a tradition passed on by word of mouth is to frame the first part of the sentence in a way that will suggest or forecast the later and will recall the first without being identical with it.<sup>60</sup> For example, we can observe the correspondence of one verse or line, with another in Judges 5:25: "Water he asked, Milk she gave; In a princely bowl she offered curds."<sup>61</sup> Milk and water are both liquids (a semantic equivalence) and both nouns (a grammatical equivalence). While individuals in

<sup>55</sup> See Joseph A. Fitzmyer's arguments for translating εὐδοκίας as referring to God's "good pleasure" rather than "human goodwill" (*The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 410-12).

<sup>56</sup> Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *Neglected Endings: The Significance of the Pauline Letter Closings*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, JSNTSup 101 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 138.

<sup>57</sup> Andrew E. Hill, "Song of Solomon," in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 3:452; G. P. Luttikhuisen, "The Poetic Character of Revelation 4 and 5," in *Early Christian Poetry*, ed. J. Den Boeft, R. Van Den Broek, A. F. J. Klijn, G. Quispel, and J. C. M. Van Winden (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 16.

<sup>58</sup> Aldrete, *Gestures and Acclamations*, 134.

<sup>59</sup> Robert D. Miller II, *Oral Tradition in Ancient Israel*, Biblical Performance Criticism 4, ed. David Rhoads (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 72.

<sup>60</sup> Dewey, *The Oral Ethos*, 41.

<sup>61</sup> Translation by Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 12.

pre-literate cultures are gifted in storing and retrieving vast amounts of oral texts, there was still a need for information to be spoken in a manner that was easy to remember. By employing standardized formats to speech, such as parallelism, a listener is assisted in the later recollection of that information.

The acclamation was important to preserve for a couple of reasons. First, the army's acclamation had divine origin—it was spoken by God's army. An inspired prayer was thought to enhance a prayer's efficacy. The format of the acclamation may be intended to ensure it was remembered verbatim, so its effectiveness was guaranteed when repeated. In Greco-Roman religion, proper recitation of prayers in order to insure their efficacy can be seen in Pliny (*Nat.* 28:11–14), where he recounts how severe damage was caused by mistaken prayers.<sup>62</sup> Enoch was told that if the angels do not recite a song at the right time or in a proper and fitting manner, they would be destroyed (3 En. 47:2). The Lord's Prayer in its various occurrences, is introduced with an obligatory formulary: "When you pray, say..." (Luke 11:2), "Pray then in this way" (Matt 6:9), "pray like this..." (*Did.* 8:2).<sup>63</sup>

A second possible reason for the parallel format of the acclamation was that in some Jewish and Christian circles it was believed that certain prayers allowed joint participation between the earthly choir and the heavenly choir (e.g., Pss 103:20; 148:2; Dan 3:58 LXX; Pr Azar 1:37; 1QH<sup>a</sup> 11.12; 4Q403 1 I, 30b–33a; 4Q504 7, 4–9; 1QM 17, 7–8; 1QS 11, 7–8, 1QSB 4, 24–26; Apoc. Zeph. 8:3). In this respect, it is understandable why a text that is simple to remember is necessary.

Reciting a song or acclamation in unison is an invitation to join or support a movement. It creates solidarity and an intense feeling of membership in a community.<sup>64</sup> The need for solidarity is important for a group's survival, especially when it is espousing views that are deemed by other parts of society as subversive or radical.<sup>65</sup> The acclamation by the divine army expresses a unified loyalty to God and underscores the universal peace that the arriving savior will realize.

Like the titles "Savior" and "Lord" ascribed to the newborn, the acclamation's reference to peace on earth has political overtones as well.

<sup>62</sup> Mathias Klinghardt, "Prayer Formulas for Public Recitation. Their Use and Function in Ancient Religion," *Numen* 46 (1999): 17.

<sup>63</sup> Klinghardt, "Prayer Formulas," 3.

<sup>64</sup> Terry Giles and William J. Doan, *Twice Used Songs: Performance Criticism of the Songs of Ancient Israel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 141.

<sup>65</sup> Giles and Doan, *Twice Used Songs*, 77.

With his victory at Actium, Augustus brought peace and order into the world for the first time in anyone's memory.<sup>66</sup> In addition to inscriptions, paeans of praise for the ruler who had brought peace, order, harmony, and prosperity appears in various genres of literature, such as poetry (e.g., Horace, *Odes* 4.15), history (e.g., Velleius Paterculus, *The Roman History* 2.89), and philosophy (e.g., Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.13.9).<sup>67</sup>

The Roman concept of peace referenced above is an ideal state that a hero achieved through war.<sup>68</sup> The concept of peace in the acclamation of the heavenly warriors is accomplished by Christ through his death and resurrection (Rom 5:1; Col 1:20) and experienced by the Church (Acts 9:31). It refers to both the absence of hostilities and a reconciled relationship with God and others in the context of the new creation (Isa 9:6; 32:15–18).

### The Shepherds' Testimony

A final illustration in the birth narrative of information transmission in the ancient world involves direct personal communication between people. In an oral society, with no telephones or internet, sharing the angel's message by the shepherds with the wider public would need to rely on direct, face-to-face communication to further be distributed beyond their small circle (Luke 2:17–18). Sharing information by word of mouth could easily be carried out with one's relatives, fellow villagers, and neighbors.<sup>69</sup> The first-century Mediterranean world was a society in which people lived close to each other. In the crowded cities of the Roman Empire persons were rarely alone. Pieter Botha contends that the numerous people who lived in the tiny apartments of ancient cities must have lived almost entirely outside, "in the streets, shops, arcades, arenas and baths of the city."<sup>70</sup> The average Roman home most likely served only as a place

<sup>66</sup> Horsley, *The Liberation of Christmas*, 26.

<sup>67</sup> Horsley, *The Liberation of Christmas*, 26; Gary Gilbert, "Roman Propaganda and Christian Identity in the Worldview of Luke-Acts," in *Contextualizing Acts, Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*, ed. Todd C. Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele, SBLSymS 20 (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 240.

<sup>68</sup> E.g., Res gest. divi Aug. §25.

<sup>69</sup> Peter J. Botha, "Paul and Gossip: A Social Mechanism in Early Christian Communities," *Neot* 32 (1998): 270.

<sup>70</sup> Botha, "Paul and Gossip," 270. For gossip in the barber shops in antiquity see Plutarch (*Mor.* 509A; Botha, "Paul and Gossip," 270).

to sleep and store possessions. Thus, the opportunities for sharing information with others were considerable. Much of what one learns and passes on is done in the context of a conversation.<sup>71</sup>

While gossip has mostly a negative connotation, in non-literate oral societies it can serve positive purposes. As Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh maintain, gossip can be used for constructive information sharing.<sup>72</sup> For example, positive evaluative talk about an individual can identify potential leaders, as their reputation is enhanced through information sharing within a community. The shepherds' mode of passing on information was prominent in the first-century oral culture and was important for spreading news as well as constructing a person's public identity. In this sense, gossip played an important role in spreading knowledge about Jesus's words and deeds during his ministry (e.g., Matt 4:24; Mark 1:28; Luke 4:14). Thus, very early in the life of Jesus, as the shepherds share their story, the people respond with amazement. The community begins to understand that God is exerting his authority as one epoch of salvation history gives way to another and Jesus's positive role and reputation in the divine plan begins to develop (Luke 2:18).

### Conclusion

We have highlighted several modes of communication typical of an oral culture and their function as they appear in the Lukan birth narrative. First, the Augustan edict, compelling subjects to register for the purpose of taxation, and the divine proclamation of a savior's birth were both expressed by official heralds. Through this corresponding arrangement of the two edicts, Luke sets the authoritative words of Caesar (both spoken and written) and God in opposition. Caesar's edict is oppressive, creating a tax burden for inhabitants of the Roman Empire. God's edict is redemptive, announcing the advent of a Savior for all people. The divine decree trumps the Roman decree. Second, the divine army accompanies the herald, underscoring the importance of the herald's message. Their acclamation, praising God and announcing proleptically the resulting peace on earth, demonstrates a unified loyalty to the divine victorious commander. Further, the acclamation's parallelism suggests an underlying oral tradition, perhaps for impressing a culture's most precious traditions on the minds of people. In an oral society, where the majority of the people were

illiterate and writing materials were expensive, the focus was on the transmission of words from mind to mind. Finally, the shepherds' face-to-face conversations with members of the public about the angel's message concerning Jesus, bears witness to the ancient Mediterranean oral culture's practice of advancing news and shaping perceptions and identities of a community's rising leaders.

<sup>71</sup> As noted by John W. Daniels Jr., *Gossiping Jesus: The Oral Processing of Jesus in John's Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 6–7.

<sup>72</sup> Bruce J. Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 103.

## Show Me the Money: Pedagogy, Numismatics, and the New Testament

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*Roman imperial and provincial coins are important for understanding religion, politics, and culture in the first century. They are also able to make a unique and valuable pedagogical contribution to classroom teaching in both the academy and the church. In an effort to promote this pedagogical use of ancient coins, this article will (1) provide a brief introduction to biblically relevant coins from the Old Testament, intertestamental, and New Testament periods; (2) briefly illustrate the relevance of numismatics for New Testament studies; and (3) provide practical guidance for the acquisition and pedagogical use of ancient coins.*

*Key Words:* imperial cult, New Testament, numismatics, pedagogy

Biblical scholars familiar with ancient coins regularly lament the lack of integration and inter-disciplinary interaction between numismatics and biblical studies.<sup>1</sup> Those involved with biblical studies are often not convinced that the interpretive value added justifies the time and energy investment necessary to benefit from numismatics or simply do not have the time to even consider exploring this fascinating field. Scholars and teachers of the Bible, however, neglect coins to their loss and the loss of their students for several reasons.<sup>2</sup> (1) First-century coins provide an invaluable window into the religious and political Greco-Roman and Jewish world within which the gospel was first proclaimed.<sup>3</sup> (2) Basic awareness of ancient coins is helpful to properly

interpret many biblical texts (see tables below). (3) Numismatics has proven to be an invaluable source supplementing our understanding of Jewish history, especially from the exile until the Bar Kochba revolt.<sup>4</sup> (4) Coins can make a unique and valuable pedagogical contribution to classroom teaching in both the academy and the church.

The pedagogical value of coins, in particular, is often neglected; coins are valuable teaching aids not just for undergraduate or graduate students but for church members in Bible studies and small groups. Because many ancient coins have survived and are available at a low cost, anyone teaching on the widow's mite (*lepton*), two sparrows being sold for an *as* (*assarion*), Jesus's illustrative use of a denarius, or the pervasive influence of the imperial cult should be able to show students an actual coin. History comes alive for students and teachers when they are able to handle and look at actual coins from the first century.



Judaea, Hasmoneans. *Alexander Jannaeus*.<sup>5</sup> 35–104 BCE. Æ  
Half-Prutah–Lepton (11mm, 0.94 g, 12h). “Yehohanan the High Priest

the prevailing Roman attitudes which were both nourished and documented by the contemporary coinage” (“Show Me a Denarius,” 114).

<sup>4</sup> Baruch Kanael, “Ancient Jewish Coins and Their Historical Importance,” *Biblical Archeologist* 26 (1963): 37. David Hendin notes, “The coins struck in the ancient land of Israel between the fourth century BCE and the second century CE represent a remarkable and readily available primary source of information about the history, heritage, and emerging culture of Judeo-Christian tradition. Coins witnessed the return of Jews from the Babylonian captivity, the wars of the Hasmoneans with the Seleucids, the building and the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, the birth and ascent of Christianity, and the creation of Rabbinic Judaism” (*Guide to Biblical Coins*, 5th ed. [New York: Amphora, 2010], xi).

<sup>5</sup> Photo and technical description courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. (<https://cngcoins.com>).

<sup>1</sup> Larry J. Kreitzer, *Striking New Images: Roman Imperial Coinage and the New Testament World* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 19; David H. Wenkel, *Coins as Cultural Texts in the World of the New Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 2017), xviii; Richard E. Oster, “Show Me a Denarius: Symbolism of Roman Coinage and Christian Beliefs,” *ResQ* 28 (1986): 107.

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed list of ten points, see Wenkel, *Coins as Cultural Texts*, xix–xx.

<sup>3</sup> Oster concludes that “one could hardly hope to treat the sociological and political ramifications of incipient Christianity in their fullness without noting

and the Council of the Jews,” upright palm branch / Flowering lily between grain ears. Meshorer Group C; Hendin 458.<sup>6</sup>

*This is a well-preserved lepton (widow's mite); a very small coin (smaller than a dime). This coin was minted almost 100 years before Jesus was born but the coins were durable and remained in circulation for generations. The paleo Hebrew writing would have been unintelligible to most people but they would have recognized it as Hebrew and understood the nationalistic message of hope, liberation, and restoration to the glories of long ago. The two grain ears also indicate agricultural abundance, a suggestion of restoration and reception of God's covenant blessings.<sup>7</sup> The lily was used in the Temple of Jerusalem as an ornament and was readily understood to be a symbol for Jerusalem.*

In an effort to promote this pedagogical use of ancient coins, this article will (1) provide a brief introduction to biblically relevant coins from the Old Testament, intertestamental, and New Testament period; (2) briefly illustrate the relevance of numismatics for NT studies; and (3) provide practical guidance for the acquisition and pedagogical use of ancient coins. This introductory article cannot hope to be exhaustive, but the good news is that one does not need to become an expert or invest weeks of research in order to be able to benefit from the pedagogical potential of numismatics.

### Biblical Coins: An Overview

#### Old Testament Coinage

Coins began being minted in the late seventh century BC in Lydia in Asia Minor and the minting of coins spread rapidly in the ancient world.<sup>8</sup> Hence, most Old Testament history transpired prior to the minting of coins. Even long after the first coins were minted their value

<sup>6</sup> There are different numbering systems in use for Roman Imperial coins, provincial coins, and Judean coins among others. Additionally, there have been updates over time and old RIC (Roman Imperial coin) numbers are different from new RIC numbers. This can become confusing; the best route when learning is just to google the number of a coin you come across to learn more about it. The best websites for this research are <http://www.wildwinds.com> and <https://www.acsearch.info>. If possible, of course, you can acquire and consult hard copy catalogues, but this is unnecessary for the beginning collector.

<sup>7</sup> Wenkel, *Coins as Cultural Texts*, 124.

<sup>8</sup> Kanael, “Ancient Jewish Coins,” 39.

consisted in their precious metal content. Thus, when money such as the *sheqel* is mentioned in the Old Testament, it is referring to the weight standard of the metal rather than to a specific coin.<sup>9</sup> Transactions in markets would have been made by weighing silver or gold using shekel weights, usually made of limestone. The shekel system was based on a standardized monetary weight unit, as was the *gerah*. Most weights would have been inscribed with the symbol  $\gamma$  for shekel.<sup>10</sup>

Following the exile of the Jewish people in Babylon, the Jews would have been exposed to Persian coins and brought some back with them to Israel. This is confirmed in Ezra 2:69, 8:27 and Neh 5:15; 7:70–72 with reference to *darics* and *sigloi*, Persian coin denominations. However, archeologists have only found a few *darics* and *sigloi* in Israel.<sup>11</sup> There is very little numismatic material for Old Testament studies since coins under the Persians did not begin to be minted in Samaria until 375 to 333 BC and Judah between 400 and 260 BC.<sup>12</sup>

#### Second Temple Judean Coinage

Judea first began minting coins under the Persians, then under the Macedonians, Ptolemies, and Seleucids. Independent Judean coins did not begin being minted until Antiochus VII gave John Hyrcanus I permission in 132 BC to mint his own small bronze coins. This was during the transition from Seleucid to Hasmonean rule and minting coins was considered a royal prerogative.<sup>13</sup> Hence, the first coins were minted in the name of Antiochus VII by Hyrcanus I presumably in Jerusalem. Hyrcanus had autonomous power in Judea under the oversight of Antiochus VII. Following his death Judea gained its full independence.<sup>14</sup>

The coins minted in the early intertestamental period revealed a strong Hellenistic influence which makes them appear to be Grecian.<sup>15</sup> Many Hasmonean coins continued to use or adopt symbols and images

<sup>9</sup> Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*, 62–68.

<sup>10</sup> Yigal Ronen, “The Enigma of the Shekel Weights of the Judean Kingdom,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 59 (1996): 122–25.

<sup>11</sup> Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*, 19.

<sup>12</sup> Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*, 101.

<sup>13</sup> Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*, 161; David Hendin, “Current Viewpoints on Ancient Jewish Coinage: A Bibliographic Essay,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 11 (2013): 263.

<sup>14</sup> David M. Jacobson, “The Lily and the Rose: A Review of Some Hasmonean Coin Types,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 76 (2013): 16–17.

<sup>15</sup> Hendin, “Current Viewpoints,” 256–60.

common on Greek coins such as the Seleucid inverted anchor and the starburst, a Macedonian royal emblem.<sup>16</sup> The Hasmoneans, however, never minted their portraits on their coins, the common practice of the Greeks. Between the second century BC and first century AD, the Jews abhorred any graven images which they understood to be forbidden in the law's second commandment.<sup>17</sup> The Hasmoneans mostly used a paleo-Hebrew script on their coins even though the vernacular language was Aramaic and paleo-Hebrew had not been used for hundreds of years. The use of paleo-Hebrew was a sign of nationalism and a reminder of "the glorious days of the Israelite period around the time of King David."<sup>18</sup> Thus, the Hasmonean rulers strategically used the inscriptions and iconography on their coins to highlight themes of independence, nationalism, and the promised restoration of covenant blessings.<sup>19</sup>

### New Testament Coinage

The New Testament mentions several Roman, Judean, and Greek monetary units and coins. Apart from Rev 6:6, all the explicit references to coins occur in the Gospels. However, the significance of numismatics extends far beyond explicit references to coins (see the next section).<sup>20</sup>

The use of three different monetary systems, Roman, Judean, and Greek, often causes confusion. Tables 1–3 below show the various coin denominations in each system with their biblical references. The Romans brought about a gradual transition from non-Roman to Roman denominations across the Empire but Greek denominations were used alongside Roman denominations even into the third century AD. In Asia and the Eastern Roman Empire, the local and Roman denominations were allowed to co-exist although Augustus began replacing city deities with his own portrait and name on coins throughout the Empire.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Jacobson, "The Lily and the Rose," 21.

<sup>17</sup> Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*, 172–73.

<sup>18</sup> Hendin, "Current Viewpoints," 267.

<sup>19</sup> Deborah Furlan Taylor, "The Monetary Crisis in Revelation 13:17 and the Provenance of the Book of Revelation," *CBQ* 71 (2009): 589.

<sup>20</sup> Wenkel, *Coins as Cultural Texts*, 31.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Burnett, "The Augustan Revolution Seen from Mints of the Provinces," *JRS* 101 (2011): 26–28.

Table 1: Roman Coin Denominations and Values (29 BC to AD 194) <sup>22</sup>		
Denomination	Value	Biblical Reference
<b>Gold</b>		
Aureus	25 denarii/ 400 Asses	
Half-Aureus	200 Asses	
<b>Silver</b>		
Denarius	16 Asses	Matt 18:28; 20:2, 9–10, 13; 22:19; Mark 6:37; 12:15; 14:5; Luke 7:41; 10:35; 20:24; John 6:7; 12:5; Rev 6:6
Quinarius	8 Asses	
<b>Bronze</b>		
Sesterius	4 Asses	
Dupondius	2 Asses	
As (Assarion)	Basic unit of currency	Matt 10:29; Luke 12:6
Semis	½ As	
Quadrans	¼ As	Matt 5:26; Mark 12:42

Table 2: Judean Coin Denominations and Values (Roman Period) <sup>23</sup>			
Denomination	Value	Roman Value	Biblical Reference
<b>Silver</b>			
Shekel	256 Prutot	4 Denarius or 64 Asses	
Half-Shekel	128 Prutot	2 Denarius or 32 Asses	
<b>Bronze</b>			
Prutah	Basic unit of currency	1/64 Denarius or ¼ As	
Lepton	½ Prutah	1/128 Denarius or 1/8 As	Mark 12:42; Luke 12:59; 21:2

<sup>22</sup> Adapted with modifications from Peter Brennan, Michael Turner, and Nicholas L. Wright, *Faces of Power: Imperial Portraiture on Roman Coins* (Sydney: Nicholson Museum, 2007), 14.

<sup>23</sup> Adapted from Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*, 22–24, 46.

**Table 3: Greek Coin Denominations and Values (Roman Period)**<sup>24</sup>

Denom.	Value	Roman Value	Judean Value	Biblical Reference
<b>Gold</b>				
Talent	~180,000 Drachma	~180,000 Denarii	~45,000 Shekels	Matt 18:24; 25:15–16, 20, 22, 24–25, 28 <sup>25</sup>
<b>Silver</b>				
Talent	~6,000 Drachma	~6,000 Denarii	~1,500 Shekels	Matt 18:24; 25:15–16, 20, 22, 24–25, 28
Tetradrachma or Stater	4 Drachma	4 Denarii/ 64 Asses	1 Shekel/ 256 Prutot	Matt 17:27
Didrachma	2 Drachma	2 Denarii/ 32 Asses	Half-Shekel/ 128 Prutot	Matt 17:24
Drachma	6 Obols	1 Denarius/ 16 Asses	64 Prutot	Luke 15:8–9
Obol	1/6 Drachma	1/6 Denarius/ 2.67 Asses	10.67 Prutot	
<b>Bronze</b>				
AE units	Various sizes with uncertain relationships to other coins			

The first Jewish ruler to mint a coin portraying a graven image was Herod I (the Great), although only one out of his twenty-two coin types has it. Apart from Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefects and procurators placed in charge of Judea minted coins that did not depict anything

<sup>24</sup> Adapted with modifications from Brennan, Turner, and Wright, *Faces of Power*, 14; Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 61–63.

<sup>25</sup> These parables do not specify whether the talents were of gold or silver, which, if specified, would not change the meaning.

offensive to the Jews.<sup>26</sup> This religious and political sensitivity was not exercised by everyone: “Herod’s son Philip and grandson Agrippa I and great-grandson Agrippa II all issued coins covered with imagery of humans and Greco-Roman gods—including their own portraits.”<sup>27</sup> Jewish leaders of the first Jewish revolt (AD 66–70) put an end to this with coins proclaiming “Jerusalem the holy” and “The Freedom of Zion.”<sup>28</sup>



**Judaea. First Jewish War.**<sup>29</sup> AD 66–70. Shekel (22mm, 13.94 g, 12h). Dated year 2 (AD 67/8). “Shekel of Israel,” Omer cup with pearly rim; date above / “Jerusalem the Holy,” sprig of three pomegranates. Meshorer 193; AJC II 8; Hendin 659; Kadman 7.

*The Jewish zealots and revolutionaries sought to present their actions as religiously motivated. During the second year of the conflict they proclaimed the holiness of Jerusalem with this coin; the scripts again utilize paleo-Hebrew to communicate Jewish nationalism and the rejection of corrupting Hellenistic influences.*

Redaction criticism is important to the study of coins mentioned in the Gospels. For example, Matt 5:25–26 calls the coin a quadrans and Luke 12:57–59 calls it a lepton. So which type of coin was it and does it matter? Each Gospel author uses the smallest denomination within different monetary systems: the smallest Judean coin is the lepton and the smallest Roman coin is the quadrans (about twice as valuable as a lepton). This would suggest that the Gospel authors were not as concerned with monetary systems as with preserving the meaning of

<sup>26</sup> Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*, 172–76, 242, 317.

<sup>27</sup> Hendin, “Current Viewpoints,” 263.

<sup>28</sup> Hendin, “Current Viewpoints,” 263.

<sup>29</sup> Photo and technical description courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. (<https://cngcoins.com>).



Christ's message and communicating it to their target audiences. This does sometimes produce difficulty in determining the exact coin that would actually have been handled or discussed by Jesus.<sup>30</sup>

### The Value of Numismatics for New Testament Studies

#### Illustrating History

The connection to a history long past is made real when an artifact from that era is in one's hand. Coins can physically "bridge the 2000-year gap between the New Testament age and our own."<sup>31</sup> Holding a lepton (the widow's mite) and feeling its small size and weight while studying Mark 12:41–44 or Luke 21:1–4 makes the passage come alive for students and teachers alike. Likewise, holding a tribute penny and contemplating Jesus's words in Mark 12:13–17 makes one wonder if perhaps Jesus himself held that very coin. Coins illustrate history by bringing it to life before our very own eyes.<sup>32</sup> This tactile and concrete engagement with history is often able to inspire and ignite historical interest and imagination in students who may not otherwise be engaged in the topic.



**Tiberius.**<sup>33</sup> AD 14–37. AR Denarius (3.76 gm). TI CAESAR DIVI AVG F AVGVS TVS, laureate head right / PONTIF MAXIM, Livia as Pax seated right holding olive branch and long scepter; ornate legs to chair. RIC I 30; BMCRE 48; RSC 16a.

<sup>30</sup> Wenkel, *Coins as Cultural Texts*, 32–33. Taylor argues that the denarius itself was relatively unused in Palestine in the early first century and the main references to it in the Gospels reflect its correspondence in value to the local currency ("The Monetary Crisis in Revelation 13:17," 582–87).

<sup>31</sup> Kreitzer, *Striking New Images*, 17.

<sup>32</sup> Kreitzer, *Striking New Images*, 17–20.

<sup>33</sup> Photo and technical description courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. (<https://cngcoins.com>).

*This Denarius is normally identified as the "tribute penny" discussed by Jesus. On the top of the obverse, Tiberius claims to be the son of the divine Augustus (DIVI AVG F) while on the back he stresses the fact that he is the greatest priest (PONTIF MAXIM). The reverse also features his mother, Livia, posing as if she were the goddess Peace (Pax). This associates the whole imperial family with the divine realm and presents the imperial family as those who bring and ensure peace. All of this was being proclaimed by this common coin around the same time that the Highest Priest, Prince of Peace, and only Son of God was walking the earth.*

#### Apologetic Value

The existence of coins from the biblical era makes an apologetic contribution. Although coins themselves do not prove any major doctrines, they do support the historical reliability of the New Testament in regard to the chronology of rulers (Herod the Great, Pontus Pilate, Agrippa, Festus, Felix, etc.) and the extent of their power.<sup>34</sup> Tertullian, in his apologetic work, referenced not only literature and philosophy but also archaeological evidence from monuments, geographical locations, and coins.<sup>35</sup>

#### Coins as Primary Sources

There are a very limited number of primary sources available to us for New Testament Studies.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, there is a wealth of information communicated by coins that can shed light on the historical background and context of the New Testament. Coins are an invaluable source for understanding "ancient economics, art, political science, history of religions, and general history."<sup>37</sup> This valuable perspective, although admittedly one-sided and coming from those in power, helps us understand more about how ancient people thought and lived. Despite the fact that coins are much more limited in their ability to communicate complex political, social, and religious dynamics than literary sources, Wenkel cogently argues that they are cultural texts which

<sup>34</sup> Kanael, "Ancient Jewish Coins," 39.

<sup>35</sup> Mark S. Burrows, "Christianity in the Roman Forum: Tertullian and the Apologetic Use of History," *VC* 42 (1988): 220.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Oster, "Numismatic Windows into the Social World of Early Christianity: A Methodological Inquiry," *JBL* 10 (1982): 220.

<sup>37</sup> Oster, "Numismatic Windows," 195.



sought to communicate something to someone.<sup>38</sup> This communicative intent greatly supplements our historical, geographical, cultural, religious, and chronological understanding of the time period. Literature often focuses on short periods of time while coins were consistently minted and have a much better survival rate than literature.<sup>39</sup> The next two sections will further illustrate how coins as primary source material expand our understanding of life in the first century.

### Understanding the First-Century World: Imperial Propaganda, Power, and Religion

Roman imperial and provincial coins are a great source for determining what religious life was like in the era of the New Testament.<sup>40</sup> The first-century world was deeply religious, and coins give us insight into the close connection of worship to politics and power.<sup>41</sup> Coins are but one expression of the extensive use of statues and images to impress upon people the reality, power, and presence of the emperor and deities. The beast of Revelation 13 with blasphemous names on its heads and which utters blasphemous things (Rev 13:1, 5) would have likely caused the original hearers to think of Roman Imperial coinage which generally featured the emperor's head surrounded, from a Christian perspective, by blasphemous claims.

Typical imperial coinage in the first century AD featured an image

<sup>38</sup> Wenkel, *Coins as Cultural Texts*, 6–7. Wenkel rightly applies speech-act theory to numismatics in order to draw attention to the intended meaning of communication behind coin production and distribution (pp. 47, 79). There was a clearly intended purpose and desired communication involved in minting coins.

<sup>39</sup> Christopher Howgego, *Ancient History from Coins* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 1997), 39.

<sup>40</sup> Oster, “Numismatic Windows,” 199.

<sup>41</sup> We are aware that our modern use of the terms “religion” or “religious” do not readily correspond to ancient worship, rituals, and practices but use these terms out of convenience and the lack of good alternative expressions. Ittai Gradel argues, “Pre-Christian *religio* was not concerned with inward, personal virtues, such as belief, but with outward behaviour and attitude; in other words, with observance rather than faith, and with action rather than feeling” (*Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002], 4). In a similar way, Wenkel notes, “Roman religion must be understood as an institution of objectivity and social cohesion, rather than contemporary (modern-day) subjective spirituality” (*Coins as Cultural Texts*, 152).

of the emperor or a family member on the obverse (front) with a picture of a deity or some image communicating accomplishment or power on the reverse. Imperial inscriptions were in Latin while provincial coins generally utilized Greek inscriptions.

Inscriptions on Imperial Roman coinage commonly feature the following abbreviations.<sup>42</sup> Several of these abbreviations describe positions which would have been held by different people for limited periods of time during the republic but were consolidated by the emperors in the first century.

**Table 4: Common Latin Abbreviations on Roman Imperial Coinage<sup>43</sup>**

SC	“Senatus Consulto”: SC was stamped on almost all Roman Imperial bronze coinage as a guarantee from the senate of the value of the coin since its value in metal was less than its purported value. Governments do this today because the intrinsic value of a dollar bill as paper is nothing—the government assures us that it is worth what it claims to be worth.
IMP	“Imperator”: This was originally a generic title for Roman commanders but by the time of Vespasian was firmly associated with the emperor, the supreme power.

<sup>42</sup> Even for the illiterate, these inscriptions served as a symbolic means of communication. Jewish coins minted with paleo-Hebrew inscriptions provide a good example. Even though Aramaic was the widespread language, an illiterate Jew presumably could recognize that Hebrew rather than Greek or Latin was portrayed on the coin. The language or script used was never neutral and there was always a clear (usually political) intention behind it. See Anne Lykke, “The Use of Language and Scripts in Ancient Jewish Coinage: An Aid in Defining the Role of the Jewish Temple Until Its Destruction in 70CE,” in *Judaea and Rome in Coins 65 BCE – 135 CE: Papers Presented at the International Conference Hosted by Spink, 13th–14th September 2010*, ed. David M. Jacobson and Nikos Kokkinos (London: Spink, 2012), 27.

<sup>43</sup> This table is drawn and adapted from Doug Smith, “Abbreviations on Roman Imperial Coins,” <https://www.forumancientcoins.com/doug-smith/abb.html>. It is adapted by consultation of Hornblower and Spawforth, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

CAES, CAE, C	“Caesar”: This is the family name of the first emperors and stresses their relationship to Julius Caesar. Later emperors used this title even though they were not directly related.
AVG	“Augustus”: Revered, worthy of veneration. Although originally a religious title, this became “the imperial title <i>par excellence</i> .” <sup>44</sup>
PM, Pont Max	“Pontifex Maximus”: This means “high priest” and indicates that the emperor was head of the state religion.
TRP, TRIB POT, P	“Tribunicia Potestas”: “Tribunician power.” This significant power was wielded by the Tribune of the Plebs.
COS, CONS, CO, C	“Consul”: This was the highest office during the time of the Republic and the office remained important under the Empire.
PP	“Pater Patriae”: “Father of the Fatherland.”
DIV, DV, DIVO, DIVI	“Divine”: On Roman Imperial coinage this was reserved for consecrated deceased rulers, but provincial coinage is not as restrained in attributing deity to living rulers. <sup>45</sup>

Coins found their most important uses in the payment of soldiers and trade, but for those in power, they were also the most effective means of mass communication available at the time.<sup>46</sup> Coins would be

<sup>44</sup> Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, eds., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 219.

<sup>45</sup> James B. Rives notes, “Among Roman citizens and in official contexts, Roman authorities made some attempt to maintain a distinction between deceased and deified emperors, who were worshipped as gods, and the living emperor, who was not; only tyrannical emperors like Caligula and Commodus demanded that they be treated as gods while alive” (*Religion in the Roman Empire* [Oxford: Blackwell, 2007], 152). Cf. Larry Kreitzer, “Apotheosis of the Roman Emperor,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 53 (1990): 211–17. On Caligula’s excess, see Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, 140–61; Anthony A. Barrett, *Caligula: The Abuse of Power*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 202.

<sup>46</sup> The wide-spread distribution of coins throughout the Empire were an effective means of propagating their imperial theology and propaganda. See David M. May, “The Empire Strikes Back: The Mark of the Beast in Revelation,” *RevExp* 106 (2009): 85–86.

seen and handled by many people in the inhabited world and although they did not provide much space to communicate, the first-century emperors put that space to good use with images and inscriptions proclaiming their identity, accomplishments, and power.<sup>47</sup> Coins also served as a means of communicating news and political developments. Kreitzer relates how coins were used in a way similar to modern day “postage stamps or press releases on the radio or TV.”<sup>48</sup> Coins provide the government the opportunity to make a statement and send a message with the intent of altering public opinion.<sup>49</sup>

Temples and statues of deities inundated the world of the first century. Although Paul would have been accustomed to seeing idols from his earlier travels, Luke notes that he was particularly troubled by how many idols filled Athens (κατείδωλον οὔσαν τὴν πόλιν; Acts 17:16). Athens, although to a greater extent than other cities, illustrates the pervasiveness of statues, idols, and images that would have characterized any city in the empire. Statues represent and, to some extent, extend the viewer’s perception of the presence of the deity. Coins functioned in a similar way. They made the image of the emperor almost omnipresent.<sup>50</sup> “Coins, like statues, give a physical face to power, sometimes realistic, sometimes idealized, not only of emperors, but also of those whose faces on coins show their importance in the physiognomy of power.”<sup>51</sup> The emperors were aware that their public image was essential to their maintenance of control and power. Minting coins was a means to proclaiming and publicizing their accomplishments and most importantly putting a face to their wealth.

The Roman government wanted to portray the Empire as a unified peaceful body that ensured prosperity and success. At times coins seem to have been minted as propaganda to cover-up “civil war, economic crisis, or tyrannical rule.”<sup>52</sup> Vespasian provides a good example of this. Just after he had been acknowledged as emperor, the Empire was under

<sup>47</sup> Christopher Howgego argues that minting coins allowed a civil authority to define their “public/official/communal identities, principally civic in nature” (“Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces,” in *Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces*, ed. Christopher Howgego, Volker Heuchert, and Andrew Burnett [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005], 1).

<sup>48</sup> Kreitzer, *Striking New Images*, 22.

<sup>49</sup> Kreitzer, *Striking New Images*, 22.

<sup>50</sup> Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 152.

<sup>51</sup> Brennan, “Faces of Power,” 7.

<sup>52</sup> Brennan, “Faces of Power,” 7.

attack along the Rhine and Danube. With such a volatile situation, the news of Titus having captured Jerusalem and suppressed the Jewish rebellion in AD 70 came just in time. Vespasian made the most of this news and had a series of Judaea Capta coins minted.<sup>53</sup> These coins were an extraordinary piece of propaganda, which communicated his power, ability to bring victory, and imperial ideology. The defeat of Jerusalem occurred almost precisely one hundred years after Antony was defeated by Octavian and this was considered to be a divine sign which was used to further support the Flavians as legitimate rulers and emperors.<sup>54</sup> Coinage often portrays the emperor as militarily victorious through the help of Nike, the god of victory. Military victory indicated divine favor.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the Judaea Capta coins do not only serve to elevate Rome and the emperor but also humiliate the Judeans and their weak God who did not save them.<sup>56</sup>



**Vespasian.**<sup>57</sup> AD 69–79. AE Sestertius (31mm, 24.13 gm). Rome mint. “Judaea Capta” issue, struck AD 71. IMP CAES VESPASIAN AVG P M TR P COS III, laureate head right / IVDAEA CAPTA, SC in exergue, mourning Judaea seated before palm, Jewish man standing right with hands bound behind back, arms around. RIC II 424; Hendin 773; Cohen 234.

*This example proclaims Rome’s victory over the rebellious Jews, and by extension,*

<sup>53</sup> Philip F. Esler, “God’s Honour and Rome’s Triumph: Response to the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE in three Jewish Apocalypses,” in *Modeling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context*, ed. Philip Esler (London: Routledge, 1995), 241.

<sup>54</sup> Esler, “God’s Honour and Rome’s Triumph,” 246.

<sup>55</sup> Brennan, “Faces of Power,” 7.

<sup>56</sup> Esler, “God’s Honour and Rome’s Triumph,” 242–43, 246.

<sup>57</sup> Photo and technical description courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. (<https://cngcoins.com>).

*their god. The image on the reverse exudes pathos. The captive man is bound and the woman is slumped forward in a position of mourning. It would be hard to overestimate the significance of the destruction of Jerusalem for Judaism and early Christianity.*

Coins from their beginning were bound up with the religion of the land. From Persian coins to Greek city coins and the earliest Roman coins, gods (Zeus, Mars, Athena, Apollo, Roma, Hercules, etc.), religious symbols (thunderbolt, eagle, tripod, etc.) and mythical divine ancestors adorned coins.<sup>58</sup> Although the eastern provincial coins mostly depicted local deities, they at times incorporated elements of the emperors and external power to signify their unity with the Empire.<sup>59</sup> “The sense of ‘belonging’ to the Roman state, a multi-cultural empire unified by political authority, central administration, and military power” is expressed clearly in provincial coins.<sup>60</sup> Provincial coins indicate that as the first century progressed the provinces increasingly incorporated the emperor into their religious world and acknowledged his “unrivalled superhuman power.”<sup>61</sup>



**Macedon, Amphipolis. Augustus.**<sup>62</sup> 27 BC–AD 14. (22mm, 9.68 g, 12h). Bare head right / Artemis Tauropolos right. RPC I 1626; SNG

<sup>58</sup> Jonathan Williams, “Religion and Roman Coins,” in *A Companion to Roman Religion*, ed. Jörg Rüpke (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 143–44.

<sup>59</sup> Howgego, “Coinage and Identity,” 2–3.

<sup>60</sup> Sophia Kremydi-Sicilianou, “‘Belonging’ to Rome, ‘Remaining’ Greek: Coinage and Identity in Roman Macedonia,” in *Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces*, ed. Christopher Howgego, Volker Heuchert, and Andrew Burnett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 101.

<sup>61</sup> Volker Heuchert, “The Chronological Development of Roman Provincial Coin Iconography,” in *Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces*, ed. Christopher Howgego, Volker Heuchert, and Andrew Burnett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 44.

<sup>62</sup> Photo and technical description courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. (<https://cngcoins.com>).

ANS 164.

*This is a provincial coin from Amphipolis (a little North West of Asia Minor) during the reign of Augustus (31 BC–AD 14). On the right side of the obverse you can make out KAISAR (Caesar) and on the left of the obverse you can see the first of two words: ΘΕΟΥ [YIOS] (son of god). The reverse is an image of the goddess Artemis riding a bull with the name of the city (Amphipolis). The coin demonstrates allegiance to Rome by proclaiming Augustus to be the son of god while still celebrating local religious beliefs by highlighting Artemis on the reverse.*

Coinage was often used in antiquity to establish a public identity, and the most predominant way of accomplishing that was through religious expression. With the polytheistic religion of Greece and Rome, some cities were permitted to mint coins depicting their local ancestral gods. However, coins only represented the majority religion and not the minority religions, such as Judaism or Christianity. Therefore, numismatics provides practically no evidence of the spread of early Christianity.<sup>63</sup>

Various deities featured on ancient coins include, but are not limited to, Zeus/Jupiter, Ares/Mars, Felicitas/Fortuna (goddesses of luck), Hera/Juno, Nike/Victory (winged goddess of victory), Apollo, Helios/Sol, Artemis/Diana, Aphrodite/Venus (goddess of love), Spes/Elpis (goddess of hope), Athena/Minerva, Aequitas/Justitia (goddesses of justice and fairness), Libertas (god of liberty), Pietas (god of piety), Demeter/Ceres/Annona (harvest deities), Asclepius, Hygeia, and Telesphorus (deities of medicine and health), Salus (goddess of health/salvation), Pax (goddess of peace), and Roma (a goddess personifying the city of Rome and the Roman state).

In addition, Roman coins depict several different religious images: sacrificial vessels, altars, temples, monuments, and objects of Roman religious practices. Temples and altars are the most commonly portrayed. The emperors minted such images to boast of their piety, devotion, and generosity expressed in building temples to the gods. These symbols also served as a way of evoking emotions of Roman loyalty, unity, and “their communities’ unique relationship with the gods.”<sup>64</sup>

### Understanding the First-Century World: Emperor Worship

The image of the emperor on coins functioned, similar to the images of deities, to proclaim and project the emperor’s presence and power throughout his empire.<sup>65</sup> Every monetary transaction in the first-

<sup>63</sup> Howgego, “Coinage and Identity,” 2.

<sup>64</sup> Williams, “Religion and Roman Coins,” 146–48.

<sup>65</sup> Wenkel, *Coins as Cultural Texts*, 152–54.

century Mediterranean world took place under the watchful gaze of the emperor through his image. He was everywhere and he was in charge. The near omnipresence of the emperor through his image continually reminded the subjects of the empire who held ultimate power.

The pairing of the image of the emperor on the obverse with an image of a deity on the reverse impressed upon every person in the empire that the emperor was associated with the divine realm: “Caesar had one foot in this world and one foot in the realm of the Greco-Roman pantheon.”<sup>66</sup> The emperor, even though not officially deified until after death, was in company and association with gods and goddesses. This close association of the emperor with the divine realm further suggested his power and authority.

The Greeks had been deifying their kings and rulers, since at least the reign of Alexander the Great (336–323 BC), often giving them a divine status. The Seleucid king Antiochus IV (175–163 BC) sought out and endorsed his own divinity, which paved the way for the Maccabean Revolt and a short period of relative Jewish independence.



**Antiochus IV Epiphanes.**<sup>67</sup> 175–164 BC. AR Tetradrachm (30mm, 16.13 g). Antioch mint. Dated SE 167 (146/5 BC; posthumous). Diadem head of Antiochos IV right / Zeus seated left, holding Nike and scepter.

*If you have studied Greek you will be able to clearly read BASILEŌS ANTIOCHES EPIPHANES (King Antioches [god] manifest/revealed). The image on the reverse shows Zeus holding the winged goddess Nike (victory) in his hand. Antioches IV famously desecrated the Jerusalem temple and claimed to be God manifest (epiphanes). He is linked by ancient Jewish sources with Daniel’s prophecy of the abomination of desolation.*

<sup>66</sup> Wenkel, *Coins as Cultural Texts*, 150.

<sup>67</sup> Photo and technical description courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. (<https://cngcoins.com>).



Although the Roman West initially frowned upon this, deification of rulers was a common practice among the Greek world. Eventually, however, the influence of the East made its way to Rome. Octavius, later called Augustus, saw an opportunity to solidify his power against Mark Antony by declaring his father divine and minting “a series of coins proclaiming his position as son of the Divine Caesar.”<sup>68</sup>

The emperor was considered to “be present in the world like one of the traditional gods.”<sup>69</sup> However, the emperor was not considered on par with the gods even though he held a position higher than mere men.<sup>70</sup> He was viewed as having the god’s special favor and was a means by which the gods blessed humanity.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, the emperor functioned as the Roman high priest, *pontifex maximus*, and was venerated and understood to be a “mediator between the gods and the human race.”<sup>72</sup>

Critics of Christianity have argued that the deification of the emperor influenced or became a model for the Christians’ deification of Jesus Christ. The Jews and Christians would have been aware of the deification of Caesar and Augustus, yet there are significant differences. The monotheistic God of the Jews and Christians is the one and only supreme being. Christ is the incarnation of God, his coming down from heaven to earth. While the deification of the emperor was a movement “of a man from earth to heaven.”<sup>73</sup> The emperor’s blasphemous claims of power and divinity would have been abhorrent to the Jews and Christians. These claims stood in direct opposition to the Christian proclamation of Jesus as God’s only Son.

As noted above, the emperors regularly sought to promote themselves by association with various gods such as Nike (Victory), Salus (Salvation/Health), Pax (Peace), and Spes (Hope).<sup>74</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Kreitzer, *Striking New Images*, 80–84.

<sup>69</sup> S. R. F. Price, “Gods and Emperors: The Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult,” *JHS* 104 (1984): 87.

<sup>70</sup> Price, “Gods and Emperors,” 87–88.

<sup>71</sup> Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 152.

<sup>72</sup> David A. deSilva, “Ruler Cult,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 1027.

<sup>73</sup> Kreitzer, *Striking New Images*, 97–98.

<sup>74</sup> Brennan, “Faces of Power,” 8–9.



**Nero.**<sup>75</sup> AD 54–68. Dupondius (30mm, 15.90 g, 7h). Struck circa AD 66. Countermarked under Vespasian in northeast Gaul, circa AD 69. IMP NERO CAESAR AVG P MAX TR POT P P P, laureate head right; globe at point of bust / VICTORIA AVGVSTI, Victory advancing left, holding wreath in outstretched right hand and palm frond over left shoulder; S C flanking. RIC I 522; WCN 524; Lyon 204; BMCRE 353–5; BN 144–5.

*Victory (νίκη, νίκη) is an important theme in the New Testament and a very common feature of Roman imperial coinage. The winged goddess features prominently on many coins. The obverse of this coin proclaims, among other things that Nero is the greatest priest (P MAX) and the father of his country (PP). The reverse clearly connects victory with the emperor (VICTORIA AVGVSTI). This coin was struck around the same time that Peter and Paul were put to death by Nero in Rome. The countermark on the front relates to the reuse of the coin by Vespasian to pay soldiers. He did not want to pay with money from Nero (a disgraced former emperor) without marking it with his seal.*



**Nero.**<sup>76</sup> AD 54–68. Denarius (3.46 gm). Struck AD 65–66. NERO

<sup>75</sup> Photo and technical description courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. (<https://cngcoins.com>).

<sup>76</sup> Photo and technical description courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. (<https://cngcoins.com>).

CAESAR AVGVSTVS, laureate head right / SALVS, Salus seated left on throne, holding patera. RIC I 60; BMCRE 90; RSC 314.

*Even as the authors of the New Testament proclaimed salvation through Jesus, the Roman emperor presented himself as the source of salvation (Salus). This was likewise minted right around the time Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome.*



**Vespasian.**<sup>77</sup> AD 69–79. Sestertius (33mm, 25.15 g, 5h). Rome mint. Struck AD 71. IMP CAES VESPAS AVG PM TR P P COS III, laureate head right / PAX AVGVSTA, Pax standing left, holding olive branch and cornucopia; S C flanking. RIC II 243.

*The emperor also often proclaimed his ability to bring peace (pax) by connecting himself with the goddess Pax, the personification of peace. Vespasian minted this shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. On the reverse he proclaims himself to be the one who brings and maintains peace in the world (PAX AVGVSTA). Coins like this connected the imperial cult with peace throughout the Empire; this is related to the well-known Pax Romana. Ironically, it was the Pax Romana that served to bring the peace of Christ to the Empire.*<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Photo and technical description courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. (<https://cngcoins.com>).

<sup>78</sup> J. E. Bowley, "Pax Romana," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 774.



**Claudius.**<sup>79</sup> AD 41–54. Sestertius (35mm, 28.72 gm, 6h). Rome mint. TI. CLAVDIVS. CAESAR. AVG. P. M. TR. P. IMP. P. P., laureate head right / SPES AVGVSTA, Spes advancing left, holding flower aloft and lifting hem of skirt; S.C in exergue. RIC I 115; BMCRE 192; Cohen 85.

*Claudius reigned during the early part of Paul's ministry and writing. With this coin Claudius proclaims that hope (Spes) is found with the emperor; a claim which directly opposed Paul's teaching that hope can only be found in the Messiah. The goddess Spes is pictured holding a flower; imagery well suited to inspire hope.*

The messages portrayed on Roman coins are in clear opposition to the Christian message. Who has ultimate power? Who is truly victorious? Who can provide peace? Who can bring us hope? Who cares for our physical needs? Who is our mediator to god? Early Christian claims about Jesus stand in stark contrast to contemporary claims made by and about the emperor.

### Starting a Pedagogical Coin Collection

Because of the durable materials and vast quantity of coins minted in the ancient world, many coins have survived to the present day. The quality of these coins varies greatly. Rare and well-preserved coins can often cost as much as \$5,000 to \$10,000 but more common coins with reasonable portraits and inscriptions can easily be acquired for \$50.00 to \$100.00.

Fakes, forgeries, and replicas circulate and are sometimes sold (whether intentionally or unintentionally) as if they were genuine so

<sup>79</sup> Photo and technical description courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. (<https://cngcoins.com>).

careful research is needed.<sup>80</sup> You will not have the knowledge or ability at the beginning stage to personally determine the genuineness of a coin so the most important guideline is to *research and know the seller*. Specialized auction houses and individual collectors invest their entire lives and careers in developing reputations for only selling genuine coins. These sellers can be reasonably trusted to only sell legitimate ancient coins because their business and reputation depends upon it. Legitimate and trusted sellers will not knowingly pass on a fake coin. This is not fool-proof since some forgeries are capable of fooling experienced numismatians, but it is a reliable guide for beginning collectors. Sometimes the provenance of a coin can be traced to a particular famous collection or to past sales at auction houses, but this historical trail is often non-existent for lower quality coins for collectors on a budget.

Several websites will prove valuable to the beginning collector.<sup>81</sup> First, Forum Ancient Coins ([www.forumancientcoins.com](http://www.forumancientcoins.com)) is an active online hub with forum posts about ancient coins by both experienced and new collectors. In addition, the site hosts a multitude of resources and information as well as hosting a consignment store and auction. VCoins ([www.vcoins.com](http://www.vcoins.com)) is a fixed price and auction online marketplace with over one hundred coin dealers from around the world. Finally, NumisBids ([www.numisbids.com](http://www.numisbids.com)) allows a user to easily and quickly search the catalogues of established global auction houses. Another option, of course, is Ebay ([ebay.com](http://ebay.com)). Many legitimate sellers list coins on Ebay and it is a good location to acquire inexpensive and low-quality coins, but Ebay is also responsible for the circulation of a large number of fakes. With Ebay in particular, it is necessary to carefully research the seller. Sellers listing on Ebay with an established business and reputation outside of Ebay will generally be more reliable.

The websites mentioned above will enable a beginning collector to acquire some initial coins while continuing to learn more about ancient coins. The next step is to think through what coins to try to acquire. Two obvious coins come to mind: the widow's mite (a lepton) mentioned in Mark 12:42; Luke 12:59; 21:2 and a denarius from the reign of Augustus or Tiberius mentioned in Jesus's dispute with the Pharisees

<sup>80</sup> David Hendin, *Not Kosher: Forgeries of Ancient Jewish and Biblical Coins* (New York: Amphora, 2005). The Forum Ancient Coins maintains up-to-date lists of online sellers of fake coins, photo galleries of fake coins, and competent daily discussions of possible fake coins: <https://www.forumancientcoins.com/board/index.php?board=9.0>.

<sup>81</sup> The authors certify that they have no personal or financial interest and no present or past employment with any of the companies or websites discussed in this article.

and Herodians in Matt 22:15–22; Mark 12:13–17; Luke 20:19–26. The lepton is the smallest coin minted in Palestine. Because of its low value (half a prutah) it was often carelessly minted and widely circulated; most surviving examples are very worn. Also, because weights were not standardized or carefully followed, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between a lepton and a worn prutah. Because of this, some sellers will market a worn prutah as a widow's mite. The denarius shown to Jesus in his famous discussion about taxes is often linked to a denarius with Tiberius's portrait, but it is also possible that it was an older one with the portrait of Augustus.

In addition to these specific coin types, a collection can be built around various themes. One could try to build a collection of each Roman emperor in the first century (Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, Nerva, Trajan), of Herodian coins (Herod the Great, Archelaus, Antipas, Agrippa I, Agrippa II), of important Roman procurators in Palestine (Valerius Gratus [AD 15–26], Pontius Pilate [AD 26–36], Marcus Antonius Felix [AD 52–60], Porcius Festus [AD 60–62]), of the Hasmonean rulers, of the Jewish revolt in 66–70 AD, of the Judaea Capta coins minted following the revolt to celebrate Rome's victory and Jewish humiliation, of coins related to emperor and empire worship, of coins with religious concepts and deities which paralleled the Christian proclamation (Pax, Salus, Dik, Nike, Spes), of the various cities mentioned in Acts or the book of Revelation, of Seleucid, Ptolemaic, or Parthian rulers associated with particular events (such as Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the abomination of desolation in 167 BC), or coins illustrating various background issues (a modius full of grain proclaiming the emperor's ability to prevent famine in contrast to the famine prophesied in Rev 6:5–6 or images of the sphinx or chimera to illustrate the kind of mythical beast that many first-century readers would have thought of based on the description in Rev 9:7–10). Pedagogically, a comprehensive collection is less important than having coins to illustrate various topics discussed often in the classroom such as emperor worship or the destruction of Jerusalem. The research and teaching interests of the individual teacher will guide the acquisition of particular coins. Lower quality examples of any of the coins featured in this article can be acquired at a reasonable cost but various details and features will likely be worn or missing.

### **Conclusion**

This article has provided a brief introduction to ancient coins relevant to biblical studies, discussed the relevance of numismatics for New Testament studies, and provided practical guidance for the acquisition and pedagogical use of ancient coins. It is hoped that this brief introduction will help increase the pedagogical use of coins in classrooms and Bible studies, and by extension, the further integration of numismatics into traditional biblical studies.



## Infinitive Tense-Form Choice: Ephesians as a Test Case

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*Verbal aspect and its involvement in the Greek verbal system has been intensely debated since Stanley Porter and Buist Fanning published their dissertations after independently researching the role verbal aspect plays in the Greek verbal system. This essay seeks to take the research done in verbal aspect studies over the past three decades and apply it to a particular test case, namely Paul's use of infinitives in Ephesians. Greek, like most languages, makes distinctions that do not directly translate well into English. Since the Greek infinitive mostly occurs in the Present and Aorist tense-forms, an author has a choice in which to use. However, the choice is not purely subjective but has contextual, lexical, and aspectual influences. This essay explores these influences and shows their exegetical significance in the book of Ephesians.*

*Key Words:* aorist tense, Ephesians, infinitive, lexical influence, present tense, procedural characteristics, verbal aspect

### Introduction

All languages make distinctions that are often not easily understandable or translatable into other languages. From Chinese resultative verb endings to the nuances of reflexive pronouns in Latin, it is important to understand a language within its own system and its own particularities rather than simply through translation. Ancient Greek is no exception. In imperatives, subjunctives, and infinitives, *Koine* Greek offers tense-form choices that are not naturally available or immediately understandable to an English speaker. For instance, the difference between the infinitives *περιπατήσαι* and *περιπατεῖν* do not generally translate with any distinction into English as can be observed in translations of Eph 4:1 and 4:17 respectively. As the beginning Greek student quickly finds out, the Greek language often makes a distinction between Present and Aorist forms of various non-indicative moods—the infinitive being the focus here.<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, the student is taught that Aorist means “once-and-for-all” and

the Present means “continually.” However, s/he soon discovers that this simple distinction does not always fit and is left wondering why a Greek author would choose one tense over the other. In *Koine* Greek, tense-form choice for infinitives was not arbitrary or fully subjective but involved lexical, contextual, and aspectual influences. An analysis of the infinitives in Ephesians will show the benefits of understanding these influences in the interpretation of Paul's letter.

### Tense-Form Influences

Since aspectual studies have recently seen a tremendous increase in scrutiny, various approaches to understanding verbal aspect will be surveyed followed by summarizing the relevant lexical and contextual factors that influence tense-form choice. These factors will primarily be discussed in their relation to the infinitive. Finally, the infinitives of Ephesians will be examined to demonstrate the fruit of this study.

### Verbal Aspect

Though verbal aspect has been studied and applied to languages ancient and modern, it did not influence New Testament studies greatly until Porter and Fanning published their seminal works on verbal aspect and New Testament Greek in 1989 and 1990 respectively.<sup>2</sup> Since that time, there has been a significant amount of discussion and debate regarding the proper understanding of verbal aspect and its relationship to *Koine* Greek. In sum, these studies attempted to overthrow the dominant view that either *Aktionsart* or time was the primary semantic meaning encoded in the Greek verbal system. Instead, they argued, verbal aspect is the primary meaning semantically encoded in the Greek verb, and other features, such as *Aktionsart* and time, were either secondary or not involved in the basic semantic meaning of the verbal system. By and large, the understanding of verbal aspect being primary in the meaning of the verb has won acceptance, but the nuances and details are still being discussed and debated to this day.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament: With Reference to Tense and Mood*, SBT 1 (New York: Peter Lang, 1989); Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*, Oxford Theological Monographs (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> As evidenced, for instance, in the 2013 SBL discussion “The Perfect Storm,” where Porter, Fanning, and Campbell debated the proper understanding of verbal aspect in the Perfect and Pluperfect tense-forms.

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this essay, I will use the convention of referring to aspects in lower case (imperfective/perfective) and tense-forms with upper case (Present/Aorist/Perfect).

Verbal aspect is largely understood as the “viewpoint” an author/speaker chooses to depict a verbal situation. The two undisputed aspects are imperfective, which views the situation internally, and perfective, which views the situation externally.<sup>4</sup> Imperfective aspect encodes the idea of viewing the situation as though it is “unfolding before the speaker/writer” without beginning or end in view.<sup>5</sup> Perfective aspect, on the other hand, views the situation externally as a whole, but without reference to its internal structure.<sup>6</sup> Oftentimes the illustration of a parade is used to depict this distinction. The spectator on the sidelines views the parade as it passes (imperfective aspect), whereas the news reporter in the helicopter views the parade as a whole seeing both the beginning and end of the action (perfective aspect). Thus, each is describing the same situation (the parade) but from different viewpoints.<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that perfective aspect does *not* mean “punctiliar” in of itself; neither does imperfective aspect equate to “progressive” or “continuous”—these are more properly understood as *Aktionsarten*.<sup>8</sup>

For the Greek infinitive, perfective aspect is realized in the Aorist tense-form and imperfective aspect is realized in the Present tense-form. The Perfect tense-form has greater diversity of views ranging from imperfective, perfective, or stative aspect. For the purpose of this paper, however, the Perfect will not be considered as it is rarely used in the infinitive and as such does not appear to have a significant influence in an author’s tense-form choice.<sup>9</sup> The perfective and imperfective aspects are considered to be in *equipollent* opposition rather than *privative* opposition, meaning that there was a positive choice for each aspect rather than one being simply unmarked while the other had a positive semantic meaning.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Bernard Comrie, *Aspect: An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems*, Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Constantine R. Campbell, *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative: Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament*, SBG 13 (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 8.

<sup>6</sup> Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 27.

<sup>7</sup> However, even though “viewpoint” is the primary metaphor that is used, there is disagreement as to whether this should be understood as a spatial metaphor or a temporal one. See Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 18–27 for a defense of a spatial metaphor.

<sup>8</sup> Campbell, *Indicative Mood*, 10–11.

<sup>9</sup> In the UBS5 there are 2291 infinitives with 49 (2%) being in the Perfect tense. One of these is in Ephesians and will be briefly discussed below.

<sup>10</sup> See Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 90; Campbell, *Indicative Mood*, 19–21.

Thus every time a Greek writer would use an infinitive, he had a mandatory choice of choosing one aspect over the other. However, it will be shown that this choice was influenced by a number of factors and was not wholly subjective.<sup>11</sup>

In Greek infinitives, imperfective aspect is created by using the Present tense-form of the verb (depicting the verbal situation internally), while perfective aspect is created by using the Aorist tense-form (depicting the situation externally). The question before us is why a writer would want to depict an infinitival action one way or the other? Stated differently, what factors were involved in an author’s choice of aspect in the infinitive? Though there is general agreement on what each aspect *is* and what tense-form encodes them, there are a variety of approaches in regards to their significance and the reasons why each aspect would be chosen in particular contexts.

Stanley Porter takes perhaps the most extreme (purist?) view of an author’s aspectual choice. For Porter the aspect choice is almost completely subjective as demonstrated in his definition of verbal aspect: “Greek verbal aspect is a synthetic semantic category (realized in the forms of verbs) used of meaningful oppositions in a network of tense systems to grammaticalize the author’s reasoned subjective choice of conception of a process.”<sup>12</sup> The key term here is “reasoned subjective choice.” In his work, Porter argues this thesis by providing examples of tense-forms that are used in a variety of temporal and aspectual circumstances to demonstrate that since tense-forms can be “contrastively substituted,” there is therefore a subjective choice in how the author desires to depict the action.<sup>13</sup>

In Porter’s discussion of verbal aspect in the non-indicative moods (particularly the imperative and infinitive), he argues that the main discourse function of the differing tense-form choices is due to the author’s desire to display prominence.<sup>14</sup> Thus, for Porter, the Present tense-form of the infinitive is more prominent than the Aorist tense-form.<sup>15</sup> So, in regards to the aim of this study, Porter would argue that the author would choose the Present tense-form when he wanted to make the action of the infinitive more prominent, and an Aorist for an action less prominent.

<sup>11</sup> Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 34, 50, 85.

<sup>12</sup> Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 88.

<sup>13</sup> Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 107. Though see Steven E. Runge, “Contrastive Substitution and the Greek Verb: Reassessing Porter’s Argument,” *NovT* 56.2 (2014): 154–73 for a challenge to this claim.

<sup>14</sup> Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 181.

<sup>15</sup> Porter argues this by demonstrating that the Present tense-form is more “morphologically” bulky and thus more prominent (*Verbal Aspect*, 178–79).

Though this position is fairly unassailable, as a defender could always argue for subjective choice, this does not seem to have the greatest explanatory power given other factors that can be shown to influence tense-form choice in actual usage.

Around the same time that Porter was working on his analysis of verbal aspect in Greek, Buist Fanning independently studied the same topic but came to some different conclusions regarding the uses of the aspects and factors that influenced an author's choice of tense-form. Though Fanning describes the semantic feature of aspect similarly (i.e., the viewpoint the author uses to depict an action), he makes it emphatically clear that aspect cannot be separated from other features in a linguistic situation and that a purely subjective choice in aspect is rare.<sup>16</sup> Thus, for Fanning, aspect is but one piece of the puzzle in making sense of an author's choice of tense-form.

In regards to infinitives, Fanning argues that aspectual distinction is primary with each aspect functioning in one of three ways depending on lexeme and context. Imperfective infinitives (Present) will likely be simultaneous/progressive with the main verb, customary/gnomic, or conative.<sup>17</sup> Perfective infinitives (Aorist) will most likely be ingressive, consummative, or constative. Additionally, Fanning remarks upon some unusual aspect-usage in the infinitive particularly regarding certain infinitival constructions (e.g., purpose infinitives) that seem to prefer one aspect over the other.<sup>18</sup> These particularities will be discussed further in the section regarding context below.

Following Porter and Fanning, Campbell published two works that set forth a slightly different model of understanding verbal aspect in *Koine* Greek. For Campbell the crucial understanding of aspect is that it encodes a spatial metaphor of viewpoint and that, as a semantic category, it cannot be cancelled.<sup>19</sup> The Aorist infinitive encodes perfective aspect and is metaphorically more "remote"; whereas the Present infinitive is imperfective in aspect and is more "proximate."<sup>20</sup> Further, he argues that this understanding has the greatest power of explanation when analyzing the usage of the aspects in Greek literature. For Campbell, though tense-form

<sup>16</sup> Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 34, 50, 85.

<sup>17</sup> Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 390–95.

<sup>18</sup> Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 398.

<sup>19</sup> Constantine R. Campbell, *Verbal Aspect and Non-Indicative Verbs: Further Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament*, SBG 15 (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 19.

<sup>20</sup> Campbell, *Verbal Aspect and Non-Indicative Verbs*, 119.

choice is not purely subjective, the semantic reality of aspect cannot be cancelled.<sup>21</sup>

Concerning infinitives, Campbell states that the "aspectual functions of the infinitive are more difficult to ascertain than those of other parts of the Greek verbal system."<sup>22</sup> Certain infinitive tense-forms occur based on the varied constructions they are found in. Although Fanning argues that some of these are "beyond explanation,"<sup>23</sup> Campbell argues that they are due to the "appropriateness of such forms with regard to aspect."<sup>24</sup> In this way, verbal aspect makes a meaningful distinction between the Present and Aorist infinitive in all constructions.

Though there is wide agreement on the definition of verbal aspect, there is still varied understanding of its application and function in context. Porter views aspect choice as subjective whereas both Fanning and Campbell acknowledge that there are other influencing factors, though this is stated more strongly by Fanning. In regard to the infinitive, verbal aspect plays a factor in how the author wishes to portray the verbal situation, but it is not the only factor as will be discussed below.

### Lexical Influence

Contra to Porter, others have argued that the tense-form a writer chooses is influenced by the lexical nature of the verb. Some verbs, such as εἶναι, are lexically *determined*, which means that they have no alternate form available and thus provide no meaningful opposition. Other verbs can exert lexical *influence* on the aspect chosen as it is more naturally expressed by one aspect over the other. Vendler's taxonomy is often used to discuss the procedural characteristics, or lexical aspect, of verbs which can then be used to analyze the verb's influence on tense-form choice.<sup>25</sup> Vendler's taxonomy outlines classes of verbs as seen in the table below.

<sup>21</sup> Campbell, *Verbal Aspect and Non-Indicative Verbs*, 7.

<sup>22</sup> Campbell, *Verbal Aspect and Non-Indicative Verbs*, 101.

<sup>23</sup> Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 399.

<sup>24</sup> Campbell, *Verbal Aspect and Non-Indicative Verbs*, 101.

<sup>25</sup> Christopher J. Thomson, "What Is Aspect? Contrasting Definitions in General Linguistics and New Testament Studies," in *The Greek Verb Revisited: A Fresh Approach for Biblical Exegesis*, ed. Stephen E. Runge and Christopher J. Fresch (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 48–49. These are not technically categories of verbs, but rather the "verb constellation," which includes its arguments. For convenience, when referring to the procedural characteristics of a verb, the verbal constellation will be implied unless it causes a noteworthy change. Fanning comments extensively on the influence of these factors, though he classifies achievements as climaxes or punctuals (*Verbal Aspect*, 129).

Procedural Characteristics			
Atelic		Telic	
State	Activity	Accomplishment	Achievement

Verbs can be classified first by whether they are atelic or telic. Atelic verbs have no natural terminus and include stative verbs (e.g., love, believe, know, etc.) and activity verbs (e.g., run, work, etc.). These classes of verbs will be expressed more naturally by imperfective aspect (i.e., Present tense-form) as it naturally depicts an action without endpoints in view. Telic verbs are those that do have a natural terminus and are thus considered “bounded” and include accomplishments (e.g., find, create, learn, etc.) and achievements, which are instantaneous in nature (e.g., hit, shut, take, etc.). These are more naturally expressed by perfective aspect (i.e., Aorist tense-form) as it has the endpoints of an action in view. Thus, atelic verbs—especially in non-indicative moods where temporal considerations are minimal—will have a greater propensity toward imperfective aspect, and telic verbs toward perfective aspect.<sup>26</sup> This is because imperfective aspect naturally denotes an action that is unbounded and not brought to a terminus whereas perfective aspect will naturally denote an action that is bounded and has come (or will come) to a natural end.

Determining the procedural characteristic of verbs can be messy and imprecise at times. Thompson notes that there is still a good deal of work to be done in accurately identifying the semantic properties of Greek verbs.<sup>27</sup> Even though there is still no consensus on precisely determining the procedural characteristic of Greek verbs, or verb constellations, it is still a helpful heuristic in thinking through the lexical influence of verbs on aspectual choice.<sup>28</sup>

In his discussion on this topic, Fanning argues that “fully subjective choices between aspects are not common, since the nature of the action

or the procedural character of the verb or verb-phrase can restrict the way an action is viewed by a speaker.”<sup>29</sup> Fanning explicates the implications of this by showing how the aspects in Greek are affected by the procedural characteristics, or inherent meaning, of the verb. Wallace makes similar observations and states, “Often a choice of tense is made for a speaker by the action he is describing.”<sup>30</sup> Merkle further demonstrates this lexical influence in his work on imperatives and convincingly argues that lexical meaning can have a significant impact on tense-form choice.<sup>31</sup> Porter, however, writes, “Tense usage is not dependent upon lexis, otherwise there is no accounting for the number of different tense forms in Greek that may be used with the same lexical item within the same temporal contexts.”<sup>32</sup> The evidence in favor of lexical influence, however, seems to be stronger and provides greater explanatory power.

Comrie notes that the importance of the telic/atelic distinction is that it can greatly limit the semantic range of verbs when combined with verbal aspect.<sup>33</sup> For our purposes, it is argued that the reverse is also the case; namely, that the inherent meaning of the verb will be most naturally expressed with one aspect or the other. Building on Fanning and contra to Porter, Baugh makes a strong argument for “default” forms particularly in non-indicative verbs.<sup>34</sup> Merkle puts forth additional research when analyzing verb forms in the imperative mood showing that Greek authors would generally comply with convention when choosing the tense of the imperative and thus, if they do, an interpreter should not overemphasize

<sup>29</sup> Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 85.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 504.

<sup>31</sup> Benjamin L. Merkle, “Verbal Aspect and Imperatives: Ephesians as a Test Case,” in *New Testament Philology: Essays in Honor of David Alan Black*, ed. Melton Bennett Winstead (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018), 34–51.

<sup>32</sup> Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 87. Thomson rebuts this position by stating, “[Porter’s] reasoning suffers from the flaw that it is based on the statistical co-occurrence of aspects with particular lexemes, without regard to the constraints on the types of situations (or more precisely, conceptualizations of situations) that can be expressed by those combinations” (“What Is Aspect,” 69).

<sup>33</sup> Comrie, *Aspect*, 46.

<sup>34</sup> Steven M. Baugh, “Introduction to Greek Tense Form Choice in the Non-Indicative Moods,” Unpublished Paper (California: Westminster Seminary, 2009), 7.

<sup>26</sup> Benjamin L. Merkle, “The Abused Aspect: Neglecting the Influence of a Verb’s Lexical Meaning on Tense-Form Choice,” *BBR* 26.1 (2016): 68.

<sup>27</sup> Thompson, “What Is Aspect,” 50.

<sup>28</sup> A way forward for some verbs, however, would be to see if they greatly prefer one aspect or another in a mood like the imperative as it has the fewest additional factors affecting its choice. Thus, if a verb has a great propensity toward one tense-form rather than another, this would be a strong indication of the class of verb it belongs to, at least in determining telicity. Additionally, even though English glosses should not be the primary means to determine procedural characteristics, the conceptual idea of the actions can form an initial hypothesis and prove helpful. Both of these methods were used in defining the procedural characteristics for verbs given below.

the aspect choice.<sup>35</sup> These conclusions will be applied and tested in our analysis of infinitives in Ephesians.

### Contextual Influence

There are many contextual factors that can influence a writer's tense-form choice. Many have recognized the influence of general versus specific commands that can influence the aspect choice of an imperative. In particular, general commands are normally in the Present tense whereas specific commands are normally in the Aorist tense.<sup>36</sup> For infinitives the situation is more complex. In particular, there are many syntactical constructions that tend to heavily impact the author's choice of tense with infinitives. As Stork argues, "One of the most important contextual features that are relevant in the case of the dynamic infinitive, is *the construction of which the dynamic infinitive is a part*."<sup>37</sup> The following is a table with infinitive constructions that display a great degree of preference for one tense-form over the other.<sup>38</sup>

Syntactical Construction Influence on the Infinitive			
Construction	Head Word	Present	Aorist
Complementary	δύναμαι	57	154
Complementary	μέλλω	84	7
Complementary	ὀφείλω	19	6
Object of Preposition	ἐν	44	12
Object of Preposition	διὰ	24	1
Object of Preposition	μετά	0	14

<sup>35</sup> Merkle, "The Abused Aspect." See also Michael Aubrey, "Greek Prohibitions," in *The Greek Verb Revisited: A Fresh Approach for Biblical Exegesis*, ed. Stephen E. Runge and Christopher J. Fresch (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 486–538, who shows the influence of negation in the tense-form choice of prohibitions.

<sup>36</sup> BDF, §335. Also see Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 327–40.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Stork, *The Aspectual Usage of the Dynamic Infinitive in Herodotus* (Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis, 1982), 38–39 (emphasis original).

<sup>38</sup> These data are taken from Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 398 and catalog the aspect-frequency in some uses of the infinitive in the New Testament.

Purpose Infinitive	<i>Simple anarthrous</i>	34	184
Result Infinitive	ὥστε	40	23

Some of these idiosyncrasies are fairly easily explained while others have no obvious reason for preferring one tense-form over the other. The infinitives that are the objects of the prepositions listed are normally temporal in nature and thus conform to the expected tense functions of the aspects.<sup>39</sup> The others, however, have no easy explanation for preferring one tense over the other and seem to be just a matter of convention and usage for the Greek author. Baugh mentions that an author who went outside of this expected norm would be making a "grammatical *faux pas*" or indicating some aspectual nuance.<sup>40</sup>

Other contextual factors include infinitives that are a part of indirect discourse, those that are exegetical, and those that are simply the direct object or subject of the main verb. Infinitives in indirect discourse would generally preserve the tense-form that would occur in the direct speech that is reported.<sup>41</sup> As a sub-set of indirect discourse, infinitives that produce indirect commands will need to be analyzed in relationship to the imperative that would otherwise be stated.<sup>42</sup> The other contextual factors seem to be neutral in their influence of tense-form and thus will be analyzed on the basis of lexical and aspectual influence.

### Analysis in Ephesians

In Ephesians there are thirty infinitives: eleven are Present, eighteen are Aorist, and one is Perfect. Some of these, however, are lexically determined: three of the Presents are εἶναι and the one Perfect is εἰδέναι. Since these verbs do not offer an author a meaningful opposition in tense-form choice they will not be included in our study.<sup>43</sup> So, of the verbs that are not lexically determined, eight are Present and eighteen are Aorist. Since contextual factors play such a strong role in influencing tense-form choice, the analysis of these verbs will be grouped by contextual categories.

<sup>39</sup> Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 399–401.

<sup>40</sup> Baugh, "Tense Form Choice," 20.

<sup>41</sup> Ernest D. Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1892), 51.

<sup>42</sup> Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 382.

<sup>43</sup> Porter labels these as aspectually vague (*Verbal Aspect*, 442–47), though Campbell makes the claim that they are suppletive and thus retain their aspectual distinction (*Indicative Mood*, 27–28).

## Complementary Constructions

Ephesians includes a total of nine complementary infinitives. Most of these infinitives are in constructions in which the head verb greatly favors one tense-form over another for its complementary infinitive. Thus, we will analyze these based on their head verb. The table below shows all the complementary infinitives in Ephesians organized in this manner.

Complementary Infinitives in Ephesians				
Eph	Head Verb	Infinitive	Tense	Procedural Characteristic
3:4	δύναμαι	νοῦσαι	Aorist	Atelic: State
3:20	δύναμαι	ποιῆσαι	Aorist	Atelic: Activity
6:11	δύναμαι	στῆναι	Aorist	Telic: Accomplishment
6:13	δύναμαι	ἀντιστῆναι	Aorist	Atelic: Activity
6:13	δύναμαι	στῆναι	Aorist	Telic: Accomplishment
6:16	δύναμαι	σβέσαι	Aorist	Telic: Achievement
3:18	ἐξισχύω	καταλαβέσθαι	Aorist	Telic: Achievement
3:19	ἐξισχύω	γινῶναι	Aorist	Atelic: State
5:28	ὀφείλω	ἀγαπᾶν	Present	Atelic: Activity

Δύναμαι is the head noun for six of the nine complementary infinitives. All of these occur in the Aorist which, as shown before, is expected after the verb δύναμαι.<sup>44</sup> Even though half of the situations depicted by these infinitives are atelic—lexically preferring the Present—the complementary construction holds a stronger influence. Thus, the aspectual distinction of these infinitives is minimized and should not be over interpreted or emphasized.

In Eph 3:18–19, Paul employs two Aorist infinitives (καταλαβέσθαι and γινῶναι) with ἐξισχύω as their head verb. Since ἐξισχύω is a NT *hapax*, there is very little data for ἐξισχύω and what kind of infinitive it might prefer. However, it occurs one other time in the LXX (Sir 7:6) and there it is also followed by an Aorist infinitive. Additionally, since ἐξισχύω is semantically related to δύναμαι (both are verbs of ability), it seems best to

infer that there is a syntactic predisposition for ἐξισχύω to take an Aorist infinitive. Lexically, καταλαβέσθαι is telic while γινῶναι is atelic. Thus, while καταλαβέσθαι might lexically prefer the Aorist and γινῶναι the Present, it appears that the complementary construction provides the basis for the Aorist tense-form choice.

One final complementary infinitive, ἀγαπᾶν, has ὀφείλω as its head noun. This occurs in Eph 5:28 and is expected both lexically and contextually. As demonstrated above, ὀφείλω greatly prefers the Present tense and thus this usage follows the typical convention. Though husbands should indeed love their wives continually, there is nothing surprising about ἀγαπᾶν being in the Present tense that should form the basis of this action being *grammatically* emphasized as progressive or continuous. The tense is simply working in concert with the atelic nature of the lexeme and the natural understanding of the complementary construction.

It is not all together clear why these trends seem to hold with certain complementary infinitive constructions. As Fanning remarks, “Several of the idiosyncrasies shown . . . appear to be beyond explanation—at least there is no obvious reason to explain the predominance of aorist or present in some of these uses.”<sup>45</sup> A tentative explanation is that there was something in the mind of the Greek author in which the aspectual identity of the infinitive conceptually fit well with the head verb even if only realized subconsciously.<sup>46</sup>

## Indirect Discourse

Infinitives in indirect discourse often require more factors to be considered in trying to determine why an author would choose one tense-form over another because they often function as reported speech and thus mimic the tense that would have been in the direct speech. In Ephesians, however, all the indirect discourse infinitives seem to function as indirect commands. As shown in the table below, there are six infinitives functioning as indirect commands in Ephesians. These will need to be analyzed with a bit more scrutiny as they are subordinate with indicative verbs but together form an utterance that is hortatory in nature. Thus, an understanding of the role of verbal aspect with imperatives and an analysis of the head verb with the infinitive will need to be considered. Fanning

<sup>45</sup> Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 399.

<sup>46</sup> Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*. Stork, however, provides additional conclusions but they have such diversity that it is only moderately helpful (*Dynamic Infinitive*, 346–47).

<sup>44</sup> See the chart in the section regarding contextual influences above.



notes that this form of command “has the same range of modal forces as the direct forms . . . and is merely a stylistic variation rather than a reflection of true ‘reported speech.’”<sup>47</sup> Thus, these infinitives will be analyzed similar to imperatives.

Infinitives of Indirect Discourse in Ephesians			
Eph	Infinitive	Tense	Procedural Characteristic
3:13	ἐγκακεῖν	Present	Atelic: State
4:1	περιπατῆσαι	Aorist	Atelic: Activity
4:17	περιπατεῖν	Present	Atelic: Activity
4:22	ἀποθέσθαι	Aorist	Telic: Achievement
4:23	ἀνανεοῦσθαι	Present	Atelic: Activity
4:24	ἐνδύσασθαι	Aorist	Telic: Achievement

In Eph 3:13 Paul is completing a parenthetical section on his calling and ministry to the Gentiles and asks that the Ephesian believers not be discouraged by his affliction for them: διὸ αἰτοῦμαι μὴ ἐγκακεῖν ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσίν μου ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν. Thus, ἐγκακεῖν is in a hortatory construction and functions as an indirect command. Since this verb is lexically atelic, it is natural for it to assume a Present tense-form and is not “marked” in any way.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the argument concerning lexical influence seems to hold here.

The next two infinitives will be grouped together as they create an opposition of tense even though they are the same verb. The first, περιπατῆσαι (4:1), is an Aorist infinitive, while περιπατεῖν (4:17) is Present and occurs just seventeen verses later. Περιπατῆσαι is the complement of παρακαλῶ and begins a parenthetical section of Ephesians that draws out the practical implications of what has already been discussed in the first three chapters. Lexically, περιπατῆσαι is atelic as demonstrated by the fact that all fourteen occurrences of this verb in the imperative mood are Present. Additionally, Present imperatives are typically found in general exhortations, of which Eph 4 is an example. In light of these considerations and the fact that παρακαλῶ seems to have no preference for being followed by an infinitive of one tense-form or the other,<sup>49</sup> it seems that an aspectual distinction is superseding other factors and should be

<sup>47</sup> Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 382.

<sup>48</sup> Baugh, *Tense Form Choice*, 18.

<sup>49</sup> In the NT, when παρακαλῶ is used in a hortatory sense and followed by an infinitive, seven of those infinitives are Aorist while six are Present.

commented on. Hoehner mentions that it should be taken ingressively as is typical of Aorist imperatives/infinitives of stative verbs.<sup>50</sup> The context of the passage, however, contains a general exhortation and does not seem to support this interpretation. Simpson describes it as constative and being reported in “summary fashion.”<sup>51</sup> Fanning comments, “A departure of the normal pattern of general vs. specific makes the command insistent and urgent.”<sup>52</sup> At the very least, an understanding of verbal aspect makes it clear that this command is being “marked” in some way. Given the context of the passage, it may be that Paul is using the non-typical form to highlight the transition from explanation to exhortation.

In Eph 4:17 περιπατεῖν occurs as a Present infinitive as an imperative indirect statement with μαρτύρομαι as its head verb. As an atelic verb this is typical of the pattern generally encountered. Additionally, it fits in with a section giving general exhortation. Unlike its Aorist counterpart in 4:1, a special emphasis should not be concluded from the aspect chosen for this verb.

The remaining three infinitives in indirect command are sequenced together in Eph 4:22–24 with ἐδιδάχθητε as their head verb.<sup>53</sup> Our first infinitive, ἀποθέσθαι, is an Aorist telic verb, which is lexically expected. Thus, it would be incorrect to emphasize a completed nature of the action such as, “you were taught to *once-and-for-all* take off the old self” based on the tense-form of the infinitive. Neither would it be best to understand this as a specific, rather than a general, exhortation.<sup>54</sup> The final verb is of a similar nature. Ἐνδύσασθαι should not be construed as a command to “once-and-for-all” put on the new self no more than Jesus’s command in Luke 9:23 should be understood as denying one’s self once-for-all and

<sup>50</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 504.

<sup>51</sup> Benjamin I. Simpson, *Translating Ephesians Clause by Clause: An Exegetical Guide*, EBooks for Translating the New Testament (Leesburg, IN: Cyber-Center for Biblical Studies, 2014), 111.

<sup>52</sup> Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 381.

<sup>53</sup> Although there is debate on the nature of these three infinitives, it seems best to conclude that they function as indirect commands. For a survey of opinions along with a defense of the current position, see Benjamin L. Merkle, *Ephesians*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 142–43.

<sup>54</sup> Campbell argues that the primary pragmatic implicature of Aorist commands is one of specific rather than general command, not necessarily punctiliar or immediate (*Non-Indicative Moods*, 84). See also Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 325–88.

taking up one's cross once-for-all.<sup>55</sup> These telic actions are naturally expressed with perfective aspect and the author conforms to the expected norm of using perfective aspect with telic verbs.

The infinitive between these two, *ἀνανεοῦσθαι*, is a Present atelic verb. Thus, it also conforms to the expected tense-form given its lexical nature. It is a natural outworking of the imperfective aspect to depict actions that have natural process such as *ἀνανεοῦσθαι*. All these commands—taking off the old self, renewing the mind, and putting on the new self—are not stressing different kinds of action but simply conforming to expected conventions of usage based on lexical influence. All are likely to be understood as general commands that should be done throughout a believer's life.

### Purpose Infinitives

Anarthrous infinitives that function to show purpose are overwhelmingly found to be Aorist. In the New Testament there are 184 in the Aorist and thirty-four in the Present.<sup>56</sup> The table below shows the breakdown of the five purpose infinitives in Ephesians.

Purpose Infinitives in Ephesians			
Eph	Infinitive	Tense	Procedural Characteristic
3:8	εὐαγγελίσασθαι	Aorist	Atelic: Activity
3:9	φωτίσαι	Aorist	Telic: Accomplishment
4:28	μεταδιδόναι	Present	Telic: Achievement
6:11	δύνασθαι	Present	Atelic: State
6:19	γνωρίσαι	Aorist	Telic: Accomplishment

Three out of the five of these infinitives conform to the expected form based on their construction as purpose infinitives. The first two parallel each other and are giving a summary statement concerning the purpose of Paul's ministry. Although verbs of speaking, such as *εὐαγγελίσασθαι*, are atelic in nature, the purpose construction usually takes an Aorist and so the author conforms to this convention in Eph 3:8. Following *εὐαγγελίσασθαι*, *φωτίσαι* is also in the Aorist, which is expected both in construction and its procedural characteristic. In Eph 6:19, *γνωρίσαι* also conforms to convention both from its lexical nature and the influence of the purpose construction.

<sup>55</sup> Merkle, "Abused Aspect," 65.

<sup>56</sup> As given by Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, 398.

One that does not conform to the expected Aorist is *δύνασθαι* in Eph 6:11. This particular lexeme is always found as a Present in the NT when it is in its infinitive form (8x) and only once is it an Aorist in the LXX, which seems due to temporal considerations.<sup>57</sup> It is likely that the idea of being able to do something was so inherently imperfective that it would be strange to a Greek's ears to hear this verb otherwise.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the strong lexical nature of the verb and the naturalness of expressing it with imperfective aspect overcome the typical pattern of the purpose construction.

The final purpose infinitive that does not conform to expected convention is *μεταδιδόναι*, which is found in Eph 4:28 where Paul is encouraging thieves to no longer steal but work hard to give to those who have need. Both the purpose construction and the procedural characteristic of this verb should influence it toward being an Aorist. The imperfective aspect of the Present is used, which shows that the author is stressing an aspectual distinction. As a verb that denotes achievement (punctiliar), the imperfective aspect is likely being used to stress the iterative nature of giving to those in need.

### Other Infinitive Constructions

The remaining infinitives include those that function as subjects, as direct objects, and exegetically. These constructions do not show any preference toward one aspect or the other. They are given in the table below and will be analyzed based on congruence with their procedural characteristic.

Other Infinitives in Ephesians				
Eph	Infinitive	Function	Tense	Procedural Characteristic
1:10	ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι	Exegetical	Aorist	Telic: Accomplishment
3:16	κραταιωθῆναι	Direct Object	Aorist	Atelic: Activity
3:17	κατοικῆσαι	Direct Object	Aorist	Atelic: State
5:12	λέγειν	Exegetical	Present	Atelic: Activity
6:20	λαλῆσαι	Subject	Aorist	Atelic: Activity

<sup>57</sup> In the LXX *δύναμαι* is found eleven times in the Present infinitive and is only Aorist in 4 Macc 11:25. Other *Koine* Greek writers employ the Aorist infinitive of *δύναμαι* but it is still overwhelmingly found in the Present.

<sup>58</sup> Similar perhaps to how English speakers will rarely put a stative verb in an imperfective form whereas other languages, like Latin, might do so commonly.



The two epexegetical uses conform to what would be expected given the procedural characteristic of the verb and so the aspectual distinction of the tense-form should not be unduly emphasized. The two that function as direct objects occur together in Paul's prayer at the end of Eph 3. These two infinitives are the content of what Paul is requesting that God grant them, namely to be strengthened with power and that Christ may dwell in their hearts. Conceptually these infinitives function similar to the way many imperatives do in prayers to a deity. Since it is well attested that the Aorist is used for these kinds of imperatives,<sup>59</sup> it seems best to understand the context of a prayer to be the main influence in determining the tense form of these two verbs. Finally, the tense-form of the infinitive in Eph 6:20, *λαλῆσαι*, appears to be aspectually motivated, meaning that Paul is not so concerned about the continuation of the speaking action but rather that speaking simply happens and that it happens well.

### Conclusion

The factors that influence an author's infinitive tense-form choice are the following in order of importance: lexical determination, contextual factors, lexical influence, and aspectual distinction. Outside of a verb being lexically determined, typically the author will conform his choice of aspect (i.e., Aorist = perfective; Present = imperfective) based first on the contextual factors and syntactical constructions. Of those infinitives that are not in such constructions, the procedural characteristic of the lexeme is the primary factor that influences an author's tense-form choice. This should be expected as telic actions are naturally depicted with perfective aspect and atelic actions are naturally depicted with imperfective aspect.<sup>60</sup> Thus, aspect is not so much negated but working in concert with the nature of the verb. Finally, there are times when an author breaks from the norm to highlight an aspectual distinction such as communicating that giving to those in need should be a customary action throughout one's life (Eph 4:28).

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<sup>59</sup> Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 347–50.

<sup>60</sup> This is most clear in situations that are not temporally influenced, such as in most non-indicative verbs.

## An Uneasy Ecclesiology: Carl F. H. Henry's Doctrine of the Church

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*This article evaluates Carl F. H. Henry's ecclesiology and argues that he highlighted regenerate church membership and mission while he downplayed the local aspects of the church (such as polity and the ordinances). The accent of Henry's ecclesiology was always placed over the wide swath of churches in the Reformation tradition, rather than a particular stream located therein. This was due to Henry's unique historical context and calling. This article both affirms and expands upon Russell Moore's previous work on the topic. The strengths of Henry's approach lie in the value of a unified evangelical voice in the face of encroaching secularism. The weaknesses lie in the neglect of denominational riches and the possible minimization of God's ordained vehicle for Christian discipleship: the local church.*

*Key Words:* Baptist, Carl F. H. Henry, ecclesiology, evangelicalism, Holy Spirit, mission, ordinances, regenerate church membership, unity

### Introduction

One of evangelicalism's greatest minds broke a cardinal rule of pastoral ministry: remove names slowly from the church's membership rolls. But Carl F. H. Henry, as the new pastor of Humboldt Park Baptist Church, refused to wait. In a November 11, 1940 letter sent to select members of the church body, Henry stated:

Forget for a moment that I am the new pastor. Let's look at some of the fine things about Humboldt Park Church. We have a splendid building, with ample room. Then, there is a growing atmosphere of worship and friendliness. Of course we are not perfect, but the church spirit is good, and visitors feel as welcome and as much at home as we members do.

We have an increasingly loyal and faithful membership that gives willingly of its time for the Lord's work. The membership list was carefully reviewed during the past week and nineteen names were removed. I am happy to say that the church desires you to continue in fellowship. It will be good in the coming weeks to find you in the heart of the

work with us. Mrs. Henry and I are eager to know you better, too.<sup>1</sup>

About two weeks prior, however, other members received a different note from Henry's desk:

The other day the Humboldt Park members voted on the church's membership list. The deacons, as all good deacons do, recommended the dropping of certain names, deceased members, those who had moved to distant address and no longer kept up their church interests, and also members now living in the area of church influence but who had not attended during the past year or more. . . . Your name was on this list.<sup>2</sup>

He concluded by urging the recipient to join the church for worship and alert them of their intentions in remaining a member. He finished with the reminder that he was always available for spiritual counsel.

Of course, Henry would go on from his early pastorate to become neo-evangelicalism's chief theological voice.<sup>3</sup> However, despite his early pastoral experience and impressive career output, Henry has been critiqued for neglecting ecclesiology. Russell Moore coined Henry "the quintessential parachurch academic" and wondered if he "even had an ecclesiology, and, if so, whether there was anything distinctively Baptist about it."<sup>4</sup> Gregory Thornbury thinks Henry "placed too much confidence in big-event and big-organization evangelicalism and could have benefited from thinking more organically and ecclesially."<sup>5</sup> James Leo Garrett agrees that Henry neglected ecclesiology.<sup>6</sup> Albert Mohler, who counts

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<sup>1</sup> Carl F. H. Henry to Humboldt Park Baptist Church, 11 November 1940, Box 1940–1941, Folder "Humboldt Park Baptist Church," Carl F. H. Henry Papers, Roling Library, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois.

<sup>2</sup> Carl F. H. Henry to Humboldt Park Baptist Church, 30 October 1940, Box 1940–1941, Folder "Humboldt Park Baptist Church," Carl F. H. Henry Papers, Roling Library, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois.

<sup>3</sup> For an excellent treatment of neo-evangelicalism, see Owen Strachan, *Awakening the Evangelical Mind: An Intellectual History of the Neo-Evangelical Movement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015). For more on Henry, see R. Albert Mohler, "Carl F. H. Henry," in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, ed. Timothy George and David Dockery (Nashville: B&H, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Russell Moore, "God, Revelation, and Community: Ecclesiology and Baptist Identity in the Thought of Carl F. H. Henry," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 8.4 (Winter 2004): 27.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory Thornbury, *Recovering Classic Evangelicalism: Applying the Wisdom and Vision of Carl F. H. Henry* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 23.

<sup>6</sup> James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon: Mercer

Henry as a theological mentor and friend, believes that “the most glaring omission in his theological project is the doctrine of the church.”<sup>7</sup>

To circle back to Russell Moore’s question: Did Henry have an ecclesiology? This article will argue that yes, he did, and will concur with (and seek to build upon) Moore’s conclusion in his excellent “God, Revelation, and Community: Ecclesiology and Baptist Identity in the Thought of Carl F. H. Henry”:

The theological foundations for the universal—or “invisible” (as it is, unfortunately, often called)—church were established in Henry’s thought at the most basic levels. What was missing was theological specificity on some of the things that make a church a church—the ordinances, membership, church government, and so forth. It is not debatable that these issues were often intentionally minimized to maintain unity within an evangelical movement seeking to take on Protestant liberalism, separatist fundamentalism, and cultural nihilism.<sup>8</sup>

In affirming Moore’s conclusion, this article will also expand upon his findings by exploring unpublished data from Henry’s archival material, and by utilizing a wider range from his overall catalog. Specifically, the article will evaluate Henry’s ecclesiological thought and demonstrate that he emphasized the areas of regenerate church membership and mission while he deemphasized the *local* aspects of the church—areas like polity and the ordinances. Further, it will show that Henry’s ecclesiology was calibrated precisely for his unique historical context and theological program (a point Moore notes as well). Henry’s ecclesiology can be referred to as *uneasy* because the neo-evangelical movement was consciously hesitant to prioritize ecclesiological distinctives in order to include a broad range of denominational allies. He did not avoid addressing ecclesiology, but when he did it was always with an ecumenical tone. One hears this in his urging fellow evangelicals to “make ecclesiology a *chief item* of theological concern in order to fully manifest what it means to be Christ’s *one church*.”<sup>9</sup> Ecclesiology was important, but the local was often overshadowed by the universal—Christ’s *one church*.

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University Press, 2009), 519.

<sup>7</sup> Mohler, “Carl F. H. Henry,” 292.

<sup>8</sup> Moore, “God, Revelation, and Community,” 33.

<sup>9</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1984), 34 (emphasis added).

### Baptist Convictions, Broader Commitments

Before defending the article’s thesis, it is important to note Henry’s own ecclesiological ties. Carl F. H. Henry was a Baptist. He credited the interdenominational climate at Wheaton College as a primary reason he was forced to wrestle with and coalesce his views of baptism and church membership. Specifically, as he studied Scripture and conversed with professors and other Christian leaders, Henry adopted baptistic views.<sup>10</sup> As noted above, his first (and only) pastorate was at Humboldt Park Baptist Church in Chicago.<sup>11</sup> His ordination was encouraged by the Chicago Baptist Association, which was affiliated with the Northern Baptist Convention. In correspondence regarding teaching duties at his alma mater, Henry expressed to one administrator that he desired “to see the systematics course at Wheaton in the hands of a Baptist.”<sup>12</sup> Toward the end of his public ministry, in 1987, the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference recognized Henry’s contributions to theology from a Baptist perspective.<sup>13</sup>

While Henry was a decided Baptist, “his most critical involvements have been outside denominational life.”<sup>14</sup> Henry’s Baptist views were convictional but not cliquish. Rather, his ministry was targeted at a wide, trans-denominational evangelicalism that embraced conservative Christians from a variety of traditions. He sought to engage those who may disagree on second-tier issues in order to establish a unified and theologically informed evangelical voice. He was willing to “go to the wall to defend” such non-negotiables as Scripture and Christology in a way he was not willing to do with ecclesiology.<sup>15</sup> Further, although he excelled at articulating the goals of a broad evangelicalism, he struggled to coalesce these into the local church context. Because of this, his ecclesiology was designed for cruising altitude; he was less focused on the taxi of week-to-week local church life.

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<sup>10</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, “Twenty Years a Baptist,” *Foundations* 1 (January 1958): 46–47.

<sup>11</sup> Mohler, “Carl F. H. Henry,” 292.

<sup>12</sup> Carl F. H. Henry to Merrill Tenney, 18 March 1946, Collection 628, Box 3, Folder 18, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

<sup>13</sup> Mohler, “Carl F. H. Henry,” 293.

<sup>14</sup> Mohler, “Carl F. H. Henry,” 292.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Mouw, “Toward a Full-Orbed Evangelical Ethic,” in *Essential Evangelicalism: The Enduring Influence of Carl F. H. Henry*, ed. Matthew J. Hall and Owen Strachan (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 52.

With Henry's ecclesiological situation addressed, this article will now turn to a defense of the thesis: that Carl Henry emphasized the areas of regenerate church membership and mission while he deemphasized the *local* aspects of the church.

### The Citizens of the New Society: Regenerate Church Membership

As Bob Patterson remarks, "Evangelicals are a particularly 'scrappy' people, and Henry has always been in the middle of the war."<sup>16</sup> One of Henry's consistent battles was with liberal church traditions that superseded soteriology with ethics:

Insofar as the professing Church is unregenerate and hence a stranger to the power of true love, it should surprise no one that it conceives its mission to be the Christianizing of the world rather than the evangelizing of mankind, and that it relies on other than supernatural dynamic for its mission in the world.<sup>17</sup>

Henry clashed with a Protestant liberalism that "had replaced a regenerate church over which the resurrected Messiah ruled as Head with a largely unregenerate visible church."<sup>18</sup> He understood the church to be more than an organization simply designed to dissolve worldly ills. Rather, it was a redeemed society made of twice-born men and women who claimed allegiance to Christ and his mission (John 3:1–21). While Henry routinely critiqued this liberal Protestant view of the church as only a means for social transformation, he was equally critical of the Fundamentalist tendency toward an underdeveloped ecclesiology:

Neglect of the doctrine of the Church, except in defining separation as a special area of concern, proved to be another vulnerable feature of the fundamentalist forces. This failure to elaborate the biblical doctrine of the Church comprehensively and convincingly not only contributes to the fragmenting spirit of the movement but actually hands the initiative to the ecumenical enterprise in defining the nature and relations of the churches.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Bob Patterson, *Carl F. H. Henry, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1983), 169.

<sup>17</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *The God Who Shows Himself* (Waco: Word, 1966), 15.

<sup>18</sup> Russell Moore, "The Kingdom of God in the Social Ethics of Carl F. H. Henry: A Twenty-First Century Evangelical Reappraisal," *JETS* 55 (2012): 390.

<sup>19</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *Evangelical Responsibility in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 35.

In articulating the nature of the church and the necessity of regenerate church membership, Henry often employed vocabulary stressing the *new*. For Henry, "the fellowship of the believers is to be the new community."<sup>20</sup> This new community does not float through the world aimlessly but rather fulfills her unique call from God:

The church thus ministers in the world as a servant for Christ's sake and bears a good conscience in view of its calling. Its task is not to force new structure upon society at large, but to be the new society, to exemplify in its own ranks the way and will of God.<sup>21</sup>

Henry directly related the concept of the *new man* to the *new society*. Recalling Paul's logical thread in Rom 10:14–15, Henry wondered, "How can a new social order be built without new men? How shall there be new men unless they are born again? How shall they be born again until they come to a personal and saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ? How shall they come to such a relationship unless they hear the Gospel?"<sup>22</sup> When one experiences the new birth they are ushered into a new social order, a new community, a new people—the local church. This "new society lives in the larger world as a colony of heaven obedient to the crucified and living Lord."<sup>23</sup> Indeed, "when Christianity discusses the new society, it speaks not of some intangible future reality whose specific features it cannot as yet identify, but of the regenerate church called to live by the standards of the coming King."<sup>24</sup> This new family is based not on human blood lines but on redemption, "the blood of unity in the cross."<sup>25</sup>

In terms of the *specific* duties and responsibilities of church membership, Henry said little. He did, however, address the lax and careless lives many members lived. A new society should be markedly different from the fallen world around it, and Henry routinely chastised the mindset that membership did not entail holiness. He sensed that a "credibility gap"

<sup>20</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 6 vols. (Wheaton: Crossway, 1999), 4:530. Hereafter *GRA*.

<sup>21</sup> Henry, *GRA*, 4:530.

<sup>22</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, "What Is the Way to a New Society?" *Christianity Today* (November 26, 1956): 23.

<sup>23</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, "The Church in the World or the World in the Church?" *JETS* 34 (September 1991): 381.

<sup>24</sup> Henry, *GRA*, 4:522.

<sup>25</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, "John," in *The Biblical Expositor*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Philadelphia: A.J. Holman, 1960), 3:181.

existed in many churches between what members preached versus how they spoke and interacted in the community at large.<sup>26</sup> Henry was convinced that if a church entertains ungodliness among her ranks, her effectiveness will be severely hamstrung:

Never is the church more effective . . . than when she provides a living example in her own ranks of what new life in Christ implies, and never is she more impotent than when she imposes new standards on the world that she herself neglects.<sup>27</sup>

He also noted that:

While, however, the Christian community is not guilty of *the sin* against the Holy Spirit, it is guilty of *sins* against the Holy Spirit. This explains why the Church, the organism of believers, is such an impotent and peripheral force in the world today.<sup>28</sup>

Because of the danger in failing to uphold biblical standards among members of the new society, Henry was an advocate of biblical church discipline. He saw “clear biblical precedent for the discipline of true believers who, falling into gross sin, thereby invite excommunication.”<sup>29</sup>

What Henry did emphasize, on the positive side, were the spiritual benefits that come with being a member of the body. In speaking with college students about the importance of local church membership, Henry noted that “there are vital spiritual lessons which the Christian can learn only in constant fellowship with those of believing faith.”<sup>30</sup> He harkened back to the early church to demonstrate that being a member of the Christian community was “a life and death decision,” a far cry from the modern sense of membership.<sup>31</sup> If members are to fulfill their responsibilities to one another and to the Great Commission, they need routine encouragement and edification, which can only be experienced as a functioning member of the body.

### The Life of the New Society: The Holy Spirit

In tandem with his thoughts on the need for a *holy* church, Carl Henry

<sup>26</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, “The Spirit of Pentecost: Will a Powerless Church Recover Its God-Given Soul?” *Christianity Today* (April 14, 1967): 29.

<sup>27</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *A Plea for Evangelical Demonstration* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971), 67.

<sup>28</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957), 470.

<sup>29</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, “The Perils of Independency,” *Christianity Today* (November 12, 1956): 20.

<sup>30</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *Giving a Reason for Our Hope* (Boston: W.A. Wilde Company, 1949), 95.

<sup>31</sup> Henry, *Giving a Reason for Our Hope*, 95.

insisted upon the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit for a *healthy* church. He was adamant that the role of the Holy Spirit cannot be ignored in achieving a biblical ecclesiology.

In demonstrating the connection between pneumatology and ecclesiology, Henry often utilized the example of the early church. For Henry, too many churches are like Christ’s disciples in the interim between his ascension and Pentecost: a group of believers who have heard the echoes of a doctrine but have yet to experience true spiritual power. The Spirit’s outpouring was the life-giving breath necessary for the church to come alive:

Without the power of the Holy Spirit, nothing of value was accomplished in the primitive Church. And it is certain that without the illumination, renewal, and liberation made possible by the Holy Spirit, nothing of spiritual value will be accomplished in the Church of Jesus Christ in our time.<sup>32</sup>

Henry thought that “many Christian churches have too long obscured the Holy Spirit’s person and work, and that recovery of the doctrine and reality of the Spirit by the community of faith is spiritually imperative.”<sup>33</sup> The impetus for this recovery lies in the fact that “to neglect the doctrine of the Spirit’s work—inspiration, illumination, regeneration, indwelling, sanctification, guidance—nurtures a confused and disabled church.”<sup>34</sup> Though undeveloped in certain areas, Henry’s ecclesiology nonetheless carries a pneumatological shape. He advocated that churches “resist and reject [a] stifling of the Holy Spirit” and insisted they “preserve ‘breathing room’ for him.”<sup>35</sup> Indeed, any church that neglects or excludes the Spirit of God “cannot fully claim to be Christian.”<sup>36</sup>

### A Mark of the New Society: Unity

Finally, one key mark of the new society that Henry stressed was that of unity. As mentioned, Henry was always working toward a unified evangelical voice in the face of encroaching secularism and naturalism. Drawing on Matt 16:18 and John 17:11, Henry claimed that “every appeal to

<sup>32</sup> Henry, “The Spirit of Pentecost,” 28.

<sup>33</sup> Henry, *GR4*, 6:370–71.

<sup>34</sup> Henry, *GR4*, 4:272.

<sup>35</sup> Henry, *GR4*, 4:275.

<sup>36</sup> Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics*, 442.

an inerrant Bible should humiliate us before the inerrant Christ's insistence on the unity of his church."<sup>37</sup> He worried that a fractured evangelicalism would devolve into intramural quarreling with little energy left to engage a disintegrating world. Still, he cautioned ecumenically-minded evangelicals to guard against "the defects of the ecumenical establishment."<sup>38</sup> However, he chastised those who disdained any unified advance: "Does merely rejecting or absolving oneself of an ecumenical institutional badge justify the lack of evangelical interrelationships and of coordinated fellowship?"<sup>39</sup> Again, Henry's plea for unity was often articulated in macro-language:

There is one God, one Christ, one Spirit. Faith into God means spiritual unity. There is thus one Bride, one Body. The members differ, whether in terms of individuals or churches. . . . But all are members of a Body which cannot but be one. There is one Word, one Baptism, one Cup. Externals may vary. The one Word may go forth in different tongues, the one Baptism or Cup may be administered under different rules of order. Even the one faith or doctrine may be expressed with some difference of formulation. Yet the Word of God is one and invariable. The Baptism and Cup of the Lord are the same. The One in whom faith is set never alters. Here in God, in the Word and work of God, is an unassailable basis of given unity. Here the people of God have to be one, whether they are prepared for it or not.<sup>40</sup>

Still, despite usually speaking of unity in terms of the universal church, Henry also recognized the importance of unity inside local churches, as evidenced by one 1940 pastoral letter he wrote: "I sometimes call it 'my church' but in point of fact, it is not mine alone; it belongs to both you and me. It is ours because it is Christ's. . . . Since, then, it is not my church but our church, we must work together. We are partners in the greatest enterprise on earth and co-laborers with God. I wish you might realize how dependent I am upon your active support, your regular presence at the services, and your prayers."<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Henry, *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society*, 32.

<sup>38</sup> Henry, *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society*, 31.

<sup>39</sup> Henry, *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society*, 32.

<sup>40</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, "A Plea for Evangelical Unity," *Christianity Today* (March 13, 1961): 24.

<sup>41</sup> Carl F. H. Henry to Humboldt Park Baptist Church, 18 November 1940.

Carl F. H. Henry believed the church to be "a transnational, transcultural, transracial community of regenerate sinners who as the people of God are shaped by the Scriptural revelation and seek to obey Christ Jesus in word and life."<sup>42</sup> But what did he understand the church to *do*? Certainly, "to obey Christ Jesus in word and life." But what does this call entail? For Henry, it meant the church should be engaged in Christian mission.

### The Call of the New Society: Mission

Carl Henry desperately wanted to see a surge of spiritual regeneration sweep the nation and the world at large. And while Henry's life was devoted to such ministries as education and publishing, he knew these would not be the epicenter of revival:

The local church—right where you are—is a crucial link in fulfilling this task. Parachurch movements have made an amazing impact in our time, largely because major denominations have neglected or have been unable to fulfill vital aspects of their mission. But revival has almost always begun in the local church, not in parachurch movements or in denominational headquarters. Renewal of the local congregation is vitally important for the evangelistic task.<sup>43</sup>

Henry understood the local church's mission to be grouped into two distinct yet related categories: evangelism and social responsibility.

### "A Passion to Turn the World Upside Down": Evangelism

Carl Henry cannot be accused of having a truncated vision. Indeed, "part of what made Carl Henry an indispensable evangelical was his relentless ambition . . . [it] was driven by a sense of urgency mixed with opportunity."<sup>44</sup> His urgency was demonstrated in his bold call for evangelism to radiate from the local church. The opportunity to do so was now:

If evangelical Christianity offers a richness of life not for sale in the Secular City, if it heralds a hope that can warm the coldest

<sup>42</sup> Henry, "The Church in the World or the World in the Church?," 381.

<sup>43</sup> Henry, *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society*, 52.

<sup>44</sup> R. Albert Mohler, "The Indispensable Evangelical: Carl F. H. Henry and Evangelical Ambition in the Twentieth Century," in Hall and Strachan, *Essential Evangelicalism*, 37.

heart, if it guarantees a future that can surpass the prospect of a sojourn on the moon, if it can open the modern soul once again to the transcendent world, if its revelation of God can demonstrate the power and joy of new life in the spirit then now—*now*—is the time to trumpet the good news.<sup>45</sup>

Local churches could not miss this opportunity for evangelism; God had called them into their particular geographical location for this very reason. As members of the new society lived in their homes, neighborhoods, and workplaces, Henry understood them to be walking ambassadors looking for opportunities to bear witness to their sovereign King (2 Cor 5:20).

According to Henry, “Every method of not evangelizing is wrong. Some methods surely are better than others, some more appropriate than others in different circumstances. Even from a timid gulp in an emotion-streaked testimony God can still get glory.”<sup>46</sup> Whatever evangelistic tool is utilized, “the best method is, always has been, and always will be person-to-person evangelism.”<sup>47</sup>

Henry understood the church’s preaching, teaching, and outreach efforts to be tethered to this call for personal redemption through Christ. The church was not a brick-and-mortar bunker in which to hide from the perils of the world. Jesus commands his followers to live differently: “If the example of Jesus is any criterion at all for us, we ought not linger unduly in the pious isolation of the temple, but rather go out and speak out to the worst and best of unregenerate men concerning new life in Christ.”<sup>48</sup> For Henry, “a Christianity without a passion to turn the world upside down is not reflective of apostolic Christianity.”<sup>49</sup> His plea was that local churches would turn the world upside down by trumpeting the gospel message to all who could hear. Churches must “never relinquish this primary responsibility.”<sup>50</sup>

Henry himself demonstrated a commitment to personal evangelism. As a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, “Carl Henry provided the most striking example of the faculty’s simultaneous deep commitment to

<sup>45</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *New Strides of Faith* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 24.

<sup>46</sup> Henry, *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society*, 50.

<sup>47</sup> Henry, *The Christian Mindset in a Secular Society*, 51.

<sup>48</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *Evangelicals at the Brink of Crisis* (Waco: Word, 1967), 51.

<sup>49</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947, 2003), 16.

<sup>50</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, “Will American Baptists De-escalate or Advance Evangelism?” *Christianity Today* (April 14, 1967): 31.

evangelism and to scholarship. Though a leader in reforming fundamentalism, he always remained a true revivalist at heart.”<sup>51</sup> One student recalled that Henry would occasionally arrive late to a Saturday morning seminar. He appeared “bedraggled in an old baggy overcoat. Later the class learned that he would periodically spend half the night out in Los Angeles witnessing to derelicts and helping them find shelter.”<sup>52</sup>

### “The Modern Priest and Levite”: Social Responsibility

Henry’s 1947 *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* was a plea for Fundamentalists to repent of their aloofness to the social needs around them. He feared that in his day, conservative Christian churches had become “the modern priest and Levite, by-passing suffering humanity.”<sup>53</sup> One of the key reasons Henry stressed social responsibility for the local church was the relationship he saw between ecclesiology and eschatology, particularly with reference to the Kingdom of God.<sup>54</sup> In summarizing Henry’s “Kingdom ecclesiology,” Russell Moore argues that Henry saw local churches to be “inherently eschatological and soteriological.”<sup>55</sup> The church, in her proper place in the unfolding Kingdom, does not bear the sword of the state nor the power of legislation. However, she is called to be a balm to societal ills. Because Henry saw the church as the “closest approximation of the Kingdom of God today,” he thought her focus should include that with which God is concerned, including suffering, oppression, and hunger.<sup>56</sup> Christ’s call to make disciples cannot be divorced from an interest in social responsibility: “We should realize that the Great Commission is dwarfed and even maligned if one implies that God is blindly tolerant of social and structural evil, that he forgives sinners independently of a concern for justice.”<sup>57</sup> The evangel had a public dimension, and Henry refused to let it be lost in the twentieth century’s

<sup>51</sup> George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 91.

<sup>52</sup> Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 91.

<sup>53</sup> Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, 2.

<sup>54</sup> For a thorough treatment of this subject, see Moore, “The Kingdom of God in the Social Ethics of Carl F. H. Henry.”

<sup>55</sup> Moore, “The Kingdom of God in the Social Ethics of Carl F. H. Henry,” 396.

<sup>56</sup> Henry, *The God Who Shows Himself*, 89. His Fourteenth Thesis in *GRA* rings with similar terminology: “The church approximates God’s kingdom in miniature” (Henry, *GRA*, 4:542).

<sup>57</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, “A Summons to Justice,” *Christianity Today* (July 20, 1992):

obsession with individualism.

While Henry clearly affirmed the church's role in engaging societal needs, he never diminished the primacy of gospel proclamation. He guarded evangelicals from using the political process as a battering ram against cultural mores. In his autobiography, as he evaluated the state of evangelicalism in the mid-1980s, Henry rhetorically asked, "Will not Christians be disillusioned and in fact discredited if by political means they seek to achieve goals that the Church should ideally advance by preaching and evangelism?"<sup>58</sup> Gospel proclamation, not political efforts, held the power to see lost men and women drawn into the new community through the new birth. He warned that "the new society must not allow democratic political participation to cancel the new society's duty to transcend her own walls and to proclaim in public the claim of divine revelation upon both the Church and the world."<sup>59</sup> Though political and cultural engagement were important, Henry understood that neither were the power of God unto salvation. This dynamic power was a reality reserved for the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:16).

### Henry's Deemphasizing of the *Local*-ness of the Church

This article has argued that Carl F. H. Henry's ecclesiology emphasized regenerate church membership and mission. At this point, it will turn to the second portion of the thesis: that Henry deemphasized the *local* aspects of the church. As mentioned, a key reason for this was Henry's unique agenda. Nonetheless, as a Baptist, it is striking how little attention Henry gives to Baptist distinctives. Arguing that Henry deemphasized these distinctives is not to say that he ignored them altogether. He held the conviction "that Baptist distinctives are valid, and that the Baptist mission in the closing decades of the twentieth century is extraordinarily urgent."<sup>60</sup> Still, in discussing specific ecclesiological points, Henry remained vague. Throughout his 3,000-page *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Henry only makes passing reference to the ordinances and their place in Baptist ecclesiology. Neither does he fully address polity or church leadership. Henry's goal in *GRA* is to argue for the validity of propositional revelation, so one cannot critique him for failing to elaborate these points.

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<sup>58</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian* (Waco: Word Books, 1986), 394.

<sup>59</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, "Reflections on the Kingdom of God," *JETS* 35 (March 1992): 48.

<sup>60</sup> Henry, "Twenty Years a Baptist," 54.

Nonetheless, it is fair to say that while Henry often affirmed the need for Baptist distinctives, his attention to them throughout his catalog is sparse. Indeed, according to Russell Moore, "Baptists will find a more thorough treatment of baptism in the writings of Karl Barth than in those of Carl Henry."<sup>61</sup>

To say that Henry did not focus on the nature or work of the local church is not to say that he said *nothing* about the local church. To the contrary, he addressed the importance of preaching and the biblical role of the pastor in numerous ways. In one unpublished sermon entitled "The Work of the Ministry," Henry reminded budding ministers that "those who surmise that preaching has had its day do not know what they say. Gospel preaching is here to stay."<sup>62</sup> Though not known as an esteemed orator, Henry routinely received letters of thanks regarding his preaching ministry. One pastor told Henry, "The impact of your ministry is still being felt in our church and the community. . . . You also made a significant impact upon the uncommitted people in our congregation. From time to time your statements are quoted in discussions and committee deliberations. The evangelism thrust of our congregation has taken on a new dynamic."<sup>63</sup> Further, Henry saw much of his teaching duties to be preparatory work for local church leaders. In his archival papers, Henry left a handwritten presentation entitled "Charge to the Pastor" that he delivered at installation services.<sup>64</sup> Much of his correspondence is focused on answering theological questions from local church pastors and recommending helpful resources for their ministries.

Still, despite some attention to preaching and pastoral ministry in local congregations, Henry provided no sustained theological reflection upon the ordinances, the biblical case for church membership, qualifications for church elders, or church government. The careful, detailed treatments

<sup>61</sup> Moore, "God, Revelation, and Community," 34.

<sup>62</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, "The Work of the Ministry," Unprocessed Box, Carl F. H. Henry Papers, Roling Library, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois.

<sup>63</sup> Rev. O. William Cooper to Carl F. H. Henry, 30 November 1978, Box 1978 [Box 1], Folder "Correspondence – Churches, Pastors, and Chaplains," Carl F. H. Henry Papers, Roling Library, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois.

<sup>64</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, "Charge to the Pastor," Box 1946–1947, Folder "Charge to the Pastor—Note Cards," Carl F. H. Henry Papers, Roling Library, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois.



that characterized so much of Henry's work are absent in the area of ecclesiological distinctives. Perhaps this is because his co-laborers and guest contributors at *Christianity Today* shared differing views on the subject; for example, at various times he utilized such voices as Geoffrey Bromiley (Anglican), Roger Nicole (Baptist), and James Boice (Presbyterian). He linked arms with these and others because of their commitment to the truthfulness of God's word, not because they advanced a particular ecclesiological agenda. This vision limited Henry's willingness to underscore ecclesiological nuances to the same extent that others have. He was content to refer to the "evangelical church" in the singular, "not referring to any particular denomination but to all conservative Protestants committed to the formal and material principles of the Reformation."<sup>65</sup> His accent was always placed on the broad swath of churches in the Reformation tradition rather than on a single stream located therein.

### Ecclesiological Lessons from Carl F. H. Henry

What can contemporary evangelicals glean from Henry's approach to ecclesiology? First, local church purity matters. Without a regenerate body, the church's mission to a lost world will be hampered. Indeed, as demonstrated in this article, Henry connected Christian ethics with Christian mission: the new society (with a new ethic) was called out into the world yet must remain distinct from the world. If the local body was impure, her voice in the world would suffer. Henry believed that ecclesiological purity begins with regenerate members who "keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal 5:25).

Second, there are appropriate times to traverse ecclesiastical boundaries for Kingdom causes. Henry was a model at this. On a number of issues, complementarians can cooperate with egalitarians, Baptists can collaborate with Presbyterians, and continuationists can coordinate with cessationists. Of course, issues surrounding ordination, ordinances, church membership, and church practice require clear boundaries through church covenants, bylaws, and statements of faith. But on social issues or issues central to the gospel, these groups can champion one another. Henry did not want to lose the good that could come from cooperation at the expense of ecclesiological quarreling.

Finally, there are also weaknesses in Henry's approach. Nathan Hatch, while appreciative of Henry's contributions, also reminds evangelicals that

<sup>65</sup> Timothy George, "Evangelicals and Others," *First Things* (February 2006): 19.

minimizing ecclesiological distinctives runs the risk of cutting evangelicals off from the "riches" of their denominational traditions.<sup>66</sup> Broad evangelicalism is at its best when it fosters a passion for the Great Commission among various denominations, while also acknowledging that spiritual formation is designed to ultimately take place within biblical local churches. Those who, like Carl F. H. Henry, champion a wide, trans-denominational evangelical voice must be careful not to see local churches as an impediment to Christian growth, but rather the incubator in which God designed Christian growth to flourish. More attention to local bodies and local spiritual formation will provide the sustainability necessary for broad gospel movements, like Henry's neo-evangelicalism, to survive longer than mere decades. Henry's soaring, universal ecclesiology would have benefited from more explicit connection to the local church.

### Conclusion: The Ecclesiological Air-Traffic Controller

This article has argued that Carl F. H. Henry emphasized the areas of regenerate church membership and mission while he deemphasized the *local* aspects of the church. This is due to his specific goal of uniting the evangelical voice in post-WWII America. He aimed to equip believers to better combat deviant theologies that were infiltrating evangelical denominations and churches. Therefore, the vast majority of Henry's efforts were spent on areas that were being undermined by neo-orthodoxy and liberal Protestantism—the doctrine of God, Scripture, and Christology.

However, that is not to say that Henry ignored ecclesiology entirely. His ecclesiological uneasiness was to be found in his hesitancy to champion one ecclesial tradition over and against another, not because he devalued local churches or found them irrelevant. To the contrary, he hoped to see local churches thrive. His 1943 *Successful Church Publicity* attempted to help local churches better permeate their communities using avenues such as television, newspaper, and the radio. Later, while he served at *Christianity Today* in Washington D.C., Henry would spend his week interacting with world-renowned theologians, and then on Sunday morning would walk two miles east to teach Sunday School at Capitol Hill Baptist Church.<sup>67</sup> As demonstrated above, much of Henry's ministry was focused on serving local church pastors through teaching, preaching, mentoring, and encouragement.

<sup>66</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, "Response to Carl F. H. Henry," in *Evangelical Affirmations*, ed. Kenneth Kantzer and Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1990), 99.

<sup>67</sup> See <https://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/about-us/our-history/>.

Carl F. H. Henry understood local church leaders to be akin to theological and pastoral mechanics—individuals who adjusted, tweaked, and serviced the airplane on the ground. Their important work allowed the airplane to function as designed. They were responsible to decide what exactly needed to be in place for the vehicle to operate according to their understanding of the biblical blueprints. He left ecclesiological distinctives to them. He saw himself in the role of air traffic controller: helping churches navigate foggy theological skies and ensuring evangelicals of various airlines did not collide mid-air. His role was not more important nor more prestigious; it was simply different. In this, his ecclesiology was calibrated for cruising altitude, where the church soared as a regenerate body of believers who lived on mission.

Carl F. H. Henry concluded his November 11, 1940, pastoral letter to his new congregation with this encouragement: “Isn’t it true in the church, as sometimes at home, that we fail to realize fully the wealth that is ours, and so too often our richest blessings are passed by lightly? When you stop to think of it, don’t you think we can be just a bit proud of our church—and show it?”<sup>68</sup> Over fifty years later, Henry remained confident, hopeful, and proud of what churches could achieve. In his 1992 address at the Southern Baptist Convention, he reminded his fellow Baptists that it was local churches in local neighborhoods from whence true revival would ultimately emerge:

The way to shape an evangelical counter-culture is not simply to march on Washington, to get involved in the political process at the precinct level, to descend en masse on congressional offices, to engage in public confrontation that the media delight to cover, or to launch boycotts. All such efforts have their indispensable place and time, but they do not nurture a deeply rooted counter-culture. It must rise instead in the churches, in the prayer meetings, in members turning out by the hundreds and thousands and tens of thousands seeking renewal, in so many cars suddenly parked near a local church that the world once again becomes curious about what is taking place in those forsaken sanctuaries, and gives new credence to the rumor that God is alive in the history of our times.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Carl F. H. Henry to Humboldt Park Baptist Church, 11 November 1940.

<sup>69</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, “The Uneasy Conscience 45 Years Later: The Spiritual Predicament,” *Vital Speeches of the Day* 58 (May 1992): 480.

## An Epistemically-Focused Interpretation of C. S. Lewis's Moral Argument in *Mere Christianity* and an Assessment of Its Apologetic Force

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*C. S. Lewis's moral argument in Mere Christianity is rightly lauded as an influential contribution to moral apologetics. Yet its structure, which Lewis never formalizes, is often misunderstood. I will first defend an interpretation of Lewis's argument that views it as centering on moral epistemology. Although moral ontology plays a key role in his argument insofar as it affirms the reality of objective morality and a transcendent communicator of the moral law, many wrongly view it as making the further ontological claim that God must ground objective morality. I emphasize how Lewis's primary aim is to show that a mind-like Guide is needed for humans to know the moral law. My other key objective is to evaluate the apologetic effectiveness of this understanding of the argument. Although I will show how he could have strengthened his argument—and his conclusion, which stops short of arguing for classical theism—in significant ways, I will contend that Lewis does offer a sound argument that carries much apologetic force.*

*Key Words:* C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, moral apologetics, moral argument, moral epistemology, moral ontology

C. S. Lewis begins *Mere Christianity* with a five-chapter moral argument. Of all the moral arguments for God's existence that have been put forward in the history of philosophy, Gregory Bassham asserts that Lewis's is "probably the most famous and influential ever offered."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, C. Stephen Evans describes it as the "most widely-convincing apologetic argument of the twentieth century."<sup>2</sup> Despite Lewis's argument rightly being held in such high regard, it is often misinterpreted; moreover, it stops short of arguing that classical theism is true. While it is clear that Lewis

aims for his moral argument to undermine a materialistic view of the universe and to point the reader in the direction of theism, the argument's conclusion is an intentionally modest—but still valuable—one: that a mind-like Guide exists and has communicated an objective moral law to humanity.

This essay aims to achieve two primary objectives. First, I offer an interpretation of Lewis's moral argument. I contend that his goal is chiefly to show that a mind-like Guide that transcends humanity exists, and I make the case that both epistemological and ontological moral evidences are key to Lewis reaching this conclusion. To achieve this objective, I will first note a common way of understanding Lewis's argument: the view that it claims that God is necessary for—or, at least, is the best explanation for—grounding objective morality. A different construction of Lewis's argument will then be laid out and defended—one that centers largely on moral epistemology and draws upon Christopher Shrock's recent work, though it departs from his interpretation at certain points. My other key objective for the paper is to evaluate the apologetic effectiveness of this understanding of Lewis's argument. I will conclude that Lewis offers a sound argument that makes some contribution toward increasing the plausibility of theistic belief, though he could have strengthened the conclusion of his argument in various ways. I will contend that he should have concluded that the Guide who communicates the moral law is personal. Moreover, he sets the stage in the first three chapters of *Mere Christianity* for making the case that God is necessary (or, at least, is the best explanation) for grounding objective moral values and duties and for making sense of moral accountability and guilt; however, he does not complete these arguments to make a theistic case that fully leverages these moral phenomena.

### Interpreting Lewis's Argument

Lewis wrote *Mere Christianity* to be understood by a popular audience; indeed, it was initially read as a series of BBC radio talks. While there is significant depth and insight to the moral argument that he presents in Book One of *Mere Christianity*, the book lacks the precision and rigor that it no doubt would have had if Lewis were writing specifically for a scholarly audience. Moreover, the precise construction of the argument must be teased out from what Lewis writes, as he never provides a formalized statement of the argument that specifically identifies his premises and how they support his conclusion. In seeking to provide such a construction, I will first consider briefly one common way of interpreting Lewis that understands him to be focusing on what best explains the foundation

<sup>1</sup> Gregory Bassham, "Introduction: Oxford's Bonny Apologist," in *C. S. Lewis's Christian Apologetics: Pro and Con*, ed. Gregory Bassham (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 19.

<sup>2</sup> C. Stephen Evans, "Moral Arguments," in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Philip Quinn and Charles Taliaferro (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999), 347.

for the existence of the moral law. I will then offer an alternative interpretation of Lewis's argument.

Erik Wielenberg, a prominent critic of Lewis's moral argument, is an instructive example of a philosopher who interprets the argument as aiming primarily at showing that God is needed to ground moral ontology (i.e., God is needed to justify the existence of objective moral values and duties). Though Wielenberg is a critic, this interpretation of Lewis is common among both proponents and critics of the argument.<sup>3</sup> Wielenberg holds that "Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*, maintains that God is good *and* is the ultimate source of objective rightness and wrongness," and he considers this claim to be "at the heart of Lewis's analysis" in this particular argument.<sup>4</sup> So Wielenberg thinks the core of the argument is to show that God is needed to serve as an adequate foundation for the existence of objective morality. Indeed, Wielenberg understands Lewis's argument to conceive of God himself as "the Good" and to equate God with the moral law. Given this interpretation of Lewis, the entire direction of Wielenberg's evaluation of the success of Lewis's argument centers upon whether God is plausibly necessary to ground objective moral ontology. He thus proceeds to attack Robert Adams's well-known position that God is the Good since he perceives Lewis's argument to be making the same sort of claim as Adams. He also tries to show that, even if atheism is true, there can still be necessary moral truths that stand alone as brute facts so that, contrary to what he believes Lewis is arguing, God is not needed for objective moral ontology.<sup>5</sup> In order for Lewis's argument to succeed, Wielenberg claims that it "must" show that the best explanation of both human moral knowledge (moral epistemology) and also "the reality of objective, universal ethical truths" (moral ontology) is the "existence of the God of classical theism."<sup>6</sup> I believe that Wielenberg's interpretation of Lewis is flawed, and thus his critique of the effectiveness of

<sup>3</sup> For example, in the following debate concerning the merits of Lewis's argument, all parties agree that the focus of the argument is on showing that God is needed to provide an adequate foundation for moral ontology. See "Part Three: The Moral Argument" (chapters 9–12) of Gregory Bassham, ed., *C. S. Lewis's Christian Apologetics*.

<sup>4</sup> Erik J. Wielenberg, *God and the Reach of Reason: C. S. Lewis, David Hume, and Bertrand Russell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 65.

<sup>5</sup> Erik J. Wielenberg, "Con: A Critique of the Moral Argument," in *C. S. Lewis's Christian Apologetics*, 141–51.

<sup>6</sup> Erik J. Wielenberg, "Reply to David Baggett," in *C. S. Lewis's Christian Apologetics*, 168–69.

the argument is wrongheaded. While moral ontology plays a role in Lewis's argument, consideration of what might ground moral ontology is absent from the argument.

In contrast to the above interpretation, Christopher Shrock is closer to understanding Lewis correctly when he contends that the focus of Lewis's argument is on "human knowledge of and belief in the moral law" and that justifying God as the best explanation for morality's existence is not the goal of Lewis's argument.<sup>7</sup> In this particular argument Lewis does not directly address what might serve as the *source or ground* of objective morality; rather, his focus is on the source of *its communication* to humans. That is, Lewis is largely making a point about moral epistemology (how we come to know moral truths), and he is not trying to claim that God is needed to ground moral ontology. Moreover, contra Wielenberg, Shrock recognizes that Lewis's argument does not aim to conclude that "the God of classical theism" exists. Lewis's more modest aim is merely to show that a mind-like Being, which may not even be personal, exists. Let us now formalize an interpretation of Lewis's argument that will be defended in this essay:

- (1) Either there is a mind-like Guide beyond humanity or there is no mind-like Guide beyond humanity.
- (2) If there is no mind-like Guide beyond humanity, then it could not be the case that humans widely possess knowledge of an objective moral law that ought to be followed but is often not followed.
- (3) It is the case that humans widely possess knowledge of an objective moral law that ought to be followed but is often not followed.
- (4) Therefore, it is not the case that there is no mind-like Guide beyond humanity.
- (5) Therefore, there is a mind-like Guide beyond humanity.

Note first of all that this construal of Lewis's argument understands it as a deductive rather than an abductive argument. That is because, for reasons that we shall see, Lewis seems to argue that human knowledge of the moral law would not be possible in a naturalistic universe in which there is no mind-like Guide beyond humanity. Note also that—contra Wielenberg—this interpretation of Lewis's argument does not view it as

<sup>7</sup> Christopher A. Shrock, "Mere Christianity and the Moral Argument for the Existence of God," in *Sehnsucht: The C. S. Lewis Journal: Volume 11, 2017*, ed. Bruce R. Johnson (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 109.

making any claim about what—if anything—needs to serve as the foundation of moral ontology. Although Lewis does contend that in our moral experience we come to know what seems to be an objective moral law that actually exists (a claim about moral ontology), he never explicitly addresses in this argument the further ontological question of where this objective moral law comes from or what sort of reality must be in place in order for objective moral truth to have a foundation in reality. Let us now consider briefly what Lewis attempts to do in each of the five chapters that comprise Book One of *Mere Christianity* in which he expounds his argument, showing that the above interpretation of Lewis is accurate.

The first three chapters all support premise (3). The first chapter argues that humans widely believe that there is an indelible moral law that we ought to follow and that we all recognize that we are guilty of breaking this law.<sup>8</sup> To support this claim, Lewis points out that people of all backgrounds quarrel with others about moral issues. We accuse others of doing something that fails to meet a standard of morality that we expect the other person to know; moreover, the accused usually does not deny knowing that there is a moral standard but simply tries to argue that he has not violated it.<sup>9</sup> Lewis's point is that it would not make sense to quarrel about the moral law if we did not believe in its existence. He also notes that people of all times, places, and cultures have recognized very similar moral truths, and what is different is merely the way in which morality is applied. It appears to be unlivable for humans of all cultures to behave as though they do not recognize or believe in a moral law that appears to be objective. Although "people may sometimes be mistaken" about the moral law, the law we all believe in is "not a matter of mere taste and opinion," and ultimately "we are forced to believe in a real Right and Wrong."<sup>10</sup> The fact that we constantly fail to "practice ourselves the kind of behavior we expect from other people" and that we often make excuses for our moral failure provides further evidence of "how deeply, whether we like it or not, we believe" in this law.<sup>11</sup> Note that in this first chapter Lewis is arguing entirely about our belief in an objective moral law that exists and makes no claims about what is necessary in order to ground such a law in reality.

<sup>8</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity: A Revised and Amplified Edition, with a New Introduction, of the Three Books Broadcast Talks, Christian Behaviour, and Beyond Personality* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 8.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 6–7.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 7–8.

The second chapter deals with two main objections to the claim that we have come to know an objective moral law. First, the objection that our sense of the moral law is merely an instinct fails because our moral experience often leads us to sense that there is a conflict between our instincts and that our moral duty is sometimes to go against our strongest natural instinct. Moreover, we do not have one purely good instinct that we should always follow, but we sense that the moral law ought always to be followed.<sup>12</sup> Lewis then dismisses a second objection—that the moral law is merely what is ingrained in us via social conventions and education—by arguing that cultures differ widely in their conventions but not so much in their morals. In addition, we commonly make moral comparisons and criticisms—even of the moral practices of other cultures, such as the Nazis—and it seems legitimate to do so.<sup>13</sup> Again, notice that there is no mention in this chapter of what if anything is needed to ground this moral law.

The third chapter argues that the moral law is not like physical laws, as it can be broken by humans if they choose to do so. It is a law that governs how things ought to be and not how things are. The moral law is also more than just what is useful or convenient for oneself or for others, as morality often requires us to do things that are inconvenient.<sup>14</sup> It seems that there is a reality "above and beyond the ordinary facts of men's behavior, and yet quite definitely real—a real law which none of us made, but which we find pressing on us."<sup>15</sup> So this law appears to exist apart from human invention. It prescribes rather than merely describes and seems to be "pressing on us" to follow it. Lewis thus addresses moral ontology only in the sense that our moral experience leads us to believe that the moral law is real and is objective, and he raises the issue that we sense that we are accountable for following the law. However, he again says nothing about what if anything would be needed in order to serve as an adequate foundation for the existence of this moral law. Contra Wielenberg's interpretation of the argument, Lewis has so far made no claim that God is needed to provide a foundation for the existence of objective morality. Indeed, Lewis has not even addressed in this argument whether moral ontology requires a foundation in order to exist. Lewis insists that humans have a knowledge of this moral law, and we will see that this fact becomes the central aspect of his argument. These first three chapters complete Lewis's case for premise (3) that humans seem to have

<sup>12</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 9–11.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 12–13.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 17–20.

<sup>15</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 20.

knowledge of an objective moral law that carries authority and is not fulfilled perfectly.

Premises (1) and (2) are addressed in the fourth chapter. Premise (1) recognizes—and, by the law of excluded middle, rightly so—that it must be true that either there is a mind-like Guide beyond humanity or there is no mind-like Guide beyond humanity. Christopher Shrock, however, describes what Lewis is doing a bit differently at this point. Shrock thinks Lewis's argument pits materialism against theism in his initial premise and that Lewis's argument ultimately concludes that theism is true. By contrast, this essay contends that Lewis argues only for a mind-like Guide whose existence undermines materialism but does not entail the truth of anything that could rightly be called theism.<sup>16</sup> Lewis does indicate that we can lump all worldviews into two broad conceptions of reality—those that reject any kind of transcendent mind and fit into the “materialist” camp (in which space, matter, and energy exist for no reason and humanity has come to exist via mindless and purposeless processes) and those within the “religious” camp (in which there is something “like a mind” that purposively created humanity and the entire universe).<sup>17</sup> Shrock fails to distinguish between theism and Lewis's “religious” view, and this adds confusion to his otherwise insightful interpretation of Lewis. While theism would fit under this broad umbrella of the religious view, it is not equivalent to it. For example, one could hold the religious view and accept that there is a powerful but limited Mind behind the universe that lacks the classic “omni” attributes of God necessary for theism—or at least anything that approaches classical theism. Lewis's core argument only makes the case for a transcendent mind-like Being that may be personal and that communicates the moral law to us. His argument does, however, aim to count in favor of the broadly understood religious view and to show that materialism is false. While his argument itself does not account for the entirety of the religious view (e.g., the creative role of this Mind is not entailed by communicating the moral law), it does argue for the Mind's guiding role and against materialism's denial of such a Mind. All worldviews either affirm or deny a mind-like Reality behind the universe. The fact that a mind-like Guide must either exist or not exist is the key to premise (1).

<sup>16</sup> Shrock recognizes that Lewis has only argued for a mind-like Guide that need not have certain “omni” qualities (p. 120), so it is odd that he frames Lewis's argument as concluding that theism is true (p. 103) and assumes that this Guide may rightly be understood as God (pp. 105–6). Shrock is unclear on his definition of theism and unclear on why he uses this term synonymously with Lewis's “religious” view (“Mere Christianity and the Moral Argument,” 103–6, 120).

<sup>17</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 21–22.

Premise (2) is also defended in the fourth chapter. Rather than appealing to a mind-like Guide beyond humanity as the best explanation among multiple viable explanations for how humans possess moral knowledge (i.e., an abductive approach that makes an inference to the best explanation), Lewis seems to hold that postulating such a Guide is the only explanation that adequately accounts for human knowledge of an objective moral law. Lewis thinks that a power beyond the universe could only reveal itself “inside” humanity via “an influence or a command trying to get us to behave in a certain way.”<sup>18</sup> So the moral law—or at least our reception of the moral law—is like an “influence” or a “command” that we discover within us. The moral law is like a “letter” that a powerful Guide sends to each of us to tell us how to behave. Although our apprehension of the moral law does not “put us within a hundred miles” of demonstrating that the Christian God exists, it does indicate the reality of a Guide who is “urging me to do right and making me feel responsible and uncomfortable when I do wrong.” Lewis thinks we “have to assume” that this Guide is “more like a mind” than like mere matter for the key reason that mere matter cannot give instructions.<sup>19</sup> The Guide need not be personal, Lewis says, but it must at least be enough like a mind to issue commands. The alternative to mind is mere matter, and matter cannot instruct us.<sup>20</sup> Notice again that no argument is given that anything like a mind is needed to provide a foundation for objective morality. Rather, Lewis claims that appealing to something like a mind is needed in order to explain the *communication* of the law to humanity. In addition, we have noted that Lewis's approach to defending premise (2) indicates that he is making a deductive rather than abductive case. He seems to think a mind-like Guide who passes on moral instructions to us is the only viable way (and not merely the best way among multiple viable possibilities) to explain our moral knowledge.

The fifth chapter of *Mere Christianity* does not seem to be intended by Lewis to advance his moral argument, as the argument appears to conclude in the fourth chapter. Instead, it offers some reflections on what is plausibly true about God in light of the moral argument *if* it is the case that a personal God exists—a possibility that Lewis considers to be beyond the scope of his argument. If the Guide who communicates the moral law is a personal God who created the universe, then He is plausibly

<sup>18</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 24.

<sup>19</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 25.

<sup>20</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 25–26.

“like” the moral law and is thus not “indulgent” or “soft” concerning wrongdoing.<sup>21</sup> We should hope that such a God is forgiving since he must hold us to a standard of morality that we do not keep. He points out that Christians believe in such a God.<sup>22</sup>

### Assessing Lewis's Argument

Lewis's argument, as constructed above, is clearly valid. Premise (1) is simply a statement that, by the law of excluded middle, a mind-like Guide beyond humanity must either exist or not exist. Premise (4) follows from premises (2) and (3) by *modus tollens*. Premise (5) follows from premises (1) and (4) by disjunctive syllogism. If sound, this argument would count against naturalism by providing evidence for the existence of a mind-like Guide who transcends humanity. It makes no claim that a personal God exists. However, by arguing for a transcendent mind-like Guide, it increases the plausibility of theism. Let us consider the strength of each premise and assess the argument.

Premise(1) should not be controversial, as there is no third alternative besides the existence or nonexistence of a transcendent mind-like Guide. Lewis holds minimally that this Guide is beyond humanity, is like a mind (at least more like a mind than like mere matter), and communicates the moral law to us. Either such a Being exists or does not exist.

Let us skip over premise (2) for the moment and first consider premise (3), which contends that humans have knowledge of an objective moral law that ought to be followed. Lewis makes a great deal of headway toward defending premise (3) by pointing out reasons why human moral experience seems to involve genuine knowledge of an objective moral law. He shows convincingly that there is a widespread human sense that a set of fairly consistent moral laws is binding upon humanity, and he makes a strong case that our belief in this law cannot plausibly be explained away as mere instinct or social custom or convenience. The law is not a fact about human behavior but is experienced by humanity as an indelible standard for right behavior that we feel pressing on us. Contrary to a moral antirealist like Michael Ruse, who argues that our sense that there is an objective moral law is “illusory” and is a mere adaptation that benefits survival,<sup>23</sup> Lewis shows that what we sense to be our moral duty

<sup>21</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 29–30.

<sup>22</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 30–32.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Ruse, *The Darwinian Paradigm: Essays on Its History, Philosophy and Religious Implications* (London: Routledge, 1989), 268.

is sometimes contrary to our strongest natural instinct and that our moral sense judges between instincts and is thus not itself an instinct.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Lewis could point out to Ruse that our moral sense is not always in agreement with what seems to have the most survival value. So, Lewis makes a variety of fine arguments in support of premise (3) by appealing to the nature of what seems to be an objective moral law that we apprehend in our moral experience and by showing that we commonly treat it as a real law in our everyday living even though we do not perfectly keep it. This is much like the defense William Lane Craig has adopted for the second premise of his famous moral argument, as Craig also appeals to our moral sense to make the case that we seem to be in touch with objective moral values and duties that rise above subjective opinion or the instinct of a herd morality.<sup>25</sup>

Although Lewis gives strong reasons to think that our moral sense is not an illusion and is actual knowledge of objective moral facts, he could strengthen his case by addressing whether there is plausibly a basis for grounding such facts. The reason that Ruse, despite admitting that morality seems to be objective in our moral experience, rejects objective morality is that he does not believe there is a “foundation” for it.<sup>26</sup> Knowledge, as commonly understood, must at least involve justified, true belief. In order to show more forcefully that the widespread belief in an objective moral law amounts to genuine knowledge, it would be valuable to argue that there is a plausible foundation in reality for the existence of such a law. If humans are to come to know objective moral facts, then there must first be such facts to be known and thus some foundation or basis for their existence. So while it is certainly legitimate that the features of our experience of what seems to us to be knowledge of objective morality can provide a great deal of evidence for thinking that there is a realist moral ontology that we truly know, Lewis's case could be strengthened if he were to include here in Book One of *Mere Christianity* a clear and explicit case that reality includes an adequate ontological foundation for grounding objective morality.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 9–11.

<sup>25</sup> William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 172.

<sup>26</sup> Ruse, *The Darwinian Paradigm*, 268.

<sup>27</sup> Shrock thinks that Lewis's avoidance of the question of what grounds objective morality is an advantage to his argument because it avoids that controversial ontological issue. But this is wrongheaded, as it remains the case that if there is no plausible ontological ground for objective morality then the plausibility of

Consider now Lewis's defense of premise (2), which contends that if there were no transcendent mind-like Guide (that may or may not be personal), then humans would not have knowledge of an objective moral law. Lewis makes one solid point in defense of premise (2), but his case for it could be strengthened by offering further support for it and by providing a critique of theories of moral knowledge that do not appeal to a mind-like Guide. We have seen that his one key defense for premise (2) is that only something like a mind is able to issue commands because the alternative to mind is mere matter and one "can hardly imagine a bit of matter giving instructions."<sup>28</sup> Since he argues in premise (3) that humans did not invent the moral law but yet know it, the law must have somehow been communicated to us. A Being that is something like a mind is plausibly necessary in order to communicate to us objective moral truths that are beyond human invention. This point, while not developed at any great length, has force to the extent that we seem to be in touch with an objective law concerning how we ought to behave that is not invented by humanity and would not plausibly be instilled in us as an instinct that may arise in naturalistic evolution. Insofar as this is plausible, premise (2) becomes plausible because, as Lewis rightly points out, such communication seemingly must come from something like a mind since mindless things do not communicate.

Lewis should have gone further on this point, though, by contending that the Guide must be personal. Lewis says the Guide need not be "very like a mind, still less like a person."<sup>29</sup> He underplays his hand here, for how could an impersonal reality have desires for us to behave in a certain way, communicate an objective moral law to us, and instill in us the sense that it ought to be followed? Why conclude that such a Being must at least be somewhat mind-like and yet allow that the Being need not be "very like a mind"? Lewis ought to clarify how a Being can be mind-like and yet not be "very like a mind" or how a Being can be mind-like and yet impersonal. Not only does his argument warrant making the stronger claim that there is plausibly a personal mind who is responsible for communicating the moral law, but the entire concept of an impersonal mind-like Being or a mind-like Being that may not be "very like a mind" and yet is able to issue moral communications to us is difficult to imagine. It is hard to see why Lewis hesitates to go so far as to argue that the Being who guides us is plausibly both personal and a mind in the fullest sense of the word.

Beyond failing to argue that the Guide is plausibly personal, Lewis

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genuine moral knowledge—which is at the heart of Lewis's argument—is reduced ("Mere Christianity and the Moral Argument," 100, 108–9).

<sup>28</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 25.

<sup>29</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 25–26.

passes over other opportunities to make a more forceful case in his defense of premise (2). Perhaps most significantly, he never emphasizes explicitly that a personal, purposive Guide is needed in order to explain our sense that the law ought to be followed. Instead, he focuses only on the need for something like a mind to explain our knowledge of the moral instructions. He thus fails to emphasize strongly moral authority and guilt in his argument after laying the foundation for doing so. He misses the opportunity to stress that only a personal Being beyond humanity can make it possible that there is any ultimate enforcement of the moral law such that our sense that the moral law must be followed is veridical. Lewis lays the groundwork for an argument concerning guilt and moral authority by pointing out that the moral law presses on us and that we fail to live up to it, but he then never completes such an argument. Just as mere matter cannot issue instructions, it also cannot lay objective duties upon us or hold us accountable for not fulfilling those duties.

Lewis notes that we feel that we ought to follow the moral law and experience a sense of guilt when we do not, but are these mere feelings? If one has an objective duty to follow this law and not merely the feeling that one ought to follow it, then this points to a personal and authoritative Judge who holds us accountable to the law. As Richard Joyce recognizes, true moral obligations would have to carry "practical clout" or "oomph." We "typically imbue our moral claims" with both inescapability and authority.<sup>30</sup> Lewis ought to argue that such authority is missing apart from a personal Judge behind the law. As Clement Dore argues, genuine moral obligations must be of "overriding importance" to each of us—even to those who ignore them. One's well-being must be tied to fulfilling these obligations if they are to carry weight. So apart from an afterlife and a powerful and wise Judge who punishes those who got away with spurning their moral obligations in this life and rewards those who fulfil those obligations, moral obligations could not be truly overriding as we sense that they are.<sup>31</sup>

Along with moral authority, the indelible sense of guilt that Lewis insightfully notes accompanies our breaking of the moral law points us to a personal and transcendent Being before whom we are guilty.<sup>32</sup> As John Henry Newman argued, our consciences lead us to feel moral guilt even when no other human is affected by our wrong action; it even leads us to feel regret when the wrong act brought us pleasure. One's conscience

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<sup>30</sup> Richard Joyce, *The Evolution of Morality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 62.

<sup>31</sup> Clement Dore, *Theism* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1984), 36–47.

<sup>32</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 7–8, 23.



connects one's moral sense with emotions and "always involves the recognition of a living object, towards which it is directed. Inanimate things cannot stir our affections; these are correlative with persons." This therefore "implies that there is One to whom we are responsible, before whom we are ashamed, whose claims upon us we fear." Since there are clearly times when we break the moral law and feel guilt even though we have wronged no human person, we are reasonable in concluding that—unless our guilt is illusory—we are guilty before "a Supreme Governor" who is personal and good.<sup>33</sup> Had Lewis pressed these points about the implications of moral accountability and guilt (if they are objective as they seem to be), he would have strengthened his case for premise (2). Our apparent knowledge that we have moral duties pressing on us and that we are guilty of violating them points to a transcendent person to whom we are responsible. Such arguments would fortify his case and would also give him further reason to regard the mind-like Guide as personal—a position he should have taken anyway based on the strength of his argument alone.

Lewis also could have bolstered his case for premise (2) by supporting it with the sort of argument that he made in *Miracles*. Similar to what Alvin Plantinga would later argue, Lewis makes the case that the truth of naturalism would undermine our basis for trusting our reason. Knowledge depends upon valid reason, but in *Miracles* Lewis points out that naturalism undercuts our confidence in the validity of our reason because our cognitive faculties, on naturalism, are merely the result of the blind forces of natural selection. An intelligent designer of our cognitive faculties provides a basis for them to be aimed at detecting truth (and not merely aimed at survival) so that knowledge is possible. For human knowledge to be possible, our reason must be derived from a source of reason that precedes and transcends nature.<sup>34</sup> If this sort of argument is plausible, then there is greater evidence that moral knowledge—along with all knowledge—fits better within a universe with a mind behind it than in a

naturalistic universe.

It was noted earlier that Lewis would have strengthened his case for premise (3)—that human knowledge of objective morality is genuine and not illusory—if he had contended that there is a plausible ontological foundation for objective morality. In addition, he could bolster his case for premise (2) if he were to show that the most plausible candidate for this foundation of objective morality is a Being with a number of God's classical attributes (e.g., personal, transcendent, unchanging, and essentially good). He could attempt to show that any adequate ground of objective morality must transcend human opinion (as that is essential to objectivity); must be necessarily good (since the standard of objective morality must not merely be contingently good or good in virtue of something else); must be unchanging (since the standard of objective morality must not be in flux); and must be personal (since it seems that only personal beings are moral agents, it is plausible that any adequate ontological foundation for objective morality should be personal). Making such a case would strengthen his argument that humans would not have knowledge of an objective moral law apart from a transcendent Mind. Besides buttressing the epistemological argument that Lewis makes, this would give him an added layer to his argument that makes a stronger claim about the nature of the transcendent Mind—that this Mind is closer to the God of classical theism than Lewis's argument can justify as it presently stands.

Finally, Lewis's defense of premise (2) would also benefit from including critiques of theories of moral knowledge that do not appeal to a mind-like Guide. For example, Immanuel Kant famously roots objective moral truth in the rational faculty of the good will and thinks knowledge of these truths is attainable by humans purely via autonomous reason.<sup>35</sup> Lewis does not interact directly with Kant or with any other view that envisions humans as autonomously coming to know objective moral truth apart from the instruction of a mind-like Guide.

## Conclusion

Lewis's argument is a valuable contribution to Christian apologetics that has spurred many—both scholars and laypersons—to reflect upon the nature of morality—especially the sense most of us have that the moral law is objective and binding—and the implications that our moral knowledge seems to have for the plausibility of there being a transcendent Guide who has revealed this law to us. Since his argument was written for

<sup>33</sup> John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (New York: Catholic Publication Society, 1870), 109–10.

<sup>34</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*, in *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 311–21, 330–34. See also Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 309–46. Plantinga argues that the combination of evolution and naturalism provides a defeater for all knowledge. Mark Linville offers a similar argument but concludes that evolutionary naturalism undermines only moral knowledge rather than all knowledge. See Mark Linville, "The Moral Argument," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 391–414.

<sup>35</sup> Immanuel Kant, "Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals," in *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What Is Enlightenment?*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959), 8–59.

a popular audience and appears in the widely-read *Mere Christianity*, it has had an enormous impact on many who otherwise would not read or think about moral apologetics or philosophy. Yet, the popular format in which the argument appears also necessitated that Lewis not make the argument as philosophically precise as it could have been. His argument, which we have seen is more epistemologically focused than is often thought, is valid and does offer effective support for each premise; however, he should have contended that the mind-like Guide that he postulates is personal based on his argument as it stands. His conclusion is more modest than it needs to be. Moreover, he should have defended premises (2) and (3) more thoroughly by addressing the ontological foundation of objective morality and by building upon the groundwork he laid concerning our sense that we have binding moral duties and are guilty when we do not uphold the moral law. He set the stage for making these points but did not pursue them. While Lewis's argument offers some support for thinking that a mind is behind the universe and that naturalism is false, he misses opportunities to strengthen his case and offer more powerful evidence that leads to a theistic conclusion.

## Book Reviews

William P. Brown. *A Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2017. xv + 363 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0664259938. \$35.00.

“From start to finish, exegesis is a communal enterprise” (p. 5). These words from chapter 1 of *A Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis* capture William P. Brown’s claim that exegesis is dialogical. Brown is a well-respected exegete, publishing widely on Psalms, Wisdom Literature, and creation. He writes this volume as a classroom text in order to offer a “tell-and-show” introduction to the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible that attempts to draw together various exegetical approaches “in a way that cultivates the reader’s curiosity, critical engagement, and emphatic imagination” (p. ix).

Part I (chapters 1–3) theoretically and hermeneutically orients the reader to the task of exegesis explored in Parts II and III. Brown frames exegesis as a hermeneutical adventure of variously situated readers engaged in the relational and hence communal enterprise of reading, which necessarily involves not only an exegesis of the text but an exegesis of the self as well. As situated, all readers come to the text, he contends, with influences, convictions, and interests that shape how one reads a text. As a result, “any full exegesis of the text requires, in some form or manner, an exegesis of the self” (p. 4). And an exegesis of the self, according to Brown, is the necessary first step in a dialogical encounter with the text, which seeks not only what the text could have *meant* in its ancient context but also what the text may now *mean* in particular contexts and communities.

This familiar conception—what the text meant and what it means—summarizes well the content of Parts II and III. In Part II (chapters 4–13), Brown surveys a broad range of “analytical” approaches to interpretation that engage the world within the text before enquiring of the world behind the text. Chapters 4–8 cover approaches that deal with the present form of the Old Testament text, moving from translation and text criticism to stylistic and structural analysis. In chapters 9–12, he presents several approaches that investigate the text’s compositional prehistory, its place in the context of the ancient Near East, its literary development, and the historical machinations that produced and shaped such develop-

ment. He closes Part II with a presentation of “canonical analysis” (chapter 13), which he contends is primarily concerned with placing texts in dialogue with other texts that form the canon of a particular community (e.g., the canonical texts of the Jewish Bible, the Roman Catholic Bible, the Protestant Bible, etc.).

Brown addresses ideological approaches in Part III, many of which emerge from post-structuralist theories. He begins in chapter 15 by addressing how one might read the Old Testament from the perspective of science. He presents the rationale and means for a generative—not apologetic or defensive—engagement of the biblical text that seeks to appropriate “the findings of science while also recognizing their limits in biblical interpretation” (p. 202). In the remainder of Part III, he indicates how the biblical text may be read within interested communities and from diverse perspectives ranging from Feminist, Womanist, *Mujerista* (Latina), Asian Feminist, and Genderqueer to Post-colonial, minority, and disability readings. Part III ends with a focus on theological interpretation (chapter 22), which, for Brown, begins by taking seriously the claims of the biblical text concerning God and the world while continually acknowledging the constructive role of the interpreter.

Lastly, in Part IV (chapter 23), Brown argues that communicating the text is the culmination of the exegetical process. He envisions communicating the text to be a retelling of the text via a different genre and directed toward a different audience: “What you find to be central to the text as you retell the text should arise naturally from the text and your work with the text, yet also in response to the concerns of people today” (p. 329). This culminating step of exegesis requires, according to Brown, an exegesis of the community to which one seeks to retell the text.

There is much to commend in *A Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis*. Brown writes in a clear and engaging manner. He does an excellent job of explaining the theoretical aspects of hermeneutics and of the various approaches he covers without becoming tedious and also demonstrates the theoretical in action. His attention to Genesis 1–3 throughout the book allows for a measure of continuity to be held across disparate approaches to reading. Brown’s recognition of the situated nature of reading and readers is a welcome focus in a classroom text on interpretation and provides a helpful corrective to an overemphasis on authorial intention. As a result, he rightly calls for “self-exegesis” as an initial step in exegesis.

While many evangelicals will certainly contend he takes the dialogical nature of exegesis too far, his willingness to draw the text into a broader dialogue, which seeks understanding of the text, is to be commended. Nevertheless, some shortcomings exist. First, while self-exegesis is a much-needed initial step of exegesis, it is problematic as “the first step in

the exegetical venture” (p. 11) and casts exegesis as an anthropocentric enterprise. Second, this anthropocentric focus actualizes in Brown’s contention that biblical authority emerges from the reading community: “Simply put, biblical authority is reader-responsive: through our genuine engagement with Scripture, God ‘authors’ us... After all, authority must be acknowledged in order for something to be authoritative” (p. 175). In contrast, it is my contention that exegesis of Scripture beckons the reader to listen for the authoritative voice of God in the text—as the first step toward a truly theocentric (and indeed Trinitarian) reading of Scripture. Apart from this, an exegesis of the self, though needed, remains ultimately elusive.

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T. Desmond Alexander. *Exodus*. London: Apollos, 2017. xx + 764 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1783594344. \$45.00.

T. Desmond Alexander has written a masterful analysis of the book of Exodus that is of value not only for the interpretation of the book of Exodus but also as a defense of the meaning of this text and how it is to be read.

Alexander writes from the perspective that the critical study of the Pentateuch, which began earnestly with Julius Wellhausen near the end of the nineteenth century, has reached a state of impasse regarding the Pentateuch’s composition. Alexander not only states this as his own personal conviction but demonstrates repeatedly in his analysis of the book of Exodus that the division of the Pentateuch into various sources (as well as the tendency to refer to secondary additions), is time and again not the most cogent way to account for the text as it now exists. In addition, the dating of alleged Pentateuchal sources relies completely on hypothetical assumptions that continue to exist solely because they are held by critical biblical scholars.

An illustration of Alexander’s methodology can be gleaned by his analysis of Exod 20:22–23:33, known as the Book of the Covenant, which covers one hundred pages of his book. The topics of the Book of the Covenant include The Extent and Structure of the Book of the Covenant, The Book of the Covenant and Its Narrative Context, Dating the Book of the Covenant, The Book of the Covenant and Ancient Near Eastern Law Collections, The Book of the Covenant as a Covenant Document, and then textual analysis of Exod 20:22–23:33, which covers eighty-six pages.

In his treatment of the Book of the Covenant, Alexander argues for a single origin of this material as it exhibits a self-contained entity. The Book of the Covenant, which follows the Ten Commandments, contains instructions for building of altars. This is essential, Alexander notes, for the covenant ratification in Exod 24:4–5. Thus, the sections of Exod 20:22–23:33 include instructions for making cultic objects (20:22–26); rulings (22:1–22:20[19]); moral precepts (22:21[20]–23:9); and promises and warnings concerning the land of Canaan (23:20–33).

Alexander also points out how the Book of the Covenant reflects the teaching of the Decalogue: no other gods (Exod 20:3) is echoed in 22:19; 23:13, 24, 32, prohibition of images (Exod 20:4) is repeated in 20:23, Sabbath observance (Exod 20:8) reemerges in 23:10–12, etc. Thus, from a literary analysis there are sufficient grounds for viewing the Book of the Covenant as a vital part of the Sinai narrative. In the conclusion of the Book of the Covenant (23:20–33) the instructions address the future occupation of the land of Canaan. Alexander argues that this section should be considered an appropriate conclusion for a covenant document as Israel looks forward to becoming a holy nation in the land promised to the patriarchs. Thus, the different sections of the Book of the Covenant complement each other, creating a unified text focusing on Israel’s covenant obligations that will enable them to become a holy nation under God’s authority.

Finally, the focus of the commentary is on the Hebrew text of Exodus as it has been received. It displays excellent textual analysis of the original language, focusing on interpreting the original meaning of each passage in its literary context and then connecting the passages to other similar texts both in the Old and New Testaments. Ancient Near Eastern parallels are presented, but their contribution to the meaning of the Old Testament Hebrew texts is kept to a minimum. The Old Testament laws are unique among the Ancient Near Eastern laws, not only because superior value is placed upon human life, but also because of the Bible’s monotheism.

This work is highly recommended not only for serious Bible students but also as a model for those reading Exodus in the light of modern biblical scholarship. In this regard the commentary not only helps us to understand the teaching and relevance of Scripture for our lives, but also serves as a Christian Apologetic for our secular age.

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Peter J. Gentry. *How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017. 141 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1433554032. \$17.99.

The principles and practices of literary interpretation divide into general and special hermeneutics. General hermeneutics (word study, use of context, charting, etc.) gives us methods useful for literary types such as narrative, legal, and epistles. Other types of literature, including poetry, proverbs, parables, and prophecy, will use these to a greater or lesser degree but require special methods. These types of literature have characteristics requiring additional guidelines. Textbooks on biblical interpretation seldom have the space to give extended instruction for these. Peter Gentry's handbook provides a corrective for prophetic literature.

In each chapter, Gentry presents a facet of prophetic study and then illustrates the concept with examples, usually from the book of Isaiah. The first two chapters review the prophet's task: chapter 1, calling God's people back to their covenant responsibilities (illustrated in Isa 5 and 6); and chapter 2, predicting judgment and restoration for Israel (applied to Isa 36 and 37, along with a brief discussion of how they were to discern true and false prophets).

Chapter 3 takes up the function of repetition in the OT, a feature associated with Semitic poetry. OT writers delight to use repetition—within a verse one might find parallel lines, within a context the same subject repeated more than once in a different form, or between sections a purposive paralleling to emphasize similarities (e.g., Gen 3 and 4) or contrasts (John 3 and 4). Gentry's discussion of poetry (including chiasm and word pairs) in this chapter is not out of place in a book on prophecy, since a good deal of the prophetic material is in poetic form. He shows how Isaiah repeats the same themes throughout his book.

At first, chapter 4 appears to be out of place. It concerns the oracles against foreign nations. It would seem to connect better following chapter 2, oracles concerning God's people. But Gentry builds on Deut 32, an example of ancient Hebrew poetry, and the principles of repetition are found there and in the "other nations" oracles that Isaiah gives, particularly in Isa 13–27. Though these oracles emphasize the punishment of the nations and the renewal of God's people, Gentry shows that there is a secondary theme of how this renewal can be a blessing to all the nations of the earth. This is consistent with the larger story the OT encapsulates (e.g., in the call to Abraham [Gen 12:1–3]) and provides a nice transition to the message of the NT.

The final three chapters are styled "Describing the Future." Chapter 5

describes the feature of near and far prophecy, where events that are distant chronologically are juxtaposed, and typology, the foreshadowing of events by earlier events. To illustrate this, Gentry traces the theme in Isaiah of a new exodus out of Babylon patterned after the exodus out of Egypt.

Chapter 6 treats how the prophets use bold metaphorical language, particularly in apocalyptic contexts, to describe events. Gentry provides illustrations from several prophets, but especially from the book of Daniel, examining the language of destruction and restoration (often described in terms of un-creation and re-creation). To read these passages in an overly literal way will cause the interpreter to miss the real-world OT referent. Gentry illustrates from the language of Jer 4:23–26 that to read the passage literally one would think Jeremiah is predicting the end of the world that still lies in our future. Jeremiah, however, uses un-creation language to describe the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians, completed by 586 BC.

In chapter 7 Gentry takes up the concept of already-not yet, the idea that an action is inaugurated but not yet fully consummated. Gentry's discussion centers on the first and second coming of Christ as King and the resultant kingdom that is/will be established. The book ends with a brief conclusion and an appendix with a chart and discussion of the structure of Revelation.

Gentry has given readers a serviceable handbook for understanding prophetic literature. The explanations are clear and usually easy to follow. The most challenging section is probably chapter 6, the discussion of figurative language. A fuller discussion and more examples would be helpful. I think that some attention should be given to the use of the word "forever" in the OT. Appeal is often made that a prophet is speaking of events or conditions that continue for an eternity of time (or at least until the end of time) without gaps. There is no Hebrew word that must mean this in every context. The words usually translated "forever" in the English Bible commonly designate in the Hebrew Bible that which will continue while the conditions remain. For example, a servant who desires to serve his master will not serve him eternally (Deut 15:17), rather just until the servant dies (cf. Job 3:19). Likewise, the priesthood of Aaron is not an eternal priesthood (Exod 29:9); it continued until the completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Heb 7:11–28). Of course, this same Hebrew word can designate what is everlasting. God is always God (Ps 90:2). Thus, when a prophet uses the Hebrew words translated "forever" it does not necessarily mean everlasting.

Finally, Gentry also draws out lessons in theology that derive from the prophetic message. For example, based on the material of chapter 2, he

shows that the text teaches how to discern the true God from a false god, that deliverance sometimes takes a long time, that God is sovereign, and that the word of God is trustworthy. The theological insights Gentry provides have parallels to the NT prophetic message and our future hope as well, making this an encouraging book for New Testament believers.

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Joshua J. F. Coutts. *The Divine Name in the Gospel of John: Significance and Impetus*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2/447. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017. xvi + 259 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-3161551888. \$96.76.

This volume is the revised doctoral thesis of Joshua Coutts, written at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, and supervised by Larry Hurtado. Coutts is a lecturer in New Testament at Regent College. In this monograph, Coutts explores the distinctive emphasis on the divine name in the Gospel of John by identifying the impetus for its use. He argues that the divine name category acquired particular significance for John through his reading of Isaiah. In light of this, Coutts attempts to elucidate the significance of the divine name in key passages in the Gospel and Isaiah. In doing so, he is not arguing by way of identifying allusions to Isaiah but rather making a case “that Isaiah played a prominent role in shaping John’s convictions about the divine name category” (p. 23). Coutts approaches the subject by investigating the significance of name language within the Gospel alongside the diversity of background influences to the divine name category. So, while his focus is primarily on the conceptual impetus for John’s interest in the divine name, he also proposes a possible socio-historical impetus.

In chapter 1, Coutts lays the groundwork for his thesis by demonstrating John’s dependence on Isaiah in three stages. First, he argues that John interpreted Isaiah with regard to references to the divine name “as part of the prophet’s witness to Christ” (p. 68). Second, the divine name concept is embedded in a thematic cluster along with two Johannine themes: the “I am” sayings and “glory.” Third, these two concepts, according to Coutts, accord well with Isaiah’s use of the divine name and the broader conceptual cluster, particularly in the latter half of his book (chapters 40–66). He contends that John “regarded name, [and] glory . . . as having eschatological and associative significance” (p. 68). By “associative,” Coutts means that “the name and glory language serves as a locus for the associ-

ation of God with a distinguishable ‘Servant’ figure” (p. 48). Taken together, these points form a cumulative argument that John was indebted to Isaiah for his interest in the divine name.

In chapters 2 to 4, Coutts investigates the divine name within the Gospel by isolating the significance of the name from its meaning and function in key passages. By isolating the significance, Coutts attempts to determine the primary impetus for John’s interest in the divine name. In each of the key passages, Coutts argues that John’s use of the divine name is associative and eschatological. Concerning John 12:28 and 17:6 (chapter 2), he contends that the divine name is located at the climax of John’s narrative “because [John] is convinced that the name is an eschatological concept and that it is at the heart of the mission of Jesus” (p. 119).

In John 17:11–12 (chapter 3), the impetus for John’s use of the divine name is his “conviction that Jesus embodies the eschatological revelation of the divine name that he shares with the Father,” which he draws from Isaiah (p. 162). Regarding John 5:43 and 10:25 (chapter 4), he argues that John reformulates the Synoptic expression “in my name” to “in my Father’s name” based on the Isaianic Servant, who is simultaneously a witness to God and the glorification and revelation of the name. Both passages function not only to authorize Jesus as the divine agent but also to signify “the association of the Father and Son in a way that is best described in the language of oneness” (p. 184). Thus, Jesus’s own glorification is associated with the glorification of God’s name.

In chapter 5, Coutts supports his argument by exploring the possible socio-historical impetus that worked alongside the conceptual impetus supplied by Isaiah. Here he makes two tentative proposals that support his overall thesis. Drawing upon the work of Lincoln, Baron, and Hurtado, among others, he argues that there was both a polemical and pastoral impetus for John’s interest in the divine name: the conflict between early believers and their Jewish detractors who charged them with blasphemy, and the challenge posed by the delay in the expected return of Jesus. Coutts proposes that these forces “converged with John’s reading of Isaiah to produce the unique emphasis on the divine name” (p. 185).

Overall, Coutts makes an original and important contribution to Johannine studies. His contribution is in both method and substance, particularly in the area of John’s Christology. He broadens our understanding of the divine name concept by demonstrating its eschatological and associative significance. The latter, in particular, has profound Trinitarian implications. As Coutts notes, it “opens a window into the God of the Gospel of John, and helpfully captures the key Father-Son dynamic in Johannine Christology” (p. 199). In addition, his approach in distinguish-

ing John's primary impetus "opens a new entry-point" for discussion beyond the focus on allusions and parallels (p. 200). In both method and substance, Coutts' contribution opens new possibilities for further research.

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Paul M. Hoskins. *The Book of Revelation: A Theological and Exegetical Commentary*. North Charleston: ChristoDoulos Publications, 2017. 491 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1542553964. \$24.99.

Paul Hoskins's recent commentary on Revelation is a new entry in a field that has seen several recent publications at a variety of levels, including expositional commentaries (Akin, Phillips), pastoral and popular works (Beale and Campbell, Patterson, Osborne), and scholarly contributions (Mathewson, Koester, Leithart). Despite the influx of volumes, Hoskins has still provided a helpful contribution with this work.

Probably more than any other work in the New Testament, Revelation nearly demands clear statements of one's interpretive perspective. Hoskins affirms historic premillennialism and eclecticism, advocating for a strongly futuristic position while also drawing on strengths from preterists, historicists, and idealists, seeking to highlight the already and not-yet nature of Revelation. This position includes an openness to interpreting numbers symbolically (pp. 29–36).

As far as introductory matters go, Hoskins holds to Johannine authorship and a date during the reign of Domitian (pp. 13–24). In addition to defending Johannine authorship, Hoskins readily connects the theology of Revelation with John's other writings, especially the Gospel of John. Structurally, Hoskins advocates a telescoping progression in Rev 4–16. There is a general progression from the first seal through the seventh bowl, and the seventh seal and trumpet each introduce the next set of judgments. At the same time, the seventh seal, trumpet, and bowl all describe the same event, the Day of the Lord, which is introduced by the sixth seal. So chronologically, the first five seals—which Hoskins understands as ongoing judgments occurring between the cross and the end times—are followed by the first six trumpets and then by the first six bowls, and these are all followed by the sixth seal, and finally by the seventh seal, trumpet, and bowl (pp. 24–28, 138).

Hoskins's work is not a technical commentary and will be accessible to a wide audience while remaining beneficial to pastors, students, and scholars. Its non-technical nature can be seen in its format and especially

its content. It normally proceeds section-by-section rather than verse-by-verse, focusing on broader comments instead of comprehensive analysis. The work is well researched, but he does not offer thorough comments on every detail of the passage or provide in-depth grammatical and syntactical observations. Rather, Hoskins elucidates the main point and theological import of the verses, especially in light of how they fit into the book as a whole. Additionally, Hoskins only rarely makes explicit use of Greek and Hebrew, and then mostly in footnotes, and always transliterated.

The most notable aspect of the commentary is the emphasis on biblical theology, specifically how Revelation uses the Old Testament. Hoskins draws attention to Revelation's frequent allusions to OT texts as well as the way it picks up and develops OT themes. In both cases he seeks to emphasize Revelation's frequent typological fulfillment of the OT and to show how recognizing these OT references and themes helps the reader to better understand the meaning of Revelation. This focus is arguably the single greatest strength of Hoskins's commentary. Similarly, he takes the OT background of Revelation seriously for interpreting its imagery, gives it far greater interpretive priority than the Greco-Roman background, and demonstrates how Revelation's symbols are grounded in the OT. The net result of these factors is a commentary that clearly explains each passage, helps the reader understand the passage's theology (including how it contributes to the whole of Revelation), and shows how Revelation makes use of, develops, and fulfills earlier Scripture.

A few weaknesses are worth noting as well. Generally, Hoskins does not interact much with opposing viewpoints. For example, he gives no mention to the importance that Rev 1:19 plays in interpreting the book (concerning things John has seen, that are, and that will take place after), nor does he provide alternative interpretations to his own (pp. 65–66). Minimizing interactions may streamline the content and help with the focus, but it means that the commentary is not as useful for addressing questions or objections that readers may have. Similarly, contentious issues in Revelation are generally not addressed. For example, one issue that appears increasingly in both scholarly and popular literature on Revelation is a concern with its violent imagery. Hoskins does not raise the issue at all. The work would be stronger if he were not only to provide the good interpretations he has given but to proactively address issues such as this for readers who may have questions or concerns. Finally, the book unfortunately lacks any Scripture or subject index, making it difficult to quickly find references.

Overall, these weaknesses are fairly minor. While failing to interact more thoroughly with alternative viewpoints and scholarly works may



lessen the work's value in research contexts, it does not diminish its worth in providing an excellent commentary on the text of Revelation. Hoskins's commentary will prove to be especially beneficial for students, pastors, and other non-specialists who wish to better understand the theological content of Revelation and the biblical theological connections between Revelation and the rest of Scripture.

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John M. Frame. *Theology in Three Dimensions: A Guide to Triperspectivalism and Its Significance*. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2017. 107 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1629953229. \$12.99.

John M. Frame's triperspectivalism shapes the way in which he presents and explains his understanding of theology, philosophy, and ethics. As a pedagogical approach to various academic disciplines, it has influenced and shaped scholars, theologians, and students for nearly half a century. Why then does he produce a short volume explicating this three-fold system? In *Theology in Three Dimensions* Frame strives to further explain, clarify, summarize, and apply his triperspectival approach for a broader audience.

Frame's introduction to triperspectivalism divides into three sections. First, he defines the word "perspectives" and elaborates upon God's infinite perspectives while proposing humanity's limited and changeable perspectives through critical judgments. Frame argues that God has revealed some of his perspectives through general revelation, special revelation, and the *Imago Dei* (p. 9). He argues his triperspectival methodology from the doctrine of the Trinity and from God's three lordship characteristics: control, authority, and presence (p. 20). These lordship characteristics correspond to the author's triperspectivalism method. In other words, control corresponds to the situational perspective, authority to the normative perspective, and presence to the existential perspective (pp. 22–26). Frame concludes with how his triperspectival structure equates with the threefold gospel (i.e., with God, Son, and Holy Spirit) and how humanity responds to God's revelation in knowledge, choice, and emotions (pp. 46–50).

Second, Frame briefly clarifies the three perspectives of his framework. He defends the idea that the normative perspective portrays God's obligations for humanity. The situational perspective perceives God's world as factual or the way he designed and created it to be. The existential perspective then allows one to take information from the normative and

situational perspectives and adequately hold to a belief or feeling with reasonable certainty. Frame points out that each perspective does not operate independently but in conjunction with the other two. Triperspectivalism, therefore, observes these three differing perspectives within a unified whole.

Third, Frame applies his approach for a student to use in various Christian disciplines. He illustrates how triperspectivalism brings balance to one's reading, interpretation, and application of Scripture. The author then implements triperspectivalism in the following areas: salvation, the Bible, ethics, philosophy, apologetics, pedagogy, and hermeneutics (pp. 71–84). He concludes with the significance of this triperspectival approach as a means to keep "us focused on the biblical bottom line, that God is nothing less than Lord, and that his lordship is fully revealed in Jesus Christ" (p. 89).

Positively, the structuring of *Theology in Three Dimensions* makes the content accessible for a broad range of readership. Each chapter ends with summary points, questions to ponder, and a glossary to help the reader comprehend Frame's triperspectival methodology and terminology. The work explains triperspectivalism without overt academic jargon in order to accomplish the author's intended purpose—to provide a brief introduction and guide for his pedagogical approach. This introduction would benefit any scholar or student prior to their engagement with Frame's other books. In sum, his argument for this unifying methodology observed in three differing ways is particularly helpful.

Some who argue that philosophy and theology should be viewed as separate from one another might argue against Frame's use of philosophical terms. However, he clarifies and defines the terms for his triperspectival formula from a biblical position. Frame adequately provides his rationale for employing the normative, situational, and existential terminology against the separatist's objections. To put it another way, Frame does not apply these terms from a philosophical epistemology but rather from a theological ontology: the normative perspective associates with God's authority, the situational perspective relates to God's control, and the existential perspective represents God's presence.

One critique would be against Frame's forceful attempt to fit all aspects of the Bible's teaching into his triperspectival model. While that model works most of the time, one must be careful not to allow any model to take precedence over Scripture. For example, Frame argues that regeneration and sanctification have differing functions in a person's life (p. 35). Yet, in his pedagogy application, he presents regeneration and sanctification as equal when teaching about one's new creation (p. 79). This

critique illustrates that one must be aware that the triperspectival approach could be pushed beyond biblical parameters if one is not careful. An individual must allow the Bible to be the final arbiter of truth for any system being promoted.

In conclusion, Frame's introductory work, *Theology in Three Dimensions*, provides a reader with ample information on his triperspectival methodology. For anyone interested in Frame's writing, this book is a must-read for understanding his framework before one embarks on any additional works. While he may push his methodology beyond biblical parameters at times, this book's strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. Anyone—regardless of academic standing—would benefit from reading and thinking through Frame's approach.

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Pete Ward. *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry, and the Life of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017. 188 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0801098192. \$21.99.

Regardless of discipline, introductory volumes often seek to engage two worthy audiences. On the one hand, they engage students or those who constitute a general audience in the necessary aspects of the field of study. On the other hand, they engage practitioners of the discipline in hopes of critiquing and shaping the larger field in question. Pete Ward (PhD, King's College, London), a professional fellow in ecclesiology and ethnography at St. John's College, Durham University, masterfully engages both audiences in each chapter of this introductory volume to practical theology. Ward acknowledges his conception of practical theology is broad, for he defines practical theology "as any way of thinking that takes both practice and theology seriously" (p. 5). Such a broad beginning is appropriate, says Ward, because practical theology must recover its theological rootedness as a discipline before it can endeavor to examine practical avenues of application.

Throughout ten chapters, Ward navigates the topics one would expect to encounter in such a work. In chapter 1, Ward skillfully positions his work from the perspective of the church. He senses an erosion in the academic discipline and its relationship to local gatherings of believers. From this beginning, he leads readers through focused chapters on the discipline's connection to the gospel, lived theology, and theological reflection. Ward follows these chapters with an important view into the critical relationship practical theology has with other theological disciplines.

Ward challenges readers to consider how practical theology encompasses more territory than traditionally understood, and he explains how this specific discipline brings out the best emphases of others. Ward finishes his work with two unique chapters for an introductory volume: Readers, especially students, will return to Ward's careful distinctions in research strategies and models. Finally, the book concludes with helpful summaries of how practical theology is produced in spiritual, ecclesial, and academic arenas.

Numerous strengths emerge within this volume. First, Ward masterfully connects practical theology to the life of the church. Through ecclesial practices (corporate worship, sacraments, preaching, etc.) and ethics, Christians encounter aspects of practical theology routinely. Ward suggests five practices that practical theology helps define: remembering, absorbing, noticing, selecting/editing, and expressing (pp. 14–21). In the life of the church, remembering reveals how the church is "shaped and formed by the gospel" (p. 14). Absorbing acknowledges churches are more than incubators of theory. Rather, the rites and practices of the church are absorbed, forming habits and relationships. Noticing involves creating and maintaining a Christian worldview, a necessary responsibility of Christian churches whose people live and breathe in a fallen world. Selecting/editing speaks broadly to everything from the importance of listening to sermons to specific forms of discipleship. Finally, expressing encompasses the activism that flows from Christian devotion. In each of these five practices, Ward promotes a practical theology that is truly born out of and for the flourishing of the church.

Second, Ward examines the connection of practical theology to the growing fields of theological study and literature as an embodied, lived experience among individuals and communities. While some readers may not find this chapter necessary for an introductory volume, Ward finds much to praise about these developments and locates specific components worthy of further investigation. Examples include the necessity of self-reflection for a robust practical theology and the critical methodologies that necessarily flow from theological inquiry. Ward's positive engagement is not without caution since he also reminds his readers that "lived theology is charged with emotions and commitments, and making changes requires more than ideas alone" (p. 66).

Ward's work does not contain any glaring issues of concern or weakness. He successfully navigates his conversation partners through each chapter of his introductory volume. Students will appreciate Ward's irenic tone and substantive insights, especially as they relate to situating practical theology as a good to the church and a defined field of study. Scholars will appreciate his measured evangelical perspective, his vast knowledge

of scholarly literature (from American and UK scholars), and his insistence that practical theology offers a critical place in theological reflection. One might wish that Ward had used his project to include a full chapter on how practical theology shapes preaching although he does briefly reference its importance (pp. 172–73). In the end, the field of practical theology is experiencing a revival of helpful introductory and critical volumes, and Ward's contribution proves to be a significant contribution.

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Toby Jennings. *Precious Enemy: A Biblical Portrait of Death*. Eugene: Pickwick, 2017. xiv + 259 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1498280679. \$33.00.

Toby Jennings (Professor of Theology, Grand Canyon University and Theological Seminary) wants his readers to understand the biblical teaching on death in service of pastoral concerns. *Precious Enemy*, a revised version of Jennings's doctoral dissertation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, is intended to provide a counterbalance to the prevailing cultural winds that push death to the margins and ignore God's providence over death. The author's argument is that "a biblical portrait of death limits the value and ethic of human life in contradiction to the pervasive yet allusive sin of biolatry" (p. 17). To state it positively, a biblical portrait of death reminds us that human life is penultimate due to its creaturely, not divine, status; that death is a result of humanity's sinful disobedience of the one, holy God; and that death is governed by God's good providence. Therefore, argues Jennings, we should learn to die well.

The book's outline is straightforward. After an introductory chapter that notes the project's place in current scholarship and provides a survey of prior work on death, chapters 2 through 4 review the biblical data. Jennings's goal in chapter 2 is to demonstrate that death originates in the sin of Adam and Eve, a sin that is imputed to the rest of humanity due to Adam's status as federal head. Chapters 3 and 4 provide fairly standard surveys of death in the Old and New Testaments; the former focuses on terminology and the issue of the afterlife in the OT while the latter addresses the relation of Christology, soteriology, and the resurrection to the nature of death. The conclusion of these chapters is that death is the God-ordained result of sin for Adam and Eve and, by virtue of federal headship, for the entire human race. God ordains death both as punishment for sin and as the means by which humans can be freed from their sinful flesh and subsequently be resurrected in a body free from sin's stain. Death is thus an enemy, but one that is God-ordained and vanquished in

Christ's own death and resurrection. It should be faced by Christians with faith that God is in control and hope that one day Christ will finally put this last enemy under his feet at the resurrection of the dead.

This leads to Jennings's reflections in chapter 5 on the church triumphant, where he explains the theological rationale for martyrdom and reviews the history of martyrdom in Christ's church. The penultimate chapter is an excursus on the death of infants and the cognitively impaired, in which Jennings argues that there is no explicit biblical data that justifies belief that infants or cognitively impaired persons experience salvation at death. There is a very brief aside where Jennings suggests that perhaps God could ordain to save some infants and cognitively impaired persons via his electing and irresistible grace, but (according to Jennings) we have no biblical data to suggest that this is the case, and especially not in any kind of totalizing way. The book ends with a concluding chapter that summarizes Jennings's work and also urges Christians to approach death in faith that God is in control and in hope of the resurrection and the beatific vision.

Readers will have already drawn some of their own conclusions about the book given this summary. Regarding what is to be celebrated in Jennings's work, all who study the Bible and theology will agree that Western culture does not take death nearly as seriously as the Bible does. Jennings's call to take death seriously, and to do so in a way that looks to the Bible for our portrait of death and the God who ordains it, is thus needed in our day. Jennings is at his best when he expositis the pastoral and spiritual claims that a biblical understanding of death makes followers of Jesus, namely to have faith and hope in our good and gracious God in the face of it. There are portions of the book that are, in this sense, inspiring and exhortative.

In spite of the portions in which Jennings is appropriately exhortative, criticism is warranted. I do not intend here to wade into debates about Reformed views on hamartiology and soteriology, but I will say that Jennings is clearly Reformed and often assumes the arguments of that tradition without giving adequate attention to the serious and scriptural criticisms others have made of it. Jennings often assumes a Reformed framework for all his questions, such that his questions are not so much questions as they are conclusions in need of a previously articulated Reformed explanation. This leads to the most controversial chapter, the penultimate chapter on infant death. Here one can almost feel the pull of the inevitable conclusion; all Jennings needs to do is show his readers the irrefutable chain of Reformed logic to get us there. Of course, none of this is to say that Reformed theologians, including Jennings, are neces-

sarily wrong about what they say about these matters (although, full disclosure, I disagree with Jennings on his logic regarding infant death and about a few other matters). It is to say that the means of argumentation is often lacking in truly rigorous and serious engagement with those who might disagree.

Readers who are interested in a biblical theology of death should engage Jennings's *Precious Enemy*. But they should enter into such an engagement with the understanding that this is not a comprehensive, final, or ecclesially universal word on the subject. Of course, Jennings does not portray it as such, but in light of the assured tone of the conclusions, it is best to exercise such discernment in reading.

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J. P. Moreland, Stephen C. Meyer, Christopher Shaw, Ann K. Gauger, and Wayne Grudem, eds. *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017. 1007 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1433552861. \$60.00.

*Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique* brings together a wealth of scholars from across the fields of science, philosophy, and theology to present the fullest (in terms of sheer volume) critique of theistic evolution to date. The major argument of the book is that theistic evolution is a deficient explanation of creation in each of the fields represented. Many of the scholars in this book are aligned with intelligent design, and so a second running theme of the book is the superiority of intelligent design over theistic evolution.

Theistic evolution includes a number of different camps and understandings, and so Stephen Meyer and Wayne Grudem spend the first two introductory chapters defining exactly what they mean by the term. Meyer gives three definitions of theistic evolution: change over time, common descent, and unguided/undirected evolution. Each of these definitions narrows the possibility of God's direct involvement in the development of creation, and Meyer emphasizes that the third position is the major focus of the book's critique, although common descent is also in focus in chapters 10–17. Grudem similarly pinpoints the third view as the major target when he writes, "[T]he form of theistic evolution that we are respectfully taking issue with is this belief: God created matter and after that did not guide or intervene or act directly or cause any empirically detectable change in the natural behavior of matter until all living things had evolved by purely natural processes" (p. 67). In theory, this definition

leaves out prominent evangelical voices who have proposed different possibilities of directed evolution, including John Stott, Tim Keller, Alvin Plantinga, and certain members of *Biologos*. However, it appears that the individual authors of the book often have both directed and undirected forms of evolution in view in their critiques.

The book itself is divided into three major sections: science, philosophy, and theology. The science section is further divided into two sections critiquing neo-Darwinism and common descent. Most of the essays in the science section have been previously presented in other publications and so there is little new information here, but this section's material adds together for a cumulative case showing various ways in which evolution is not settled science. The philosophy section focuses mainly on methodological issues, demonstrating the necessity of philosophical reflection on the larger metaphysical issues surrounding evolution. The theology section emphasizes the difficulty of holding to theistic evolution and the major tenets and storyline of Scripture at the same time. Some of the salient chapters in the book are Sheena Tyler's "Evidence from Embryology Challenges Evolutionary Theory," Casey Luskin's "Missing Transitions: Human Origins and the Fossil Record," and C. John Collins's "How to Think About God's Action in the World." Each of these chapters challenges some form of theistic evolution with clear prose and honest assessment of the topic.

Of course, in a book with this many authors focused on one particular topic, it is not surprising to find discrepancies in definitions between the chapters. One such discrepancy is the use of theistic evolution, mentioned above. It appears at times to function as a broad term for all forms of theistic evolution (unguided, planned, directed) and at other times only as the unguided/undirected version. Another such discrepancy involves the use of intelligent design, which is important because it plays such a prominent role in this book. Like theistic evolution, intelligent design has a number of connotations and definitions, and it appears to be used in different ways. For example, Stephen Meyer writes, "[A]ny proponent of theistic evolution who affirms that God is directing the evolutionary mechanism, and who also rejects intelligent design, implicitly contradicts himself" (pp. 43–44). According to this statement, intelligent design can simply mean that God directed the creation process by whatever means it took. However, Winston Ewert argues in his chapter that intelligent design makes specific falsifiable claims that distinguish it from theistic evolution (p. 199). J. P. Moreland similarly postulates intelligent design as a superior explanation for creation over theistic evolution (p. 559). This leads to some confusion over exactly what intelligent design means for

each particular writer and how it specifically distinguishes itself from theistic evolution as the superior position.

As is often the case in books on this topic, there is a question over whether it generates more heat than light in dialogue between the various creation positions. I found some sections more helpful than others in this regard. For instance, I found the spirit of Wayne Grudem's engagement with members of *Biologos* and others as fellow believers encouraging, even in the midst of his direct critique of their position (p. 64). However, I found J. P. Moreland's request that *Biologos* interact with more traditional Christian scientists, philosophers, and theologians a bit odd considering that *Biologos* has done a number of those interactions with young-earth and old-earth creationists over the last several years (p. 559). I also found Colin Reeves unhelpful in his use of J. I. Packer's definition of liberal methodology to label Denis Alexander's approach as a type of "de-mythologization," particularly since Packer endorsed Alexander's work that Reeves criticizes (p. 722). I hope that future interactions on both sides will follow Grudem's lead here.

Overall, I believe this book will benefit those who are making their way into the creation-evolution debate and are curious about the major issues involved. Those who understand the major figures and ideas of the debate will not find much new information here although having all of these essays in one volume is handy. Finally, those who are more agnostic toward the specific mechanisms of creation will leave this book understanding the importance of key doctrines, methodological questions, and metaphysical issues without necessarily feeling the need to commit to a specific view related to the mechanisms of creation.

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Nathaniel T. Jeanson. *Replacing Darwin: The New Origin of Species*. Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2017. 287 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1683440758. \$24.99.

Nathaniel Jeanson earned his PhD in Cell and Developmental Biology from Harvard University. He presently serves as a research biologist with Answers in Genesis.

In *Replacing Darwin*, Jeanson presents an ambitious project to do exactly that—provide an alternative to Darwin's theory of evolution. He contends that a paradigm shift is in order. To illustrate his argument, Jeanson effectively uses the analogy of a jigsaw puzzle—a puzzle where one lacks a box cover to follow and doesn't know the total number of pieces.

However, since the time Darwin published his *Origin of Species*, the field of genetics has arisen. Lacking the crucial information provided by genetics, Darwin made many premature (and therefore erroneous) conclusions. Genetics has just recently provided the critical "corner pieces" to the puzzle.

Jeanson contends that a form of evolution has indeed happened—speciation. Speciation is the process by which one species evolves from another species, and to a significant extent the process is driven by natural selection. However, Jeanson does not embrace Darwinian evolution, particularly Darwin's hypothesis of universal common descent. Rather, he argues that speciation is limited to basic families, or orders. Furthermore, speciation occurred rapidly and recently—meaning that it all happened in less than 10,000 years.

Jeanson presents his argument in three steps. First, he provides a clear and succinct account of the development of the field of genetics from the discoveries of Gregor Mendel up to the Human Genome Project (and the ENCODE Project which followed). Jeanson explains that the role of genetics was unknown when Darwin wrote *Origin of Species*. This put Darwin at a fatal disadvantage since genetics is the scientific field most central to speciation.

Second, Jeanson admits that the genetic evidence demonstrates that many distinct species share a (perhaps extinct) common ancestral species. But abandoning the fixity of species does not entail embracing universal common descent. Jeanson laments that the controversy over universal common descent has obscured the reality of significant "family trees." The myriad of species on earth today originated from a relatively small number of families. Jeanson explains, "For example, the family Bovidae possesses 138 living species. From cattle-like species to goat-like species to antelopes and duikers, Bovidae is a very diverse family. Yet over 3,000 breeds of cattle, sheep, and goats exist in this family."

Jeanson argues that Darwin's assumption that speciation occurred over eons of time was as unnecessary as it was incorrect. Rather, Jeanson observes that evolutionists agree that the thousands of distinct breeds have come about in the past 12,000 years. This is because the various breeds—of dogs, cats, and livestock—are all the products of animal husbandry practiced by humans. Humans have been practicing such farming activities for only 12,000 years; therefore breeds are a relatively recent phenomenon. Fewer species exist than breeds, so Jeanson reasons that speciation could have occurred recently also. This raises the objection that such rapid and recent speciation should be occurring today, yet none is detected. Jeanson responds that species discovery is recent and ongoing, and as such is virtually indistinguishable from species creation.

This sets the stage for the third part of Jeanson's argument. He contends that, on the issue of mutation rates, the (time) tables have turned. The genetic time-markers do not agree with an ancient timescale. Jeanson argues that the mutation rates found in mitochondrial DNA do not match standard evolutionary theories. The evolutionary timescale predicts more differences than are actually found, typically by many orders of magnitude. This disparity is found across a wide spectrum of species, from humans to insects to baker's yeast. He contends that the mutation rates fit a young-earth model rather well.

To explain speciation, Jeanson argues that the original creatures were created with genetic diversity already imbedded within their respective DNA. This latent diversity then expressed itself rather quickly, depending on environmental factors brought on by geography and other influences. This means that speciation, rather than being an "evolutionary" phenomenon, is more "devolutionary."

In sum, *Replacing Darwin* makes primarily (maybe even exclusively) a genetic argument for young-earth creationism. The book deals little with other areas of science or with biblical exegesis and theological concerns. However, the model presented in *Replacing Darwin* gives a coherent and understandable explanation for how all types of land creatures were able to fit in Noah's ark. It also provides an explanation as to how the different and distinct species are found in disparate parts of the globe (some exclusively so). For example, how did kangaroos get all the way from Mt. Ararat to Australia? And why are they found only there? Jeanson's hypothesis addresses those questions. This model also makes testable scientific claims. One can expect they will be examined closely, both by those sympathetic and those who are not. In any event, as an old-earth creationist, I found much to appreciate in this work, especially the evangelistic appeal at the end of the book.

Jeanson also does a good job of presenting the current controversy surrounding the findings of the ENCODE Project. He explains that evolutionary and creationist models make very different predictions about the differences found in nuclear DNA and that the findings fit creationists' models far better. Evolutionary models predict that the DNA will contain large quantities of "junk" or nonfunctional genes. This is why the findings of the ENCODE Project have been so controversial. Though the results are still preliminary, they indicate that most of the genome that was labeled as junk turns out to be functional after all.

Nevertheless, some portions of *Replacing Darwin* give reason for concern. Jeanson places a great deal of weight on the meaning of the Hebrew word *min* (typically translated as "kind") in the account of Noah's flood

in Gen 6–9. He argues that Moses intended the word to refer to the scientific categories of family or order, rather than species. Jeanson claims that his approach stems from the "explicit statements from Genesis," but he also admits, "the exact definition of *min* is debated among Hebrew scholars" (p. 148). Actually, there is broad agreement among Hebrew scholars that the term does not have scientific precision. And the Bible does not say Noah released the ancestor of the Columbidae family, but rather he released a dove—which seems to be a particular species of bird. Jeanson appears to be building on an assumption that is difficult to prove exegetically.

On another tack, Jeanson concedes that evidence exists for transitional species. He admits that his "argument eliminates the hypothesis of the fixity of species" (p. 147). This is not a trivial concession. One past major argument made by creationists of all stripes has been the lack of transitional species in the fossil record. It will be interesting to see how other creationists respond to this change. Jeanson argues that his model is non-evolutionary in that it affirms *speciation* but not *evolution*. Yet the *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines speciation as "the formation of new and distinct species in the course of evolution." In contrast, *Replacing Darwin* presents cattle, sheep, goats, and antelopes as having come from a common ancestor. This is one example among many.

To conclude, *Replacing Darwin* presents a clear argument for a rapid version of speciation that is compatible with the belief that the earth is less than 10,000 years old. The book provides a testable hypothesis, so time and scientific testing will tell its merits. Though rather technical, *Replacing Darwin* can be read by the motivated layperson. This work is essential reading for those wanting to understand the current state of young-earth creationism.

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John Behr, ed. *Origen: On First Principles*. Oxford Early Christian Texts. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. 800 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0199684021. \$180.00.

Fr. John Behr, Dean and Professor of Patristics at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, has recently joined a chorus of voices chanting the praise of Origen of Alexandria (c. 185–c. 254). Pope Benedict XVI dubbed the third-century theologian a "great master of faith" in his General Audience of April 2007. More recently, David Bentley Hart offered homage in his article "Saint Origen" (*First Things*, October 2015).

Behr's "song of praise" takes the form of a new translation and introduction to Origen's masterpiece of theology, *On First Principles*. As the pioneering work of Christian systematics, this text has significantly influenced the history of theological discourse, inspiring thinkers such as the Cappadocian fathers, Jerome, and Maximus the Confessor. Behr's substantive introduction and fresh English translation is thus a landmark feat—the first work of its kind to appear in over eighty years.

Unlike G. W. Butterworth's translation of 1936, based largely upon Paul Koetschau's reconstruction of the text (1913), Behr focuses on translating the Latin text (*De Principiis*) produced by Rufinus in the fourth century. The original Greek (*Peri Archon*) did not survive the patristic skirmishes surrounding Origen's orthodoxy. Thus, Behr avows to give the English-speaking world the best opportunity to hear Origen's voice, albeit via the pen of Rufinus.

Behr provides "as literal a translation" as possible, "while still respecting the rules of English grammar" (p. xcvi). Those familiar with Behr's other translations, such as *On the Apostolic Preaching* by Irenaeus and *On the Incarnation* by Athanasius (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997 and 2012, respectively), know that he strives to provide word-for-word renderings of patristic texts. This version of *On First Principles* is no exception. Behr translates Rufinus's text into fluid English prose, providing the Latin with critical apparatus on each adjacent page.

The mention of Origen's name seems to perpetually convey the connotative freight of "heresy." While Behr admits certain unconventional aspects of Origen's teaching (e.g., the eternity of creation; p. lvii), he also highlights the unpropitious circumstances surrounding Origen's condemnation (p. xvi). A careful reading of *On First Principles* nevertheless suggests several outside-the-main viewpoints. As a representative example, Behr discusses at length the notion of the soul's pre-existence, a concept integral to Origen's project. In this prior state, outside of time and yet somehow embodied, the soul merits its subsequent status within the present age, a position garnered either by virtuously clinging to God in love or by moving away through a slothful lack of divine imitation (see *Princ.* 2.9.6–9.8). Souls persist in adherence to the Word with varying degrees of intensity, some clinging ardently, some less so, until all fell away, save one. The only soul that adheres fully to the Word is that of Christ, which is "joined to the Lord" to become "one spirit," thereby becoming indistinguishable from the Word through this union (1 Cor 6.17; *Princ.* 2.6.3).

The now divinized soul of the incarnate Christ never abandoned God, whereas all others moved away. But Origen is subtle on this point. And so is Behr. Admitting the novelty of his reading, Behr argues that Origen's (putative) "mythology" of the soul refers to a particular moment in the

biblical narrative: "The most concrete passage in Scripture, where all who had, with varying degrees of love, adhered to their Creator, fell away, except one, is the crucifixion" (p. lxviii). The cross is the event in which the visible, temporal horizon both mirrors and somehow fuses with the unseen, eternal horizon: all the disciples depart from their Lord, yet Christ holds fast to God. Behr argues that because the soul of Christ was divinized by its holding fast, "the unity of the God-man is again effected upon the cross, for after it, and in its light, we can no longer differentiate between human and divine properties" (p. lxix). This reading of Origen characterizes the cross as Christ's exaltation, not his defeat: "Through the Passion, Christ, as human, becomes that which, as God, he always is" (p. lxxiv). Like an iron placed in the fire, Christ's soul unceasingly clings to God, receiving the very properties of God and mediating those divine properties to the fullness of his humanity. Christ's divinization is thus an eternal reality most fully revealed in the historical event of the cross.

Behr's introduction to *On First Principles* contains several other intriguingly novel analyses of Origen. Even after several readings, this reviewer remains less than fully convinced by every conclusion. I do, however, feel compelled to read it yet again, mainly for its subtle complexity and wide breadth of theological insight. Behr's translation work is superb; it is no doubt the new standard for an Anglophone readership of Origen. And Behr's creative introduction provides a fascinating entryway to the mysterious land of *On First Principles*. The two-volume set is recommended reading for patristic scholars and philosophical theologians as well as those seriously interested in the history of Christian doctrine.

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Robert W. Caldwell III. *Theologies of the American Revivalists: From Whitefield to Finney*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017. ix + 246 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0830851645. \$35.00.

For years scholars have understood the importance of conversion in the events of the Great Awakenings. However, among leading pastors and theologians of the era, convictions surrounding conversion varied. Robert W. Caldwell III, professor of church history at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has established himself as an authoritative voice on Jonathan Edwards and the Edwardsean tradition, the Great Awakenings of North America, and Baptist history during these periods. In *Theologies of the American Revivalists*, Caldwell offers a summary and assessment of the theological foundations of leaders and major denominational groups during the Awakenings.

According to Caldwell, the revivalists of this era shared a common theology. He observes that moderate evangelicals held to a revival theology marked by conviction, conversion, and consolation. These evangelicals recognized that God prepares the heart so that the individual recognizes and experiences his or her guilt of sin. Individuals experience regeneration through the work of the Holy Spirit, and by turning in repentance and faith, the work of regeneration is found to be authentic. Moderate evangelicals found that assurance is the by-product of faith; thus, it is only experienced after regeneration. Caldwell rightly uses individuals like Samuel Davies, John Tennent, and Jonathan Dickinson to convey this process.

While understanding this process of salvation was shared by many moderate evangelicals, other groups took it and modified it to accommodate their own theological convictions. Caldwell shifts to compare and contrast the revival theologies of Andrew Croswell and Jonathan Edwards. Croswell, who opposed and was strongly opposed by moderate evangelicals, held to immediate conversion. His emphasis was on personal salvation. On the other hand, Edwards's revivalist theology emphasized a voluntarist accent and disinterested spirituality. Through these two individuals, Caldwell builds a vision for how their views would be tailored in the years to come.

Caldwell explores the New Divinity movement and the expansion of Edwards's disinterested spirituality and voluntarism. Caldwell shows the significance of Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins, both of whom contributed to the establishment and promotion of New Divinity theology. They shifted from a disinterested spirituality to a disinterested benevolence, and they (particularly Hopkins) embraced Edwards's anthropology while adding to it the call for immediate repentance. Caldwell is careful to note here that while this sounds similar to Croswell's revival theology, Hopkins's approach is much different. The New Divinity movement also adjusted some of Edwards's theology, including convictions regarding original sin, atonement, and justification.

Caldwell argues the Second Great Awakening is best understood in the regional movements found in New England, the western frontier, and upstate New York. Caldwell explores the alterations made by Congregationalists, such as seen in the work of Edward Dorr Griffin. Nathaniel William Taylor also worked to improve New Divinity Theology—his New Haven Theology. This changed the direction of New Divinity theology. Through this assessment, Caldwell conveys how these ideas affected Congregationalists and New School Presbyterians. Many rejected this New Haven theology, and it brought division between New England Congregationalism and American Presbyterianism.

Caldwell also describes other revivalist theologies. The revivalist theology of Methodists during the era was popular and influential. Methodists stressed the love of God and free will, the universal offer of the gospel, and the call to holiness and Christian perfection. Early Baptist revival theologies also played a significant role. However, unlike the uniformity of the Methodists, Baptist revival theology varied in each of the Baptist groups. Caldwell compares and contrasts Separate and Free Will Baptists, Edwardsean Baptists, and Regular Baptists, showing their common ecclesiology but varied soteriology.

As Caldwell continues, he surveys several other individuals and schools of thought. First, Caldwell argues that Charles Finney's theology was an extension of Edwardsean theology, except for the rejection of moral inability. Finney sought to avoid causality when addressing salvation and the relationship between the work of the Holy Spirit and individual free will. As such, he found that "agents of revival" contributed to the sinner's acceptance of the gospel (p. 183). The phenomena experienced in revivals were not always well received though. Responses came from Princeton Seminary through Charles Hodge and Archibald Alexander as well as from the Restoration movement with Alexander Campbell. Caldwell carefully describes the features of their responses and visions for revival. He concludes with a brief summary and offers a helpful assessment of the factors and trajectories of revival theology.

This work is an excellent resource for anyone interested in understanding and exploring the complexities and commonalities of the theology of revivalists during the Great Awakenings. Robert Caldwell's expertise in these areas emerges in his writing, and he excels in conveying multifaceted issues in precise ways. He is careful to remain objective in his descriptions without advocating a theological agenda. On the practical side, he provides summaries at the end of each chapter that are quite helpful in condensing the content. This book will serve both the layperson and scholar well, and it ought to challenge us to call on God to do a fresh work among us today.

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Joe E. Trull and R. Robert Creech. *Ethics for Christian Ministry: Moral Formation for 21st-Century Leaders*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. 275 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0801098314. \$26.99

Commenting on the challenges facing the Church today, both friend and foe are apt to raise the issue of moral failure within ministerial ranks. Sadly, there is much fodder for the critique as reports of pastors felled by



egregious sin is a “regular front-page phenomenon.” Such is the characterization of Joe E. Trull and R. Robert Creech in the opening chapter of their recent book, *Ethics for Christian Ministry: Moral Formation for 21st-Century Leaders* (ECM). “Ministerial ethics can no longer be presumed,” they assert, and so they intend with the book a resource for educating ministerial students on the “ethical obligations contemporary clergy should assume in their personal and professional life” (p. x).

Neither Trull nor Creech are new to pastoring or to ministerial education. For the past decade, Creech has served on faculty at George W. Truett Theological Seminary, and before then he pastored for twenty-two years in Texas. Trull, likewise, has over two decades’ experience in pastoral ministry and more recently served a fifteen-year stint as a professor of Christian ethics at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where in 1993 he wrote his first book on ministerial ethics with the help of fellow Baptist James Carter. In its organization and content, *ECM* largely follows this seminal work as revised in 2004 and published under the title *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders*.

On structure, *ECM* features eight chapters and four appendices. In the first chapter, Trull explores the question of pastoring as a profession or calling and arrives at a “both/and” conclusion. Significantly, as professionals, ministers are “committed to certain ideals” that include adherence to a high standard of conduct (p. 21), and it is Trull’s express hope that his pastor-readers will, by the end of the book, be positioned to pen a “personal code of ethics” to guide them in ministry (pp. 21–23). Working towards that objective, Trull begins with a brief introduction to ethics (chapter 2) that assumes the classic three-fold division of character, conduct, and moral vision (“integrity”). In fleshing these out, Trull declares “the Bible is the primary resource” as it presents not just explicit commandments but also moral principles and the example of Christ (p. 28). Much, however, is to be gleaned, he insists, from reflection on Christian tradition and so he commends the reading of Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, and, of more recent and diverse vintage, Cahill, Hauerwas, and Verhey.

In the book’s mid-section Creech considers the practice of ministerial ethics with four foci in view, beginning with the pastor’s personal life (chapter 3). It is critical, Creech contends, that both pastor and congregation recognize the pastor’s “inherent vulnerabilities” and covenant together to develop “structures of support and accountability” (p. 59) to facilitate health in all dimensions (spiritual, emotional, and physical). In chapter 4, Creech focuses the discussion on the minister’s relation to the congregation. Love for the flock is paramount and manifests, he contends, as “competent proclamation, pastoral care, and leadership” (p. 77).

Interaction with fellow ministers is the focus of chapter 5. As he discusses how to deal with one’s predecessor, fellow staff, neighboring ministers “preaching the same gospel,” and, finally, one’s successor, Creech offers much good practical advice. In chapter 6—Creech’s final contribution—the focus is engagement beyond the walls of the church in ministry to the civic community that promotes “peace and justice.” In this chapter more than any other, Creech draws from the work of other scholars whom fellow Southern Baptists may be challenged to recognize or with whom they lack solid theological agreement.

In chapter 7, Trull returns with what may seem a detour for the book as he homes in on a particular issue—specifically, the scandal of clerical sex abuse. After noting its scope and impact, he lobbies for action, calling church leaders and members to advocate for “justice through due process and ministry to victims” (p. 176). They must also labor at prevention, however, and that, Trull contends, requires “guidelines and accountability” (p. 206). In chapter 8 he argues that such may best be facilitated by ministers adopting both a personal and a professional code of ethics, and in the book’s appendices, he provides a number of sample codes to stimulate the process for willing readers.

On general features, *ECM* presents well with a logical flow, few errors of grammar and syntax, and a style of writing accessible to students and non-academics. Gender-neutral language pervades, though, and serves to convey an unstated egalitarian conclusion on the question of women in the pastorate. The oblique delivery understates the importance of the issue as it concerns the book’s *raison d’être*. If Scripture is properly interpreted as limiting the role of pastor to men, then in projecting a contrary view *ECM* would clearly undercut the authors’ stated mission of helping equip the Church with leaders who strive for obedience to God’s will in every aspect of life. In sum, while the book’s egalitarian bent may prove a significant distraction for some readers, it certainly delivers much practical content that churchmen across the theological spectrum can accept.

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Sam Chan. *Evangelism in a Skeptical World: How to Make the Unbelievable News about Jesus More Believable*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018. 288 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0310534679. \$24.99.

Globalization, pluralistic contexts, and the rise of global Christianity leave some Christians in the twenty-first century scratching their heads. Is there a “correct” way to do evangelism? If so, what is it? The dizzying array of answers to these questions can be overwhelming or frustrating.

In the midst of such murky waters, where does one find a comprehensive evangelism book for the twenty-first century? Sam Chan, a City Bible Forum public evangelist in Australia, rises to meet the challenge in his book *Evangelism in a Skeptical World: How to Make the Unbelievable News about Jesus More Believable*. His book can also be accompanied by a 15-lecture video study, in which he tackles his topics with more depth.

Chan, a global Christian himself, claims that in today's changing world, there is no "one-size-fits-all" way to do evangelism. The method and medium can be shaped by the audience and the speaker. Though promoting a variety of methods, he continually harps, "Evangelism is defined by its message" (p. 37), firmly situating evangelism in the realm of gospel proclamation. Chan hopes that the flexibility in method encourages believers to be intentional when thinking through methodology, be less critical to those who do evangelism differently, and gain "a profound understanding that God uses our humanity ... to communicate his gospel" (p. 284).

Chan's chapter "A Theology of Evangelism" simultaneously grounds his evangelism to a theological foundation while laying the groundwork for his argument that evangelism is not bound to a single method. In it, he defines evangelism as "our human efforts of proclaiming this message [that Jesus Christ is Lord] ... and trusting and praying that God, in his sovereign will, will supernaturally use our human and natural means to effect his divine purposes" (p. 24). He succinctly covers important evangelism foundations such as the definition of the gospel, various roles in the evangelism process, and models of conversion. While operating within a specific theological tradition, Chan is not overly dogmatic to his position. Though some readers in other traditions may not agree with some facets of his theology of evangelism, they can still find value in Chan's work.

To answer the question of how to craft a culturally relevant but biblically faithful evangelistic presentation, Chan borrows from the world of missiology, discussing issues like gospel-cultural hermeneutics, storytelling, and contextualization. One of the strengths of his work is his emphasis on entering a culture's story, challenging the culture's story, and fulfilling the culture's story (pp. 159–66). Through this pattern, Chan advocates intentional, faithful gospel presentations that use cultural bridges to speak to the hearers' hearts in a way that resonates with them.

Chan not only claims multiple evangelistic methodologies are valid, he also dedicates large chunks of the book to providing specific examples. He shares multiple Bible stories that illustrate how God works through a variety of different evangelistic models. He provides simple step-by-step simple instructions to build gospel presentations that take into account

the audience, the platform, and the evangelist. He describes multiple gospel metaphors and how to present the gospel using each one. He gives examples of contextualized gospel presentations, storytelling, and various evangelistic talks. He defines common traits of postmodernism and then describes ways to faithfully share with Postmoderns.

While much of his book reads like an evangelism primer for any person, Chan's chapters on storytelling, evangelistic topical talks, and evangelistic expository talks exhibit that he is writing for students preparing for ministry. Though he mentions storytelling as a way to present the gospel, he spends the majority of the chapter on formal, discussion-based storytelling, skimming over the prolific uses of storytelling as an informal entry point for an individual or group. There is little mention about how to transition into a story, how to gauge interest, or how to move from the story to broader gospel presentation. While the rest of the book could appeal broadly to the normal layperson in the pew, these three chapters focus on opportunities that will not normally be available to everyone.

By pushing against a set evangelistic method, Chan attempts to help a generation maintain theological faithfulness while being culturally relevant to an ever-changing non-Christian context. His argument, examples, and instructions do not disappoint. Chan integrates missiological strategies, theoretical and practical evangelism, the reality of global Christianity, and conservative evangelical moorings to give his readers a work set apart from other contemporary evangelism textbooks. It is both theologically robust and profoundly practical. His book empowers the believer with both a knowledge of evangelism's fundamentals and the practical tools needed to actually go out and do it.

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Jason S. Sexton, ed. *Four Views on the Church's Mission*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 208 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0310522737. \$16.95.

What are we to make of the debates that surround the idea of missions and the mission of the church? Why is it so hard for evangelicals to find an agreed upon definition? How can evangelicals decide about the role of evangelism, church planting, social work, and other holistic ministries within the mission of the church?

This volume seeks to address, though not wholly solve, questions like the ones above. *Four Views on the Church's Mission* is part of the Counterpoints series published by Zondervan. According to the publisher, the

series is designed to encourage dialogue by comparing and critiquing varying views on issues important to Christians. In the current volume, the writers are seeking to correct what they perceive to be a problem among evangelicals—divorcing missions from the normal, congregational activity of the church. They are concerned that the common understanding of mission is “something the church does, largely outside the church” (p. 11). Beyond this shared concern, each of the contributors develops his own theological description of the church’s mission.

As with all the other books in this series, each view is presented by its proponent. Responses and critiques by the other three contributors follow that presentation. The format provides a very helpful example of theological development as well as a model of scholarly debate. The contributors are able to highlight where their respective views are similar as well as where and why they differ. The format also keeps each presenter honest as it requires care in the presentation of one’s ideas and in the way others are represented. In the end, the reader has a thorough understanding of the issues at hand and a grasp of the different theological positions.

This book presents four competing views of the mission of the church. The first, represented by Jonathan Leeman, is called the “Soteriological Mission.” This is the more traditional understanding of the church’s mission. It emphasizes the priority of individual conversion and redemption.

The second position is called “Participatory Mission” and is presented by Christopher J. H. Wright. The chapter is a summary of Wright’s book *The Mission of God*. It suggests that the mission of the church includes everything that God’s mission includes. While Wright does place emphasis on conversion and gospel proclamation, he also comments that everything the church does is its mission. It is quite interesting that even though Wright includes many different elements in his discussion, he makes a point to highlight creation care as a central element.

The third position is called “Contextual Mission.” This idea is presented by John R. Franke and it advances the idea that the mission of the church will take on different characteristics and emphasize different elements in different places (i.e., in different contexts). He suggests that the witness of the church acts as the first fruits and as a sign that God’s Kingdom is not present in the world today. The church’s mission brings healing to broken communities in very specific yet varying ways.

Finally, the fourth position is called the “Sacramental Mission.” It is presented by Peter J. Leithart. This position suggests that the church’s mission is shaped by the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Each of these demonstrates the vitality of faith and the Christian community. As a new, redeemed community, the church is then called to engage

in social and political ministries in an attempt to repair the damage caused by sin in this world.

The contributors (and responders) each present their ideas clearly. They also do an excellent job of demonstrating not only where they differ, but also why. Each engages the biblical storyline from OT through NT, and each shows how his position is supported in the overarching biblical narrative. This discussion is helpful for the reader because of the temptation we all face—failing to grasp the biblical basis of positions different to ours.

As the contributors advance their different theories, one idea becomes abundantly clear. The issues that separate these men cannot be settled by agreeing on a definition of the critical terms. Instead, the differences rest on interpretative decisions throughout the biblical narrative—most significantly on the continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments.

I think that any person interested in the debate/discussion about missions and the place of the local church in the mission of God will benefit from reading this book. It is well written, and each contributor represents himself and his position well.

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Duane Alexander Miller. *Two Stories of Everything: The Competing Metanarratives of Islam and Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Credo House Publishers, 2017. 160 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1625860965. \$15.99.

Many people outside the church or mosque assume Muslims and Christians spend their time quibbling about certain universal religious categories such as “deity,” “morality,” and “ritual.” Reduced to such abstractions, any religion’s ultimate claims about human destiny can be safely compartmentalized as having little relevance to the modern quest for “human flourishing.” Anglican missiologist Duane Miller’s latest work challenges the reader to escape this path of gross oversimplification and, instead, view Islam and Christianity not simply as tame “religions” but as “metanarratives” demanding a reply. “Religions” may indeed quibble over doctrines and practices. “Metanarratives,” by comparison, make comprehensive claims to explain the world, humanity, and human destiny in all places and all times, summoning the hearer to either affirm or deny them. Those willing to accept the challenge and ponder the ramifications Miller outlines may learn just how dramatically the despised category of “religion” shapes the future under the very nose of Western secularism.

Miller accomplishes his task by comparing and contrasting how Islam

and Christianity conceive of human origins, human nature, Israel, Jesus, Muhammad, the community of God, and eschatology, summarizing it all with a helpful glossary. To present both worldviews plausibly in a short space, the author must write with great brevity and selectivity. Nevertheless, Miller ably demonstrates the stark differences between Islam and Christianity while amply footnoting his sources. By laying the basic groundwork in this way, Miller allows readers to explore the issues more fully for themselves. Along the way, he introduces interesting nuances of each respective creed, from Anselm's views on the atonement in *Cur Deus Homo* to the doctrine of abrogation in Qu'ranic hermeneutics.

As both a scholarly student of Islam and Christianity and former academic dean and professor at Nazareth Evangelical Theological Seminary for nearly a decade, Miller speaks as one with an intimate professional and personal knowledge of both faiths. He displays a deep respect and affection for Muslim peoples while also reflecting a passion for their incorporation into Christ. This nuanced regard for Islam alone should commend the book to the Western Church. Miller's analysis equips the church to find confidence in the distinct message of the gospel while recognizing its own deep wounds, which Islam's strengths expose.

Readers, of necessity, will be disappointed in such an introductory work when their pet issues are not shared by the author. Some readers will frown upon Miller's doctrine of sin which skews Orthodox, not Reformed, in trajectory. Others will lament Miller's failure to chronicle Muhammad's failings in detail while some will consider that he has white-washed the evils associated with the Crusades. He could be considered a "Zionist" for his comments on Israel by some while others, naturally, will think him not nearly zealous enough on behalf of the Jewish state! These criticisms, however, reflect the price paid for attempting to present "mere Christianity" instead of any particular sectarian presentation of the Christian faith.

Upon reflection then, Miller's work might be said to present "Three stories of everything." In the act of describing Islam and Christianity, he ultimately critiques the dominant metanarrative of our age, secular humanism. In fact, despite their differences, Islam and Christianity share this in common:

[They] resist privatization and compartmentalization. The Enlightenment vision was that ... society would be able to move beyond the superstition of medieval Christendom into a brave new world of reason, analysis, individualism, and modernity.... This project of discerning "objective reason" from the "subjective religious faith" is from the very beginning, an impossible task. (p. xii)

Islam and Christianity both pronounce Western secularism to be dead and dying. The practical question Miller explores at various junctures is which way of life will ultimately take secularism's place. Miller offers some possibilities that Western Christians may find disconcerting, reflecting their own concessions to secularism.

In any event, pastors seeking a respectful Christian comparison of Islam and Christianity would do well to help their people work through this book. The average Christian reader should have no problem accessing the information independently. Writing for a popular audience, Miller does so without sensationalism, while still offering honest assessments of the current situation the average Christian won't otherwise encounter. The scholar may not learn new information here, but Miller's approach serves as a worthy model for taking potentially difficult material and presenting it in an accessible way for Christ's Church. This work is well suited for church-based study groups, for individual study, and even as a classroom text in some settings.

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