SOUTHEASTERN
THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

Vol. 2, No. 2 Winter 2011

Southeastern Theological Review
Is published biannually for the faculty of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary seeks to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ by equipping students to serve the church and fulfill the Great Commission."

Submissions to the journal are welcomed and should be directed to the editor, Heath Thomas (hthomas@sebts.edu). Submissions to *Southeastern Theological Review* are evaluated by double-blind peer review. Articles submitted to *STR* should present original work in their field. Manuscripts should conform to the *SBL Handbook of Style*.

Any queries regarding book reviews should be directed to the review editor, Michael Travers (mtravers@sebts.edu). Reviews should conform to the *SBL Handbook of Style*.

Annual Subscription Rates: $30 (regular) $15 (student)
(both electronic and hardcopy)

For more information visit: www.southeasterntheologicalreview.com

Direct all correspondence to: Attn: Editor, *Southeastern Theological Review*
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
PO BOX 1889, Wake Forest, NC 27588-1889
USA

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ISSN 2156-9401

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Mission, Discipleship, and Hermeneutics: Introducing the Current Volume

Heath A. Thomas
Editor, Southeastern Theological Review

Introduction

It is a joy to preface this volume of *STR* as the new editor for the journal. Accepting this post is both a privilege and honor, and I am grateful to the invitation from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary to serve in this capacity. Dr. David Hogg, the former (and first!) editor, has taken a position at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University. Dr. Hogg served with skill and verve, and *STR* extends our gratitude to him for his hard work and gracious spirit. We wish him well on all his future endeavors. Still, we have not allowed him to go quietly into the night, so to speak, as *STR* has requested that he serve on the editorial board, to which he agreed. With this said, *STR* enters into a new phase with both a new editor and a new editorial board. The board itself is made up of faculty from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, but it is in place to mention that the board is also comprised of scholars from institutions outside of North Carolina.

The Mission of *STR*

The mission of *STR* coincides with the mission of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Namely, *STR* exists "to equip the Church to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and fulfill the Great Commission." At root, this mission is grounded in an understanding of the Lordship of Christ and the coming Kingdom that he brings forth. The Church is the means by which the gospel of the Lord Christ is proclaimed and obeyed in this world; we testify to the perfect life, atoning death, victorious resurrection, and transcendent ascension of King Jesus. The Church proclaims the forgiveness of sins offered in his death and resurrection and lives under his lordship as the King over creation. The Church, then, gathered by Christ and united under him, is the means by which God's Kingdom is brought to bear on this world. Scriptures disclose this reality, and the Scriptures provide the norm that norms both proclamation and obedience for the Christian life. *STR* is one vehicle to search out the Scriptures in a rigorous and academic manner to equip

the Church for both gospel proclamation and gospel obedience. *STR* aims to help the church think well and deeply in the areas of mission, biblical studies, theology, philosophical theology, historical theology, and practical theology. In this way, *STR* aims to equip the Church to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and fulfill the Great Commission.

The Present Volume

This journal focuses in large part upon the central place of mission in Christian identity. To this end, it is a privilege to dialogue with an esteemed missiologist and theologian who has spent his life critically engaging this topic: Dr. Michael Goheen of Trinity Western University and Regent College. His recent publication *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* is featured in the first two essays. In this volume Dr. Goheen in this book that the biblical story illumines the marks of a biblical and missional church. Grasping the biblical story also informs faithful Christian discipleship. The first essay introduces Dr. Goheen a bit more fully and it provides an interview with him on this significant monograph. In the second essay, Dr. Bruce Ashford of Southeastern Seminary provides an extensive and critical review of *A Light to the Nations*. Those who are interested in the intersection of biblical studies, theology, and mission will not be disappointed.

The third essay is written by Dr. Jason Hood of Christ United Methodist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. In keeping with the theme of the first two essays, Dr. Hood explores the theme of Paul's emphasis upon collection for the poor and how this relates to Christian mission. In his analysis, the reader will discover marks of faithful discipleship as advocated in the New Testament.

The final two essays diverge from the theme of mission, and rather illumine the area of biblical hermeneutics. Dr. Richard Briggs of Cranmer Hall at Durham University (UK) explores what it means to talk about the "meaning" of biblical texts. Utilizing the work of J. L. Austin, Richard suggests that meaning is an important focus for biblical interpretation, but it reveals its importance in a localized way rather than in overly-developed and global theories of biblical meaning. Finally, keeping pace with the emphasis upon hermeneutics, Dr. Robert Cole of Southeastern Seminary explores how Isaiah 6 fits within its immediate literary context, carrying with it eschatological overtures. This is a literary and contextual reading that diverges from other historical-critical approaches to the same text. So mission, discipleship and hermeneutics comprise the essential themes addressed in this edition of *STR*, and the editorial board prays that it will be a stimulating and challenging read.

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A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story

STR Interviews Dr. Michael Goheen

Introduction

STR had the privilege of talking with Dr. Michael Goheen on the publication of his monograph on the missional church and the biblical story. He is the Geneva Professor of Worldview and Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (USA), Teaching Fellow in Mission and World Christianity at Regent College (Canada), Fellow in Mission and Worldview Studies at The Paidea Centre for Public Theology (Canada). Despite these significant academic achievements, Mike cannot be accused of living in an ivory tower apart from the gritty realities of the church on the ground! He has served in ministry throughout his life and presently is a minister of preaching at New Westminster Christian Reformed Church in Burnaby, British Columbia.

Mike's work is characterized by a distinctive integration of *topoi*: biblical studies, worldview, mission and theology. His previous publications deal with precisely these topics from particular angles. In his co-authored volume (with Dr. Craig Bartholomew) *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Your Place in the Biblical Story* (Baker Academic, 2005), Mike traced the contours of the biblical story articulating the central themes of the kingdom of God and covenant. The goal of the redemptive-history presented in the Bible is the actual coming of the kingdom of God which is consummated in new creation. The insights from *Drama* are brought to bear on the topic of worldview in his co-authored volume (again with Dr. Craig Bartholomew) *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Baker Academic, 2008). In this volume he articulates a biblical worldview that is grounded in the biblical story and one that confronts the counterfeit worldviews of the day. Expanding from this same worldview emphasis, Goheen co-edited a volume with Erin Glanville entitled *The Gospel and Globalization: Exploring the Religious Roots of a Globalized World* (Regent College, 2009). The volume articulates how Christians within the context of a Christian worldview might provide a faithful and constructive response to the powerful cultural force of globalization.

Each of the previous volumes helps to set the context for *A Light to the Nations*. All have in common a deep rootage in the biblical story. Each volume observes and evaluates reality through this biblical witness. Each volume professes that God's ways with creation find their climax in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The church is then related to God and world in Christ, and they find their purpose and direction in and through God's previous activity of redemption. Because they are rooted in this drama of the Bible, the topics of worldview and mission become points of emphasis in the integrated arguments of Goheen's volumes. Further, the Bible, worldview, and mission become avenues that articulate the substance of theology—God, world, and the structure and direction of reality. The reader will note that a number of these themes will emerge in the interview below.

Interview with Michael Goheen

STR: *Why did you write this book?*

Goheen: I have had an interest in missional ecclesiology for some time. I grew up in the Baptist church where evangelism was extremely important. As I was shaped more by the reformational tradition [i.e., Calvinistic Reformed tradition stemming through Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, Albert Wolters and Gordon Spykman] I began to see the breadth of the gospel and recognized that mission was broader but still inclusive of evangelism.

I became a church planter and pastor in my early years and struggled with my ecclesiology and its relation to mission and evangelism. The two traditions at work in my denomination at the time were a confessionalist tradition that held rigidly to the Westminster Confession of Faith and a church growth tradition shape by social science. The first was biblical, rooted in rigorous theology, but culturally irrelevant. The second was quite relevant but quite shallow scripturally and theologically.

I found a way beyond these two that was both faithful to the gospel and culturally relevant in the work of Lesslie Newbigin. I wrote my Ph.D. dissertation on Newbigin's missionary ecclesiology. I originally contracted with Baker to give an overview of missional ecclesiology that would deal with biblical, historical, and theological foundations, the internal life of the church, the church's mission in the world, and its relation to culture. However, some pastor friends who were reading and helping me with the book challenged me to do a whole book on biblical and exegetical work for missional church because there was so little of it in the missional church movement. I took their advice.

I wanted to challenge the church in at least two ways. First, we need to develop a missional self-identity in the West. That is our role in the biblical story. We exist for the sake of the world to witness to the coming kingdom in life, word, and deed. Second, we need to develop a missional encounter with culture. We have been domesticated and compromised by the idols of Western culture because of the myths of a Christian culture and of a neutral secular or pluralistic culture. I was hoping to provide some biblical insight to bolster these two needs.

STR: *In your book, you spend a great deal of time on the Old Testament. In fact, you devote two major chapters to this portion of Scripture. Why is the Old Testament important in generating a missional ecclesiology?*

Goheen: If we start our ecclesiology in the gospels or epistles we have missed the greater part of the biblical story. Perhaps a few observations can clarify why this is so problematic. Central to Jesus' mission was to be the eschatological shepherd who would gather the lost sheep of Israel. His mission was to gather and renew God's people to fulfill the calling they had abandoned. Who were those people? What was their mission? That can only be answered by going to the Old Testament. Another observation is that the majority of images used of the church in the New Testament come from the Old Testament people of God. To understand those images one must do the exegetical work in the Old Testament. So, in a nutshell, the New Testament people of God pick up the calling of Israel in a new redemptive era.

STR: *In Chapter 5 ("The Death and Resurrection of Jesus and the Church's Missional Identity"), you draw together the relationship between cosmic and individual facets of the gospel and Christ's death/resurrection. Why is this important for the church?*

Goheen: The Bible tells the story of universal history. It begins with creation and ends with new creation. Jesus is creator, lord of history, savior, and judge. Too often we reduce the gospel to Jesus as savior or worse Jesus as our individual savior or even worse Jesus as savior of our souls. We individualize the gospel and use the Bible as a personal theology or ethical book. But it is not that kind of book. It tells the true story of the whole world. It is in this story that we must find our place. So I believe that the most faithful way of dealing with Scripture is cosmic, communal, and individual. By that I mean the biblical story tells a story of comic renewal. Within that story there is a community that participates in that renewal. Each individual as part of that community must appropriate the gospel for themselves. I believe G. C. Berkouwer is right when he says that Western (especially North American) Christians don't deny the cosmic and communal but simply neglect it. He calls this "soteriological self-centeredness." We put the individual in the center and everything else revolves around him or her. We need a Copernican revolution where Christ and his cosmic salvation is put back at the center and our lives revolve around and are incorporated into that.

STR: *In the same chapter, you perceptively draw out missional implications that arise from the cross. Your insights here speak against an either/or dichotomization between particular models of the atonement, whether Christus Victor or penal-substitutionary. In your view, why is it important to allow both models to have a full voice for understanding and embodying the Church's mission?*

Goheen: First off, we need all the biblical images to understand what was accomplished at the cross. There are numerous images in Scripture, and to reduce

the breadth of what God accomplished to just one of those—whether it be Christus Victor or penal-substitutionary—is to look at a diamond through only one of its facets. But also a focus on the penal-substitutionary atonement (which I want to insist is biblical!) exclusively misses the fact that the cross also is a power to transform our lives. We too easily focus on the cross as that place where we find forgiveness and are justified. That is true but it is also the power of God unto salvation. The cross dealt with both the guilt and power of sin. Other images open this up more fully. Also the exclusive use of one image can again individualize the atonement. Substitutionary atonement can be reduced to Jesus dying for my sin—and miss the sin of the world! Archetypal images are not so easily individualized. Jesus' death is the end of the old age and his resurrection the inauguration of the new. This brings a cosmic and communal dimension to the cross. So in summary many images will keep us from individualizing the atonement and from reducing what it accomplished.

STR: *How would you define "the gospel?" If we take, say, 1 Cor 15:3–5 as our departure point as a "bullet-point summary" of the gospel, how does that verse draw us back into the biblical story as you have drawn it out in your book?*

Goheen: The gospel needs to be defined narratively I believe. A quick perusal of the gospel shows us that in 1 Corinthians 15 it focuses on his death and resurrection. In Mark 1 it is on the kingdom. In Galatians 3 it is pointing back to Genesis 12. So the good news is that God is restoring the creation and human life to its original *shalom*. This is promised and developed in the Old Testament. Its arrival is announced by Jesus at the outset of his ministry. It is accomplished in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Further there are many benefits that come from Christ's work that are good news—forgiveness, justification, adoption, sanctification, hope, love, peace with God, and so on. So I don't think we should try to capture the good news in a formula or a few bullet points. Rather the unfolding of the story of the Bible helps us see the breadth of this good news as well as its concentration in the work of Jesus.

STR: *Why do you speak of the church as being missional in word and in deed? Is not evangelism primarily a verbal proclamation of "good news of Jesus" as described in the New Testament? Is evangelism as "verbal proclamation" not enough?*

Goheen: Once I was speaking to an assembly of high school students. I announced that I was the greatest trumpet player in the world. I then took a trumpet and blew two or three of the worst sounding notes you have ever heard. I then pointed out that words are empty if not validated by our lives. Evangelism is the announcement of the good news that in Christ salvation has come into the world. But people have the right to say "where?" If we cannot point to a living community and lives that show that God's power has indeed invaded history, then our words are empty. Our words interpret our deeds and lives, and our lives and deeds authenticate our words. Surely one sees this in the ministry of Jesus where his life, words and deeds revealed the kingdom. Nietzsche

once said: "They would have to sing better songs for me to learn to have faith in their Redeemer: and his disciples would have to look more redeemed!" That doesn't mean that our words will completely lack power if our lives and deeds betray the gospel. The gospel does have its own power. But it will mean that it will weaken our witness and we will be judged for that. A quick look at Acts 4.32–34 is helpful. In v. 33 we see that the apostles powerfully testified to the resurrection of Jesus. That verse is sandwiched between a statement that tells us that the church embodied that gospel—was one in heart and mind, generous with their possessions, pursued mercy and justice. The verbal witness was powerful because of the demonstration of the power of the resurrection in the community.

STR: *In Chapter 6 ("The Missional Church in the New Testament Story"), you give a broad definition of "witness" drawn from Acts 1:7–8. Your definition includes testifying to Christ with the whole of life. Why do you do this? Is it in any way wrong to speak of "witnessing" as a verbal presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ?*

Goheen: With Darrell Guder I like to say we *live* the witness, *say* the witness, and *do* the witness. That is, we announced that God's comprehensive salvation has come in Jesus Christ. Our lives embody that salvation and testify to its power. Our deeds are signs that also point to the coming of salvation. All three must be working together for a powerful witness to the good news.

STR: *Sometimes the gospel has been watered down to an empty social "gospel" that evacuates the message of the death and resurrection of Christ to simply "good works." Can you speak to this in the 20th century? Do you see that this a temptation of the church today?*

Goheen: Unfortunately in the early 20th century a split between word and deed resulted from a reaction among revivalists and fundamentalists (as they called themselves later) to the social "gospel." The social "gospel" movement was rightly concerned for politics, society, culture, and so forth. However, it was captured by the naturalism of the Enlightenment worldview and was heretical. It lost the heart of the gospel. That is why I have put gospel in quotes. Sadly this played itself out in our historical development. In our reaction to this we stressed the importance of verbally proclaiming the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection. This is understandable but unfortunate. I believe for a number of reasons that today we are moving beyond this dichotomy. Part of it is the rich work done by many on the ministry of Jesus. Also the third world church has challenged us to rethink our views of mission. Yet old traditions die hard, and I suspect we will continue to struggle with this unbiblical dichotomy for a while yet.

STR: *As we see it, one of the important facets of your work is a strong emphasis upon linking mission and salvation history. Why is this the case?*

Goheen: The church's mission must begin with God's mission. A good way of defining mission is that our mission is faithful only as we participate in God's

mission. God's mission is to restore the creation and the life of humanity from sin. The Bible tells that historical narrative. God sets out on the long road of redemption to restore the world and his people as his kingdom. Central to God's mission is to choose a people that will bear the promise of his renewal in their lives. The fundamental identity of the church and the nature of its mission must be found in terms of this role given to it in the mission of God. So mission and ecclesiology can only be understood narratively, as we trace our role in the story.

STR: *Mike, clearly you have a pastor's heart and have served as pastor as well as a professor. If you are teaching mission in the local church, then how do you do it? And where do you begin?*

Goheen: I begin with the role and identity of God's people in the biblical story. Often we start with a certain definition of mission and then go to the Scripture to find proof-texts that fit that view of mission. We need to treat the whole of Scripture and the whole literary structures of various books and not just proof-texts like the Great Commission. For example, when we put Matthew 28.16–20 in the context of the whole biblical story and as the climactic statement of the book of Mathew there is so much more there than we have seen in the past. So I begin with the biblical story. But within that telling of the story, at least for a congregation, I would constantly draw out the numerous implications of the text for our mission today. This is tricky. Those interested in mission are often impatient and want to see the implications of the Bible for mission today quickly while biblical scholars are often so immersed in the original context and so aware of the hermeneutical difficulties of bridging the horizons that they never speak to the present. It is a sad state. So we need to be very careful as we struggle to merge the horizon of Scripture with our own, but it must be done. The Bible provides the light for our mission. So for a congregation I would reflect at various points on the significance of what is happening in the biblical story for our mission today.

STR: *In your book, you draw a distinction between "mission" and "missions." What is that distinction and why is it important?*

Goheen: The distinction between "mission" and "missions" is one I take from Lesslie Newbigin. "Mission" is the calling of God's people in the world to witness to the salvation accomplished in Christ in the whole of their lives. It involves every part of their life and is in life, word, and deed. However, "missions" (with an "s") is the task of establishing a witness to the gospel in places where there is none or where it is very weak. It will usually be cross-cultural. The problem is that our older colonial views of mission have caused us to see everything that is overseas as mission. The problem with this is (as an *Urbana* video has pointed out) that we are spending well over 90% of our cross-cultural resources in places where the church is strong. That means a small amount is devoted to taking the gospel to places where it has never been

heard. Bryant Myer calls this "the scandal of a disproportionate allocation of mission resources." Newbigin saw this already in the 1960s and, when he was editor of the International Review of Missions, refused to remove the "s" from missions even under great pressure to do so. He wanted to protect the specific task of taking the good news to people and places where there was no witness.

In the 19th century "missions" would have been from the West to the non-West because the church was strong in the West and almost non-existent in the non-West. However, that is not the case today. "Missions" cannot be defined geographically like this. So in the 19th century mission was reduced to "missions." Sadly today much missional church literature in reaction has forgotten "missions." "Missions" is both a necessary task of the missional church and the ultimate horizon of the church's mission. So its eclipse is serious.

STR: *Mike, thanks for giving of your time to talk with us about your very important work. We pray that it would continue to serve to lift high the Name of Jesus.*

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A Review Essay of Michael Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*

Bruce Riley Ashford
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Introduction

Historically, evangelical ecclesiologies have focused on the church's organization, ordinances, and ministries. These realities, however, cannot properly be understood except in tandem with a serious exploration of the church's core identity and self-understanding. *A Light to the Nations* provides just such an exposition of the church's identity, arguing that the church is missional to its very core. The author, Michael W. Goheen, writes primarily for theological students and pastors, but succeeds in producing a book also accessible to thoughtful laypeople. This essay will argue that the book is a significant contribution in the disciplines of ecclesiology and theology of mission and, in spite of several minor points of critique, is strongly recommended. In addition to *A Light to the Nations*, he is the author or editor of five books which span the disciplines of theology, missiology, worldview, and intellectual history.[1]

Summary

A Light to the Nations is structured by the progressive unfolding of the biblical storyline. Goheen makes his argument in seven movements, which correspond to the first seven chapters of the book. In the first chapter, the author provides a summary statement of the significance of ecclesiology in relation to the concept

1. Michael W. Goheen, *"As the Father Has Sent Me, I am Sending You": J. E. Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Publishing House, 2000); Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004); Margaret O'Gara and Michael W. Goheen, eds., *That the World May Believe: Essays on Mission and Unity in Honour of George Vandervelde* (Lanham, MA: University Press of America, 2006); Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); Erin Glanville and Michael W. Goheen, eds., *The Gospel and Globalization: Exploring the Religious Roots of a Globalized World* (Berkeley, CA: Regent, 2009).

of mission. At the beginning of the biblical narrative, God responds to human sin by promising to redeem his image-bearers and restore his good creation. In keeping his promise, he chose a community who would proclaim and embody his redemption and restoration in the midst of human history. This community is a glimpse of what God had originally intended in creation and a foretaste of what he would provide in the future. God chose Israel to be that community, and continually renewed them as they failed in their task. Through the prophets, he promised Israel that one day he would give them a new heart, forgive their sin, and shape them into a new community. In accord with this promise, God claimed a decisive victory over Satan and sin through the crucifixion and resurrection and sent his newly gathered "Israel" to the ends of the earth as a tangible sign of his inbreaking kingdom. In other words, God's church is missional at its very core.

For many Christians, "mission" refers primarily to the church's geographic expansion and human activities to forward that expansion. Goheen, however, argues that mission is more comprehensive than geographic expansion and is located primarily in God's actions and only secondarily in human activities. The mission of God is to redeem his image-bearers and restore his good creation. The mission of God's people is two-fold: toward God, we live for his glory, and toward the nations, we mediate his blessings. International "missions" is a subset of God's mission and the church's mission, whereby God's church proclaims and embodies his gospel among the nations, and usually does so by crossing geographical and cultural boundaries.

In the second chapter, the author writes about God's formation of Israel as a missional people. Before one can understand the New Testament church, one must understand the Old Testament people of God. In Old Testament terms, mission did not consist of intentional activities to proclaim God's Word across geographical boundaries. Instead, it consisted of Israel's calling to confront the idolatry of the nations by embodying God's design for human life and universal history, so that the nations might come to know and love the true and living God. Goheen focuses on Genesis 12:1–3 and Exodus 19:3–6 to make his case. From the first passage, the author points out that God elected Abraham for the sake of mission, to make Abraham a great nation through whom God would bless all nations. From the second passage, Goheen argues that God gave the law as a way of encapsulating his intention for Israel to live their lives comprehensively under God's authority, embodying his original creational intentions, providing a foretaste of his future restoration, and setting forth a contrast with the nations' idolatry.

In the third chapter, the author shows how Israel's missional calling remained during her time as a loose confederation of tribes, as a kingdom, and as an exiled and scattered people. During these successive eras, Israel repeatedly failed in her calling, and the prophets continually pointed to a time when Israel would be gathered with the nations, serving God. The fourth chapter points to the in-breaking of that very kingdom through the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus announced that the kingdom had already arrived and described the kingdom as his powerful presence and his eschatological salvation. Through his miracles, Jesus provided signs of the

kingdom, reversing the horrific consequences of evil. In his teaching, Jesus called Israel to repentance so that they might be a light to the nations as God originally intended. In his instructions to his disciples, he challenged them to participate consciously and consistently in the inbreaking of his kingdom.

The fifth chapter centers on Jesus' death and resurrection. Goheen rightly observes that evangelicals have often left the resurrection's significance unexplored, treating it merely as an apologetic device. Instead, Goheen urges us to understand the cosmic and communal significance of the cross and resurrection. The resurrection is the beginning of the age to come whereby God restores Israel, gathers in the Gentiles, and promises the restoration of the entire created order. The resurrection signals that God is sending eschatological Israel, the church, to accomplish his mission as they are empowered by his Spirit. The sixth chapter focuses on the early church's mission. Just as Israel was called to live as a contrast community among the nations, so the early church is called to be a contrast community among the nations even to the ends of the earth. Unlike Israel, however, Christ commanded the early church to take the gospel not only to Jerusalem, but also to the ends of the earth.[2] Furthermore, the early church is empowered by the Holy Spirit as a post-resurrection witness to Jesus Christ.

The seventh chapter sets forth several New Testament images of the church—people of God, new creation, body of Christ, temple of the Spirit, and diaspora. Goheen argues that these images are missional, stimulating and motivating us to missionality in a way that mere prose and rational argumentation cannot. The eighth chapter summarizes the main threads of Goheen's argument thus far in the book, challenging the reader to participate in God's mission by continuing the mission given to Israel, Jesus, and the early church. The ninth chapter closes out the book by giving a picture of what a missional church might look like today, suggesting that such a church whose worship nurtures missional identity, is empowered by gospel preaching, and is devoted to communal prayer. Further, it strives to live as a contrast community, understands its cultural context, seeks a missionary encounter in its callings in the world, practices organic evangelism, and is deeply involved in the needs of its neighborhood and world. Finally, it is involved in cross-cultural missions, equipped with well-trained leaders, parents, and small groups, and committed to expressing the unity of the body of Christ.

Critical Interaction

A Light to the Nations is a significant contribution to the disciplines of missiology and ecclesiology. *First and foremost, Goheen provides an exposition of the church's mission and the missional church in light of the entire biblical testimony*. Goheen structures the book and unfolds his argument by tracing the biblical storyline from

2. As Goheen points out, "Jerusalem" should not be Westernized or individualized; Jerusalem is charged with theological and eschatological significance, signifying God's promise to restore Israel first and only then to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

creation and the fall to redemption and new creation. The narrative as a whole, rather than some particular verse or passage within the narrative, drives his understanding of the missional church.[3] Instead of cherry picking the Great Commission passages as his only biblical building blocks (and focusing exclusively on international missions), he focuses on the whole sweep of the narrative in order to make sense of God's mission, Israel's mission, the church's mission, and international or cross-cultural missions. On the whole, he renders these concepts in a biblically faithful and meaningful manner.

For Goheen, mission is four-fold. *God's mission* is to redeem his image-bearers and to restore his good creation from the ravages of sin (19, 191). In the Genesis account, we learn that God created man and woman in his image and likeness and placed them in the Garden in a state of shalom (universal flourishing). Man and woman sinned against God, however, breaking with his creational design and disrupting his intended shalom. In the aftermath of their sin, God ultimately responded by choosing Israel. *Israel's mission* was to be a contrast community, bearing witness to the true and living God in contradistinction to pagan idolatry (25). Israel continually forsook her calling to be a light to the nations, choosing instead to look for her own salvation and for the condemnation of the nations. Upon this backdrop, Jesus announced that the kingdom had arrived and called Israel once again to be a contrast community. During this time, God was breaking off some branches (those Jews who did not believe) and grafting in some branches (Gentiles who do believe). Thus grafted, *the church's mission* is to be a contrast community, bringing glory to God and drawing the nations to him in worship as they proclaim the gospel in word and deed (122, 191). In so doing, the church will be led to participate in *cross-cultural* or *international missions*, as it takes the gospel to those who have never heard (148–51). Through these four interrelated concepts, Goheen is able to hold together the broad range of biblical testimony concerning the missional nature of God's church.

Second, Goheen provides a persuasive biblical theological argument that the church's mission is comprehensive—it is sent into the world to glorify God and bear witness to the nations, and to do so in every dimension of human life and culture. This comprehensive view of the church's mission is anchored in creational realities, illustrated by Old Testament law, and brought to fruition in a new heavens and earth replete with creational and cultural realities. God's creational design was for man and woman to live a life characterized by *shalom*, practicing loving dominion in the context of their flourishing relationships with God, each other, and the

3. Late 20th century missiology often has been crafted with little or no attention to biblical theology. Manifold missiological texts rely primarily or exclusively on pragmatic considerations, sociology, anthropology, business marketing, and other disciplines. Goheen's is one of an increasing number of proposals that seeks to position mission in light of the overarching biblical narrative. See Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003); Arthur F. Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003); Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006); and Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010).

created order. God's designs for man's well-being were comprehensive in nature; they covered all of created reality. After the fall, however, shalom was broken and God's creational intentions were distorted in an equally comprehensive manner. Although God's creation was still structurally good, humanity's sin directed it toward idolatrous ends.[4]

God called Israel to be a distinctive people who lived a compelling lifestyle in front of the nations, bearing witness to God's glory and embodying his original intentions for human life. Toward that end, he gave Israel the law which showed them how to live their lives comprehensively under his glory, including such diverse areas as family relationships, religious worship, economic dealings, non-human creation care, and commercial ethics (39). In other words, no single aspect of life was exempt from being brought under YHWH's lordship: "This is why the law's instructions to Israel cover the whole scope of human life. The people of Israel now serve a new covenant Lord, the God of creation. They owe him their undivided loyalty and must consecrate their social, economic, familial, and political structures—indeed, the whole of their personal, social, and cultural lives—to him" (40). Likewise, today's missional church must make comprehensive assessments of its social and cultural context, discerning the underlying idolatrous beliefs and speaking the gospel prophetically at those points of idolatry (211–23). Further, God calls his people to proclaim and embody the gospel in their workplaces and communities (213–15). In so doing, we are a foretaste of the new heavens and earth, where Christ will be Lord indeed of all dimensions of redeemed society and culture. Our comprehensive missional calling, therefore, is rooted in the Bible's creational, redemptive, and eschatological teachings.

Goheen's argument for the comprehensive nature of the church's mission provides a necessary corrective to an unbiblical theological paradigm that has flourished among evangelicals and has undergirded various misguided missiologies. This paradigm views the fall as having corrupted God's good creation in its very being. Material (and therefore cultural) realities are inherently bad, while immaterial "spiritual" realities alone are good. As a result, the church views its calling as limited primarily or exclusively to matters of spiritual formation (e.g., devotions, church attendance, interpersonal witnessing encounters) rather than being extended to the public and material aspects of life. But this conception mis-draws the line. There should be no line drawn between "good" and "bad" elements of God's creation, because all of God's creation is good. Rather, the line is drawn between our proper and improper direction within God's good creation. As Wolters points out, God's creation remains *structurally* good, although since the fall it is *directionally* corrupt. Structure refers to the order of creation, while direction refers to the order of sin and redemption: "Anything in creation can be directed

4. Goheen provides a more extensive treatment of God's creational design and sin's misdirection of it in *Living at the Crossroads*, 31–50. For further reading that is confluent with Goheen's interpretation, see Albert M. Wolters' classic treatment of the subject in *Creation Regained* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

either toward or away from God," he writes. "This double direction applies not only to individual human beings but also to such cultural phenomena as technology, art, and scholarship, to such societal institutions as labor unions, schools, and corporations, and to such human functions as emotionality, sexuality, and rationality."[5] This directional reality distinguishes between the good and the bad, rather than some distinction between material and immaterial aspects of creation. God's creation (structurally) is good but (directionally) is corrupted by our idolatry.

This mis-drawn line between the material and the immaterial leads to an ugly divorce between the private and public aspects of human life, and has done inestimable harm to the church's witness. God never intended any one realm of our lives to be hermetically sealed off from the rest. As Abraham Kuyper wrote in *Pro Rege*, "The Son [of God] is not to be excluded from anything. You cannot point to any natural realm or star or comet or even descend into the depth of the earth, but it is related to Christ, not in some unimportant tangential way, but directly."[6] The whole of human life and culture is the realm of Christ's lordship. His sovereignty extends not only to the goings-on within the four walls of a congregational gathering but also to the broader affairs of society and culture. His church therefore must live missionally not only as the church gathered, but also as the church scattered. We must take a missional posture as we find ourselves involved in the arts (music, literature, cinema, architecture, etc.), the sciences (biology, physics, sociology, etc.), the public square (journalism, politics, economics, etc.), and the academy (schools, universities, seminaries, etc.). We must recognize God's calling on our lives not only as it relates to our personal spiritual development or our involvement in the gathering of our local church, but also as it relates to our workplaces and communities. The church's missional calling extends to the whole realm of Christ's lordship.[7]

Third, Goheen provides a compelling exposition of the unity and coherence of the mission of God's people by properly relating the Old Testament and New Testament testimonies. He does so, first of all, by showing their unity without blurring their respective uniqueness. On the one hand, the church's mission is fundamentally at one with Israel's mission in that both were sent by God to be contrast communities, bearing witness to the true and living God in contradistinction to pagan idolatry. Concerning Israel's mission he writes, "To be a distinctive people displaying an attractive

5. Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 59.

6. From an excerpt translated by Jan Boer, *You Can Do Greater Things than Christ* (Nigeria: Jos, 1991).

7. Elsewhere, Goheen and Craig Bartholomew provide a brief treatment of public life in light of the church's mission. Goheen and Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads*, 146–73. For further reading in the same vein of thought, see Richard J. Mouw, *He Shines in All That's Fair* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) and Cornelius Plantinga, *Engaging God's World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). Mouw's book is a general treatment of culture and common grace which urges the church to seek the common good, while Plantinga's book is a more specific appeal to Christian college students, encouraging them to live out their calling in their college studies and their future occupations.

lifestyle to God's glory before the surrounding nations, Israel was obliged to face in three directions at once: to look *backward to creation*, embodying God's original design and intention for human life; *forward to the consummation*, bearing in its life God's promise of the goal of universal history, a restored humanity on a new earth; and *outward to the nations*, confronting the idolatry of the nations for whose sake it had been chosen. All of this was for the sake of the world, that the nations might come to praise and know the true and living God" (25). Likewise, concerning the church he writes, "Only when the church is a faithful embodiment of the kingdom as part of the surrounding culture yet over against its idolatry will its life and words bear compelling and appealing testimony to the good news that in Jesus Christ a new world has come and is coming" (5). Therefore, both Israel and the church were to be witnesses to God's reign by looking backward to God's creational design, forward to his promised new creation, and outward to the nations.

On the other hand, the church's mission differs from Israel's in that the church is a post-resurrection community, indwelt by the Spirit, and sent to live in the midst of the cultures of the world. Significantly, Goheen demonstrates that the church's mission is centrifugal while Israel's was centripetal, without either minimizing or inflating Israel's relation to the nations. By demonstrating the comprehensive nature of Israel's mission and by arguing her comprehensive calling is for the sake of the nations, Goheen avoids minimizing it.[8] By avoiding the temptation to present Israel's missional calling as a centripetal one, he avoids inflating it beyond the biblical witness.[9] Israel clearly was called to bear witness to the nations, but her calling was not located in some purported command to take God's word across geographical and cultural boundaries.

Fourth, Goheen provides a helpful treatment of faithful witness in cultural context. As this essay mentioned above, Goheen argues that the Torah was given to Israel to guide them in living their corporate life comprehensively under YHWH's authority. They were to embody God's intentions for his good creation, to be a foretaste of his future restoration, and to be a contrast community whose corporate life stood out in compelling contrast to other nations' pagan idolatry. As such, "the Torah given to Israel is, on the one hand, *universal*, in that it manifests God's creational design and intent for all human life. But on the other hand it is also *particular*, in that it is an example of a specific social and cultural contextualization of that order at a certain time in a certain place and culture" (40). The Torah itself is a contextualization of God's universal intentions for mankind. Further, Israel's missional calling remained during successive eras in her history (51–66). As a tribal

8. Even J. H. Bavinck's exemplary introduction to missions minimizes Old Testament Israel's calling to be a light to the nations. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960), 11–24.

9. Walter Kaiser's work on mission in the Old Testament has benefited both Old Testament studies and missiology. See Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000). However, when he argues that Old Testament Israel's mission was centrifugal, he goes beyond the biblical witness. Christopher Wright critiques Kaiser on this point in *The Mission of God*, 502–4.

confederation, Israel was called to be a holy people in the center of the nations. As a monarchy, she was called to be a priestly kingdom in the midst of the nations. As a diaspora, she was called to be a holy people scattered among the nations.[10] As Goheen points out, Israel was constantly tempted either to assimilate with pagan culture or to withdraw from it (60–66). But Israel's calling was to create a third path between assimilation and withdrawal—a path of faithful contextualization. This same calling to faithful contextualization was also given to the church who now must bear witness among the many nations and cultures of the world (153), performing the hard work of cultural exegesis so that it may appropriately live out its calling as a contrast community (208–13).

This process of contextualization, as the Goheen describes it throughout the book, is best described as *dialogical* contextualization (although he does not use this term). In a process of dialogical contextualization, believers continually bring their questions and categories into conversation with Christian Scripture.[11] Although Christian Scripture speaks in some manner to any question raised in a particular cultural context, and although Scripture also can be preached to people whose basic ideological categories have been bequeathed to them in a pagan cultural context, the Scriptures always challenge the received questions and categories. In other words, culture is warped because it is underlain by idolatry. Therefore, Scripture speaks to a society and its culture but also changes the terms of the encounter by providing that culture with a newer and better set of questions, and a newer and better set of categories.

This is Goheen's point when he continually speaks of the church as a contrast community who questions the received categories and ultimate questions of any particular cultural context. Although he makes the point in a general manner throughout the book, he sharpens the point when he applies it specifically to the West. In the final chapter of the book, Goheen notes ways in which God's Word calls the Western church to go against the flow of Western culture. He argues that the church should be a community of justice in a world of injustice, generosity in the midst of consumerism, selfless giving in a world of entitlement, humble/bold witness in a world of relativism, hope in a world of disillusionment, joy in a world of hedonism, and spiritual vitality in a world of secularism. The author's perspective is a necessary corrective to Christian churches and missionaries who think of contextualization in ways that are markedly assimilationist or separatist, or who think

10. Goheen's exposition of how Israel's missional calling remained throughout successive changes in their social, cultural, and political contexts is suggestive for how the Western church must reposition and renew her missional calling in light of her increasingly post-Christian context.

11. David Clark, Robert Schreiter, and William Dyrness have suggested a dialogical pattern, or contextual spiral, in which there is an ongoing interaction between the biblical text and contemporary culture. See David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 99–132; William A. Dyrness, *Learning about Theology from the Third World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 28–34; and Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), 6–12.

of contextualization as something exclusive to international missions. Contextualization is part and parcel of gospel witness. God's people cannot *not* contextualize; they are always contextualizing, but are doing so either faithfully or unfaithfully.

These four points by no means exhaust the positive features and contributions of *A Light to the Nations*. A more comprehensive list would include Goheen's treatment of covenant and kingdom, the church's suffering in relation to its spiritual power, the importance of prayer, and the missional significance of parenting. The strengths of this book far outweigh the weaknesses, both in gravitas and in number. *Yet, one aspect of Goheen's argument that could be strengthened is the "end of the story."* He does a fine job, throughout most of the book, of emphasizing the ways in which eschatology bears directly upon mission. For example, the second and third chapters note God's eschatological promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3, the eschatological implications of the law in Exodus 19:3–6, and Israel's intertestamental hope that God would again act in power by his Messiah and his Spirit in order to rebuild the temple, cleanse the land, and rule his universal kingdom. Further, the fourth through seventh chapters speak to the inbreaking kingdom of God in its communal and cosmic significance, the early church's call to point forward to the consummation of history, and the ways in which both Jesus' and Paul's understanding of the gospel is eschatological.

However, one missing element in the author's otherwise robustly eschatological approach is the final biblical picture of the missional church in her international splendor, worshiping before a risen Lord. This picture, particularly as given in the fifth and seventh chapters of Revelation, would provide an elegant finishing touch for many of the themes woven throughout *A Light to the Nations*. In Revelation 5, we see that God's people are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb (5:9b) from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (5:9c), are worshiping Christ as universal Lord (5:8–14), and have participated in this victory by means of their prayers (5:8).[12] Furthermore, another missing element is a sufficient picture of the missional church in her final environment, the new heavens and earth.[13] Again, as portrayed in Revelation 21 and 22, this picture ties together the deftly woven creational and cultural strands of Goheen's biblical theology. In these chapters, we see that God will indeed restore his good creation, upon which his missional church will dwell in his glory without pain or tears. Taken together, these two glimpses of the final state would make for a strong concluding chapter to the biblical theological portion of the book, or at least a concluding section of a chapter. The author has written elsewhere on these themes;[14] one hopes that he will include such a section in the second edition of the book.

12. Considering its role in the culmination of God's work among the nations, the fifth chapter of Revelation is surprisingly omitted or underrepresented in theologies of mission. An exemplary but brief treatment can be found in Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission, Volume Two: Paul and the Early Church* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 1517–21.

13. One of the few treatments of this passage in relation to missional theology is Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), 261–76.

14. See Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 207–13.

Another aspect of Goheen's argument that could be strengthened is his treatment of a cluster of themes—human sin and guilt, God's wrath and condemnation, the proclamation of Christ's atonement for the forgiveness of sin, and the eternal state of those who are finally unrepentant. Although Goheen does mention sin's guilty stain (104), God's wrath in response to sin (107), humanity's need for forgiveness (87, 92), the atonement's provision for our guilt (102–5), the need for evangelists to cross cultural boundaries (131) to proclaim the gospel to those who have never heard and so forth, the overall impression gained is that this strand of the biblical testimony is underrepresented. Goheen is concerned to push back against ecclesiologies that portray the church as merely an aggregate of justified individuals and seeks to portray a fuller biblical picture of a church as a *people* called out by God for kingdom purposes. His concern is properly placed, but in the end one is left wanting more emphasis on verbal proclamation of the gospel (Rom 10:14–17) for the forgiveness of sins, and the sending of missionaries across social, cultural, and geographical boundaries for the sake of guilty sinners. An expansion of this cluster of themes will complement Goheen's own emphasis on the church's communal witness—it is a community of forgiven people whose communal life rightly images God to the world.

Conclusion

A Light to the Nations is an elegant and powerful missional ecclesiology, which would serve well as reading for several types of audiences. First, it would make an illuminating companion text in a systematic theology course. While many systematic ecclesiology texts focus on the tasks of the church, this book focuses on the missional nature of the church. Second, it would serve well as a text in a course on Christian mission. While many mission texts focus exclusively on international missions, or on pragmatics, or on the social sciences, this text provides a unified and coherent biblical theology to undergird the church on her mission. The most practical thing in the world (for a mission class) is a biblical theology of mission that provides the starting point, the trajectory, and the parameters for the tasks of mission. Third, the book stands on its own feet as a contribution to the field of biblical theology, furthering the author's contributions in previous books such as *The Drama of Scripture*. Finally, the book makes a stimulating discussion piece for pastors, elders, and thoughtful laypeople who are thinking through the church's missional calling. This book is strongly recommended.

STR 2/2 (Winter 2011) 127-142

Theology in Action: Paul, the Poor, and Christian Mission[1]

Jason B. Hood
Christ United Methodist Church, Memphis

Introduction

The apostle Paul[2] is famous for his theology and his role in the formation of early Christianity. Most believers are familiar with his preaching, evangelism, and letter writing. But many Christians have little awareness of Paul's mission to the poor, a mission embodied in "Paul's *obsession* for nearly two decades": his "collection for the saints."[3] Paul's collection and other teaching on possessions and generosity occupy more space in his letters than his teaching on justification by faith. Yet scholars and contemporary church leaders alike often fail to give the collection and related Pauline teaching the attention it requires, and fail to absorb insights from Paul's praxis (perhaps due in part to the inability of scholars to agree on the boundaries of the collection).[4] To that end, this study examines Paul's efforts for the poor and the significance of his work for believers today.

1. The bulk of this essay is derived from Jason Hood, "Theology in Action: Paul and Christian Social Care," in *Transforming the World: The Gospel and Social Responsibility*, ed. Jamie Grant and Dewi Hughes (Nottingham: Apollos, 2009), 129–45. That essay has not been published in North America. It is adapted here with permission.

2. In this essay—which is intended to serve the church practically and missiologically as much as academically—the letters ascribed to Paul in the canon are treated as a unit deriving from a single author, the canonical Paul, and biblical data is used regardless of origin (i.e., Acts and Pastoral Letters are in play). If the academy learns something from this approach, so much the better.

3. S. McKnight, "Collection for the Saints," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. Hawthorne and R. Martin (Leicester and Downers Grove: IVP, 1993) 143, emphasis original. See D. Garland, *2 Corinthians* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999) 386–90; M. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: a Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 312–18, 402: "The hard-fought-for collection . . . to some extent consumed Paul for years."

4. Gorman, *Apostle*, 312. Note the almost total absence of the collection in (among other texts and studies) the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* and B. Witherington III, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Leicester and Downers Grove: IVP, 2001).

Paul's Collection for the Poor

The collection for the poor provides an important window to Paul's own social concern. The hint we have of Paul's concern for the poor comes in Galatians 2:1–10, in his discussion of his relationship with the apostles in Jerusalem.[5] Paul and Barnabas are accepted as apostles to the Gentiles. The leaders in Jerusalem call them to "remember the poor" as they carry out their mission, and Paul professes that he and Barnabas were already eager to do what this request required (2:10). No doubt Barnabas's track record made him a prime candidate for apostolic mission, since he modelled such service (Acts 4:36–37).

The instruction seems to be a general description of how to conduct ministry rather than the beginning of the collection proper. But Paul's collection grew out of this admonition.[6] The "poor" as the target of the collection were probably Judean Christians in a state of material want due to some combination of natural or political disaster (food shortages could be caused by both) and loss of inheritance and family structure as social punishment for believing in Jesus as Messiah and joining with his followers. No doubt many among the believers were widows, the disabled, and other marginalized persons. The remarkable degree of Christian concern for the poor may have exhausted local resources (Acts 2:44–45, 4:34–37), leaving the community particularly vulnerable in the face of disaster and persecution.

Paul explicitly addresses the collection in his three largest letters. 1 Corinthians 16:1–6 includes instructions for gathering the collection weekly, according to one's ability. Romans 15:25–28, 30–31 discusses the collection as the reason for Paul's absence from Rome and addresses the obligation to practice reciprocal giving.

5. Most aspects of Paul's life, letters, ministry and theology are contentious matters in contemporary scholarship; the collection is no exception. A full survey of the social implications of Paul's ministry, theology and the collection is beyond the scope of the present study. For fuller studies, see D. Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992); S. Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor: Reciprocity, Strategy, and Theological Reflection in Paul's Collection* (WUNT 124; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); David J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul's Collection for Jerusalem and Its Chronological, Cultural and Cultic Contexts* WUNT 2.248 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); commentaries by Garland; M. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, vol. 2* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), and especially Bruce Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty and the Greco-Roman World* (Grant Rapids: Eerdmans), 2010. Some scholars treat Paul's efforts over time separately; this study follows other scholars who value treating all of Paul's efforts under the same umbrella. See McKnight; Gorman, 312; Joubert, "Collection, The" in *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible A-C, vol. 1* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 698; S. Hafemann, *2 Corinthians* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 330.

6. J. D. G. Dunn, for example, rules out Galatians 2:10 in his discussion of the collection (*The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998), 706. Longenecker argues that the collection is not in view in Galatians 2:10, and that we have here a general admonition. See reception historical evidence for this approach in his essay "The Poor of Galatians 2:10: The Interpretive Paradigm of the First Centuries," in *Engaging Economics: New Testament Scenarios and Early Christian Reception*, ed. Longencker and Kelly Liebengood (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 204–20. In any event, the collection flows from this admonition.

Gentiles owe a "debt" of *koinonia*—that is, a fellowship that features economic sharing—to Jews, because they have received spiritual benefits from them. Paul also expresses some concern over whether the gift will be accepted or fully appreciated by those in Jerusalem. 2 Corinthians 8–9 is one of the longest sustained discussions on a single topic in Paul's letters. All three of these passages include references to other churches' participation in the collection, Paul's active role in collection and delivery, and "the saints" as the recipients.

Other references to ministry for the poor in Paul's letters are probably focused on local ministry.[7] Acts, although largely outside the scope of this essay, provides evidence of Paul's efforts. The collection at the beginning of Paul's ministry is stimulated by a prophecy in Antioch regarding a famine, and Barnabas and Saul take the lead in delivering the subsequent gifts (Acts 11:27–30; 12:25). Many of Paul's companions mentioned in Acts are almost certainly representatives of the nations selected to participate in the transportation and delivery of the collection (see especially Acts 20:3–6; cf. 1 Cor 16:3–4).[8] Paul's insistence on returning to Jerusalem to fulfil his mission to deliver the collection—and the presence of Gentile co-workers aiding him in the delivery of *koinonia*—would become one of the proximate causes leading to his arrest and imprisonment (Acts 21:10–33; 24:17).[9]

As Paul's mission grew, so did his work for the poor. Even in the face of the growth of his church planting enterprise, he did not divest himself of fundraising, the task of delivering the funds, or (elsewhere in his letters) instruction in the care for the poor. As a result, the shape of his life and ministry were heavily influenced by the collection and its implications. McKnight summarizes, "It is hard to imagine any campaign more embracing of the northern Mediterranean and any project that occupied Paul's attention more than this collection for the saints."[10] Paul demonstrates a commitment to fundraising for those in need despite the dangers of such an enterprise (ancient Mediterranean travel was no picnic); despite legitimate needs among donors themselves (2 Cor 8:1–5); despite reluctance among some givers and even the possibility of reluctance on the part of some would-be recipients, not to mention the objections of bystanders (Rom 15:27; Acts 20:22; 2 Cor 8:8; 9:1–5); despite the planning and personnel required (1 Cor 16:1–4; 2 Cor 8:16–24; cf. Acts 20:3–6); despite the way in which Paul's dream of evangelizing all the way to Spain was postponed (Rom 15:24–27); and despite the way in which the

7. D.J. Downs, '"The Offering of the Gentiles" in Romans 15.16', *JSNT* 29 (2006) 173–86; L. Hurtado, "The Jerusalem Collection and the Book of Galatians," *JSNT* 5 (1979) 46–62 (esp. 53–57), believes Paul addresses the collection in Gal 6.6–10. See C. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches: a Biblical Theology of Material Possessions* (NSBT 7; Leicester: IVP, 1999), 178 n. 5 for moderate critique of Hurtado's argument.

8. Marshall, *Acts* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 323: "these were probably the persons appointed by the churches to take their shares of the collection to Jerusalem"; cf. McKnight, "Collection," 143–44 and Thrall, *2 Corinthians*, 561–62.

9. As the NIV translation of Acts 24:17 suggests. See Marshall, *Acts*, 378–79; G. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 804 n. 5; Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 386 n. 72; Dunn, *Theology*, 707.

10. McKnight, "Collection," 144; see similarly Joubert, "Collection," 699.

presence of his Gentile contributors contributed to his arrest and imprisonment (Acts 21:28–29).[11]

Theology in Action: Paul's Gospel and Paul's Collection

Dunn notes that the collection holds a "peculiar significance" for Paul, and "sums up to a unique degree the way in which Paul's theology, missionary work, and pastoral concern were held together as a single whole."[12] Such statements notwithstanding, the collection rarely plays such a role in scholars' articulations of Paul's ministry and theology. Still less frequently are the ethical implications of the collection addressed, although 2 Corinthians 8–9 is a favorite passage from which to derive inspirational slogans for church building campaigns and budgets. Because of the depth of Paul's concern with factors such as Jew-Gentile unity, some scholars address the collection almost entirely in terms of Paul's concern for the gospel project in which he was engaged, seemingly leaving no room for concern for the poor in their analysis of the purpose of the collection.[13] At the very least, however, it is clear that many theological and social factors motivated Paul, and concern for the poor was among them.[14] Paul desires *to assist the poor in such a way that the unity of the church is powerfully expressed*.

Paul's language concerning the collection reflects these diverse motivations. The giving creates and sustains ***koinonia*** (Rom 15:26, 2 Cor 8:4, 9:13), or a family-like unity, fellowship or partnership with deep economic implications. Christian ***koinonia*** and the collection are grounded in the good news that God redeems sinners and creates one new family—a unified new humanity in Christ.[15] Paul anticipates that in such a fellowship, the mutual obligation of loving unity across racial, geographic and cultural lines would work itself out in tangible acts of generosity, potentially flowing osmosis-like in both directions as needed (2 Cor 8:13–15). Paul calls the collection a "proof of love" (2 Cor 8:8) and a "service" to those in need (9:4; Acts 12:25). As proof of submission to the gospel (2 Cor 9:13), the collection testifies to all willing to hear that God is Lord over the Gentiles.[16] The collection is evidence of the truth of the gospel to unbelievers and Jews skeptical of the Law-free admission of Gentiles into God's family, the great "mystery" at the center of Paul's gospel (Eph 3:1–10; 5:32). Above all, the collection is associated with "grace"

11. McKnight, "Collection," 146.

12. *Theology*, 707.

13. Some scholars question the relevance of poverty *per se* for the collection, seeing instead factors of a political and social nature (Schneider, *Good of Affluence: Seeking God in a Culture of Wealth* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002] 208–9, drawing on Bassler, *God and Mammon*, 92–96; but contrast Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 387 n).

14. Gorman, *Apostle*, 313, helpfully offers seven reasons for the collection.

15. Eph 2–3, Gal 3:27–29, Col 3:10–11, 14–15.

16. The strategic place of the collection in Romans 15 reinforces these points (Beker, *Paul*, 72).

(*charis*). This characterization is often lost in translation, as the numerous instances of *charis* in 2 Cor 8–9 appear as "gift"—a perfectly legitimate translation, but one that can lead readers away from seeing horizontal giving as a response to (and even participation in) God's vertical giving.[17] Inspired by the grace given them in the past (8:1, 9:14) and the grace awaiting them in the future (9:8), the recipients of grace should themselves give graciously.

In this way, the collection stands as a concrete example of Paul's teaching on the ethical consequences of salvation. Throughout Paul's writings, divine salvation ("indicative") precedes the command to respond with "good works" ("imperative"; see esp. Eph 2:8–10; 4:28; 1 Tim 2:9–10; Titus 2:8; 3:1, 8), no small part of which would have been care for those with various physical, relational and emotional needs. In a similar way there is a close relationship between Paul's gospel and the Paul's collection, borne out by the pithy summary in 2 Corinthian 8:9: "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich." The good news of Christ's self-sacrificial incarnation and his life and death on behalf of others is the motivation for participating in the collection and the model for Christian life lived in service to others. While biblical religion is often seen as a means to material benefit (1 Tim 6:5, and in today's world no less than in Paul's!), Paul insists that the whole church will derive mutual benefit from responding with charity to God's gracious, costly acceptance of sinners (2 Cor 8:13–15, 9:8–11, 14). Hafemann observes that "the collection illustrates the significance of Paul's theology of grace both for the individual (having received from God, Christians give to others) and for the life of the church (having been accepted by God, Christians accept one another). *Completing the collection would therefore be the theological capstone of Paul's apostolic service*."[18] Indeed, the collection was so important to Paul that he was willing to risk imprisonment and death in Jerusalem (Acts 21:4, 13)—yet I doubt that one Christian in one hundred would know why Paul went to Jerusalem (Rom 15:25–26).

Paul does not pit various motives against one another, but sees them functioning in harmony and contributing to the ultimate goal of God's praise and glory (2 Cor 9:11–15), which helps to explain his reference to the collection in priestly language (Rom 15:27, 2 Cor 9:12). The priestly and sacrificial language associated with the collection and other early Christian giving reinforces the nature of the global Christian community in the Messiah as his priests and temple.[19]

For Paul, care for the poor cannot be pitted against "gospel ministry"; it was consonant with and required by gospel ministry.[20] The return to Judea to deliver the collection takes priority over Paul's visit to Rome to launch of gospel ministry

17. See now especially Kelly Kapic with Justin Borger, *God So Loved He Gave: Entering the Movement of Divine Generosity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010).

18. Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 331, emphasis added.

19. Nicholas Perrin, *Jesus the Temple* (Baker Academic, 2010) points out the economic significance of the temple status of the church; 70–74, 92–99, 145–47.

20. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 1. It is likely that, in the collection, Paul sees an opportunity to undercut opposition to many facets of his ministry.

in the unreached regions of the Empire all the way to Spain (Rom 15:22–29). We do not know if Paul achieved this mission, but we do know that he delivered the collection.[21] *The collection was so vital that its delivery was at that moment a more urgent matter for Paul than his desire to evangelize and plant churches on the missionary frontier* among those who were "without hope and without God in the world," as he describes them in Ephesians 2:12.[22]

Applying Paul's Mission for the Poor in Contemporary Preaching, Teaching, and Mission

Paul's mission for the poor enables readers to draw a number of practical implications for contemporary Christian mission. Even though there are many areas where Paul is more or less silent, his emphases, motives, and actions should be reflected in our contemporary mission practice.

The Demands of Christian Mission: Paul and the Standard for Christian Generosity

Paul's standard for Christian generosity has much to teach the contemporary church, particularly when viewed in conjunction with his wider teaching on stewardship.[23] In the first instance, Christians give generously as they are blessed, not by arbitrary percentages. Paul has numerous opportunities to institute a quantitative guideline or tithe, yet he never does so.[24] Nor does Paul ask people to pledge what they do not expect to have in the future.[25] Paul eschews these contemporary practices and relies instead on altogether different standards.

"'Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ Jesus,' [1 Cor 11:1] is rather the whole burden of the ethical side of Paul's teaching."[26] The command is

21. McKnight, "Collection," 143, correlates this plan with the data in Acts 20:16, 22.

22. Paul illustrates in his actions the approach espoused by C. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Leicester: IVP, 2006) 61, 316–23, on the relative importance of evangelism and mercy ministry.

23. Such a wider emphasis helps overcome the uncertainty that dogs the disputed matter of the boundaries of the collection.

24. Tithe was not practiced outside Palestine; it is anchored to the Promised Land in Deut. 26, Malachi, and Tobit 1–2; cf. Paul's emphasis on the removal of OT legislation. See Mark Allan Powell, *Giving to God: The Bible's Good News about Living a Generous Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 161–62; Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches*, 198–99 and his conclusion and autobiographical comments, 241–53; and two articles by D. Croteau and A. Köstenberger: "'Will a Man Rob God?' (Malachi 3:8): A Study of Tithing in the Old and New Testaments," *BBR* 16.1 (2006), 53–77; and "Reconstructing a Biblical Model for Giving: A Discussion of Relevant Systematic Issues and New Testament Principles," *BBR* 16.2 (2006), 237–60.

25. 1 Tim 6:17–19; 1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 8:12; cf. Acts 11:29.

26. B. B. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia; P & R, 1950), 565; from a different tradition and era, see Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community,*

summarized summarized in a number of places, including Phil 2:3–11, where Paul commands the Philippians, "Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others"; he then describes the humble, sacrificial form of service seen in Jesus' incarnation and death. The examples of Jesus is used in 2 Corinthians 8:9 to encourage participation in the collection, and in Romans 15:7 to spur the Romans on to hospitality and community-creation that leads to mutual care and the breaking of cultural barriers.

The call to imitate Jesus flows throughout Paul's letters.[27] This practice of being shaped by the cross is not simply a matter of responding to God's gracious gift of salvation. Rather, being shaped by the cross requires the imitation of the pattern of life by which that salvation came: through incarnation, humiliation, and the cross. The self-sacrifice of Jesus absorbed a great cost for the benefit of others leading to resurrection, new creation and exaltation. For Paul, the standard for Christian giving and for all of Christian ethics is not an amount; it is a Person, the *crucified* Lord. This use of imitation (not limited in the early church to Paul; cf. 1 John 3:16–18) suggests that the standard of Christian giving has no clear limit.[28] When Paul circumscribes the limits for Christian generosity, he does so not for the sake of one's own security or comfort, but to prevent idleness and sin, and to avoid undue burdens on the churches (2 Thess 3:6–13, 1 Tim 5:3–16).

Ethical instruction does not stop with the shape of Jesus' life. Paul repeatedly holds out his own sacrificial example and hope of resurrection as a model for others, not least in the arena of personal finance, as an illustration of what the imitation of Jesus might look like.[29] Moreover, this sacrificial standard is not

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Cross, New Creation , A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics (San Francisco: Harper, 1999), 46: ". . . the fundamental norm of Pauline ethics is the christomorphic life. To imitate Christ is also to follow the apostolic example of surrendering one's own prerogatives and interests."

27. To cite a few passages: Rom 8:17; 15:2–7; 1 Cor 4:8–17; 9; 11:1; 2 Cor 4:7–18; 12:7–10, 15; 13:3–5; cf. Phil 2:4–11; 3:10–11; Eph 5:2; Col 1:24; 1 Thess 1:6–7; throughout 2 Tim; cf. Acts 20:33–35. For a full treatment see my forthcoming book from IVP on the imitation of God, Jesus, and the saints.

28. Perhaps the Macedonians (2 Cor 8:1–5) have grasped this vision. On the cross as fundamental to Christian ethics, see Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: Harper, 1999). On pp. 19–26 Hays lays out central foci for ethics in Paul which are similar to those presented here. Gorman brings out "cross-shaped" nature of Pauline discipleship in *Apostle* and in his earlier book, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001). This theme is often missing in evangelical treatments on the significance of the cross in the New Testament; see Hood, "Cross Imitation in Mark's Gospel, Redemptive History, and Contemporary Evangelicalism," *Evangelical Quarterly* 81.2 (2009), 116–25.

29. The application of imitation of Jesus to generosity shows that imitation is not a matter of wrote copying, but is rather "creative imitation" (so Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005], 442). Vanhoozer adds (p. 397): "This is how we follow the drama of Christ's life: not by repeating it in uniform fashion but by repeating it so as to continue the through line of the Word's communicative action in order to incarnate the same basic 'idea' (i.e., the knowledge of God) and action (i.e., the love of God) under different conditions."). The need to contextualize the

unique to Paul, nor is it merely a New Testament phenomenon (1 Jn 3:16–18; Luke 14:25–33).[30] Old Testament characters such as Abraham, Job, Boaz, and Ruth provide fine examples of open-handedness before God and others.[31] The Old Testament teaches that one important aspect of wickedness and unrighteousness is *disadvantaging others for one's own benefit* (e.g., Jer 22:13–16). Conversely, there is a tendency to take righteousness as mere innocence, the result of keeping oneself from *disadvantaging others*. But the Old Testament, Jesus and Paul require more than avoiding unrighteousness. The truly righteous person "*disadvantages himself or herself for the sake of the community*." Jesus' predecessors, no less than his followers, were required to exhibit righteousness of the sacrificial sort, just as he himself illustrated this righteousness perfectly.[32] Thus, Paul can appeal to Jesus as well as Old Testament texts in his call to righteous acts for the sake of others (Acts 20:33–35; Ps 112:9 in 2 Cor 9:9).

Paul also presents an oft-overlooked benefit produced by sacrificial Christian generosity. Because the sinful human state and the tendency to set hope on things other than Christ, open-handedness is necessary to wage war against the idolatry of greed (Col 3:5, Eph 5:5; cf. Luke 12:15–34).[33] Paul requires believers to wage spiritual warfare against love of money and the desire for wealth, and generosity is part of that practice (1 Tim 6:6–10). Contented enjoyment of God's provision leads to the liberation of resources to meet the needs of others (6:17–19). Paul's insistence on modelling sacrificial generosity and sufficiency in Christ confirm his own status as one free from the grasp of greed (Acts 20:33–35).

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imitation of Jesus makes human examples of obedience invaluable. R. Michael Allen has argued for the importance of "ethical triangulation" as "a formal principle by which the material differences" between Jesus and his human followers "may be navigated; triangulating imitation provides an hermeneutical matrix within which Christian witness ought to commence and forever remain." "[S]ocio-contextual differences may be negotiated by looking to other faithful norms, cross-referencing their manners of witness, and analyzing the redemptive substance of their pluriform testimony." *The Christ's Faith: A Dogmatic Account* (Studies in Systematic Theology; London: T & T Clark, 2009), 359–60.

30. "Thus cruciformity cannot be inscribed or legislated; it cannot be codified or routinized. It can only be remembered and recited, hymned and prayed, and then lived by the power of the Spirit and the work of the inspired individual and corporate imagination." M. Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 383 (see similarly R. B. Hays). There is some truth here; yet a great deal of OT legislation and wisdom points readers in the same direction (see below on Waltke, or the book of Ruth), even if NT interpreters are slow to see such links.

31. On Abraham see especially Calvin, *Inst*. 2.10.11; Heb 11:8–10, 13–16; Jas 2:21–22.

32. B. Waltke with C. Yu, *Old Testament Theology: a Canonical and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2007) 289; Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 97–98. See Jamie Grant, "'Why Bother with the Vulnerable?' The Wisdom of Social Care," in *Transforming the World*, 51–67.

33. See now Rosner, *Greed as Idolatry: The Origin and Meaning of a Pauline Metaphor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); cf. S. Wheeler, *Wealth as Peril and Obligation: The New Testament on Possessions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

The Director of Christian Mission: A Generous God and His Generous People

This theme is related to Paul's use of Jesus as exemplar, and constitutes another aspect of the standard for Christian generosity. Paul connects God's generosity with human generosity by citing a passage on the way in which God provided manna in the Old Testament: "As a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, 'Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.'"[34] There has been something of a backlash against earlier trends to interpret supernatural feeding miracles naturalistically as "fable[s] about generosity" rendering the "miracle" in Jesus' feedings of the thousands as "generosity overcoming selfishness as everyone follows Jesus' example."[35] Can human generosity be compared to God's unique goodness and supernatural power? Is there in fact biblical warrant for using God's miracles as a model for human generosity? Or are others correct in resisting the use of this passage as an ethical norm?[36] Answers can be found if we consider similar uses of God's generosity as a stimulus for human generosity.

2 Corinthians

Paul connects the generosity of the giver with God's own generosity in multiple places in 2 Corinthians, stating that believers are blessed by God so that they themselves can give (2 Cor 9; 1 Tim 6). As we have already seen, God's *spiritual* generosity (which of course includes future physical generosity when believers receive new bodies and the whole of the new creation) should result in our *physical* generosity that meets *material* needs (2 Cor 8:9). One chapter later, Paul cites Psalm 112:9 in 2 Corinthians 9:9: "He scatters gifts . . . he has given gifts to the poor; [therefore] his righteousness endures forever." Many have taken this passage as a reference to God's own generosity and righteousness.[37] But the Psalmist's subject throughout Psalm 112 is "the righteous man." The canonical location of the psalm is instructive, for the previous psalm speaks of God's own righteousness enduring forever, in part on the basis of his goodness to nature and humans who receive covenant blessings such as food and "inheritance" (Ps 111:3–6; 112:2–4, 9). From this bounty the righteous man gives generously. The juxtaposition of these two psalms ties human care for others to God's care for his creatures. Paul's overall emphasis in the conclusion of the chapter fits elegantly with Psalms 111 and 112: God's gift, even if coming through human hands, redounds to his glory and for the benefit of

34. 2 Cor 8:13–15.

35. Turner, *Matthew* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008) 369.

36. For example, Schneider, *Good of Affluence*, 208–10.

37. Thrall, *2 Corinthians*, 580–83 for discussion and the correct conclusion; *pace* Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 410.

the giver: "His praise endures forever" (111:10); the giver is "blessed" and "his horn is exalted in honour" (112:1, 9; cf. 2 Cor 9:11–15). How would it shape Christianity generosity to believe that our work was God's work? At the very least, it would mean that the final act in the giving sequence is a matter of praise and thanks to God, rather than thanks and praise for givers. And this is why Paul almost never thanks humans, despite the fact; yet was constantly thanking and praising God for what his brothers and sisters in Christ did for him.

Divine and Human Hospitality in Romans

In Romans 15 Paul cites the hospitality and service of the Messiah as a theological foundation for believers' reception of those in Messiah across racial, social, or cultural lines. God's goodness should lead to goodness towards others, regardless of ethnic or cultural distinctions, in imitation of the goodness of God. Hospitality, harmony and love (Rom 15:1–7) require believers to "welcome one another as Christ welcomed you."[38] God receives glory when his earthly family experiences the material, physical benefits from the cross-wrought destruction of segregating boundaries long in place (Eph 2:11ff.).

Divine Generosity and Human Generosity in the New Testament

Other New Testament data coordinate divine and human generosity and indirectly shed light on Paul's mission. In the synoptic tradition, Jesus makes much of the way in which God's own goodness and "natural" provision must result in our own generosity (Matt 5:38–48; Lk 6:27–36). If God's "natural" provision leads to our own natural provision, it is surely no great step beyond this to see God's 'supernatural provision' as a model for human generosity. The Eucharist is juxtaposed with foot-washing in John 13; Jesus follows these acts of divine care and provision with instruction for his disciples to learn from his own "example" (13:12–17; 13:31–35; cf. 1 John 3:16–18). The correlation between God's provision in the Eucharist and the sacrificial service it communicates underscores the tragedy of socio-economic segregation in the church in Corinth during the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17–34), a segregation that incurs Paul's condemnation in no uncertain terms, for the Corinthians have failed to "welcome one another as Christ welcomed [them]" (Rom 15:3, 7).[39]

38. Hospitality is linked to material care for the saints (see esp. Rom 12:13).

39. See Calvin, *Inst.* 4.17.40; Blomberg's treatment in *Neither Poverty nor Riches*; and Hays, *First Corinthians*, 194–206. According to Fee, *First Corinthians*, 560 and nn., Chrysostom and other Fathers clearly understood the thrust of the passage, but "sacramentalism" and "pietistic" readings of this passage emphasized personal introspection and have led the church to downplay Paul's actual intention, which was more corporate than personal.

Eschatological Divine Generosity and Human Generosity

Christian generosity functions as evidence of the new creation work of God's Spirit. As a miraculous provision for Israel in anticipation of the inheritance of the whole world (Rom 4:13; Heb 11:8–10, 13–16), the Promised Land required a response of gratitude-fueled generosity (Deut 26:1–15). The book of Deuteronomy "has a kind of inner unity" shown by the "sustained mirror image relationship" between YHWH's work for Israel (chapters 1 through 11) and the demands of response in worship and obedience in chapters 12 through 26. "This relationship can be described in terms of specific terminology: a correspondence between Yahweh *bringing* Israel to a *place* and Israel *bringing* offerings to a *place*; between Yahweh acting *before* Israel and Israel worshipping *before* Yahweh; between Yahweh *giving* the land and other good things and Israel *giving*, in imitation of him, to the needy."[40]

As Christians live in *koinonia*-shaped generosity and kingdom community in the present, they respond to, anticipate, witness to, and share in the miraculous presence of God's abundant new creation wrought by the Holy Spirit. The abundant life in the Promised Land anticipated something greater (Rom 4:13; Heb 11:8–10, 13–16) that is already partially present, in advance of the great eschatological conclusion. God's guarantee of future generosity provides a stimulus for Christian generosity in the present, just as God's generosity in the past inspires present giving. Christian generosity in the present covenant community also represents God's *own* eschatological goodness to his people, for the Christian community is in fact his own new creation (2 Cor 5:17, Gal 6:15). Hafemann's comments on 2 Corinthians 8:13–15 tie these various threads together and suggest the relevance of this standard of eschatological equality for contemporary Christian generosity:

Equality . . . is being established *by the people themselves* through their *own* Spirit-led sharing. While God supplied Israel's physical needs with manna and quail but did not change their spiritual condition, under the new covenant God is meeting the spiritual needs of the Corinthians in order that *they* might meet the physical needs of others (cf. 2 Cor 9:8–11). Paul's expectation in 8:11 is thus one more expression of his confidence in the transforming power of the presence of God under the new covenant (cf. 3:3, 6, 18). For this reason, Paul leaves the amount of their giving up to the Corinthians, convinced that, as a new creation in Christ (5:17), the quantity of their giving will match the quality of their changed hearts (5:15).[41]

40. J. Gordon McConville, *Grace in the End: A Study in Deuteronomistic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 61; citing his fuller argument in *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 33–36, and cf. 37. See also Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy* (NIBC; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1996), 3.

41. Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 341 (emphases original); see also 366. As Hafemann notes, Acts seems to share this vision (2:42–47 and 4:34–37); I. Howard Marshall, "Luke's 'Social' Gospel: The Social Theology of Luke-Acts," in *Transforming the World*, 118 n. 9: "Our suggestion is that Luke makes it clear enough that the ideal was intended to be upheld and practiced elsewhere, though not necessarily in precisely the same manner. Having emphasized what happened in

The Delimitation of Christian Mission for the Poor

In addition to a call for a general orientation toward generosity (1 Tim 6:17–19; Eph 4:28; Acts 20:35), "fair sharing" or "equality" (NRSV and ESV, respectively, for *isotes* in 2 Cor 8:13–14) and "liberality" (Rom 12:8), Paul also provides restrictions on Christian social care. The Pastoral Epistles place limits on organized church-based support for the needy, such as requiring recipients of aid to participate in merciful deeds of Christian *koinonia* (1 Tim 5:10); such deeds are part of the purpose of Christian work (Eph 4:28). Under normal circumstances, one must rely on one's own work or one's family for support and not the church or illicit means of gain. The priority of work strongly suggests that Christian social care should exhibit a concern for human flourishing that includes employment. Paul called his disciples to follow his own model of contentment and care for self (Acts 20:35; 1 Thess 1:6, 2:9–12; 1 Tim 6:6–10).

In our day of democratic mass participation in the political process, Paul's readers are interested in the political significance of his teaching. Paul's commitment to the lordship of Jesus over all (Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10) suggests that the political significance of his teaching is extensive.[42] Yet it is probably unfair to press Paul for his opinion on political and social action outside the church. Martin Hengel explains: "[The first Christians] cannot give us a practicable programme of social ethics to solve the question of possessions, which has become so acute today." In addition to the massive socio-political and economic differences between Paul's day and ours, "the first Christians were a tiny minority, who were also politically suspect, [therefore] they could not strive in their ethical action for the social reform of the Roman empire of the time." Hengel explains that this is the reason Paul focuses on the construction and care of the Christian community.[43]

Despite the degree of difficulty in applying Paul's teaching universally or politically, Christians still have a responsibility to those outside the church, as Galatians 6:10, Romans 13:7, and much early Christian data make clear. Paul's emphasis on care-within-the-church is not a rejection of beneficence outside the ecclesial sphere.[44] The limits on Christian social concern taught in Paul's letters should not be pressed into service *against* Christian social obligation in the wider world. Paul offers no support for avoiding generous assistance to unbelievers afflicted by violence, natural disasters, and systemic injustice. Nor should Paul's limits necessarily be taken as (say) a biblical mandate to require *full-time* work from single mothers who need assistance, thus leaving children of single-parent families

Jerusalem, Luke had no need to repeat himself later; he expects his readers to take certain things 'as read.'"

42. See Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999).

43. Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church* (trans. J. Bowden; London/Philadelphia: SCM/Fortress, 1974) 41; Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches*, 247; Hays, *Moral Vision*, 33: "[Paul] articulates no basis for a general ethic applicable to those outside the church."

44. The Christian standard of neighbour-love entails such a focus.

under-parented. Paul insists that believers should pay taxes (presumably without grumbling, Phil 2:14), which were used to accomplish a whole raft of objectives in the ancient world, and his approach contrasts with at least some of the ways in which contemporary conservative and libertarian impulses manifest themselves especially in America. If Paul does not explicitly affirm such tax-producing enterprises, neither does he spend his energy condemning them.

But this is not to give a Pauline imprimatur to left-leaning political action. In contemporary political terms, was Paul conservative or liberal politically? The question is anachronistic, and in Paul's letters we find that many of our most pressing questions regarding social and political concerns effectively are unaddressed. While there are grounds for exploring the broader implications of Paul's teaching, the present essay does not provide the opportunity to explore them.[45]

We do not know if Paul was successful with his collection or not. But the effects of Paul's emphases in the early history of the church point to the wisdom of his focus on a massive *koinonia*-engineering enterprise. Christians were unique in their emphasis on the degree of generosity and inclusion of the poor.[46] In just a few centuries, the emphasis of Paul and other early Christians ensured that the church would rival the Empire writ large as the fount of social care. Paul's collection and the *koinonia* undergirding it formed a powerful critique of the Empire, its gods, and its wisdom—not through overt denigration, still less through open hostility, but through quiet counter-example.[47] Christian *koinonia* attempts to reflect God's true intentions for new humanity in a state of *shalom* (Eph 2:15) a state only possible in King Jesus and his Father, not in Caesar and his gods.

The Dynamics of Christian Giving: Paul and the Rhetoric of Generosity

Paul subverts the normal expectation for gift-giving in the ancient world. Forceful social rules in the ancient world meant that a gift would inevitably require the recipient to respond appropriately with praise or a gift. In this system, generosity

45. The issues are complex. See Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 1999). More clearly, Paul's teaching supports deeply entrenched mission and involvement in community and shalom-building with a gospel-centered mentality. See the relatively sophisticated treatment by Gornik, *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), who uses his experience living and serving in a marginalized community to good effect. See also his "The Rich and the Poor in Pauline Theology," *Urban Mission* 9 (1991), 15–26.

46. See Nicholas Perrin, *Jesus the Temple*, 71 n. 113, on what appears to be institutional failure in Judaism, citing especially David Seccombe,"Was There Organized Charity in Jerusalem before the Christians," *JTS* 29 (1978), 140–43; Bruce Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 92 on widespread absence of pagan care for the poor in Greco-Roman context.

47. The collection is often neglected in Imperial and Anti-Imperial readings of Paul; see Wan, "Collection for the Saints as Anticolonial Act: Implications of Paul's Ethnic Reconstruction," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*, FS K. Stendahl (Harrisburg: Trinity Press Intl., 2000), 191–215.

essentially functioned as an investment in one's future well-being (illustrated well by Luke 14:12–14). Givers often tried to outdo one another in order to earn honour in the court of public opinion. Paul is capable of using such social rules himself when it suited his purposes, using the Macedonian's generosity and the prospect of being shamed by failure to give (e.g., 2 Cor 8:1–5, 16–21; 9:1–2). But because God is the ultimate author of grace, and given that there may be little return on the investment from Jewish Christians (Rom 15:30–31), the apostle undercuts standard social expectations for reciprocal giving.[48] Only once does Paul thank individuals for their service or their gifts: his gratitude is normally reserved for the God who stands behind their labors and gifts (i.e., 2 Cor 8:16; Phil 1:3–6; Acts 28:15; 1 Cor 16:4 is the lone exception). Moreover, Paul expects that the Spirit-sealed bonds of Christian *koinonia* could lead to reciprocal care, but not simply on the basis of social rules, but rather on the basis of future need (2 Cor 8:13–15).

The methods of communication and giving in the ancient world are crucial for those seeking to understand Paul, for he often engages in practices that contemporary Christians might write-off as guilt-laden tactics. One must exercise caution when pulling a word, phrase or verse from Paul on generosity from its literary and cultural context as a universal truth. To take but one example, in the light of Paul's rhetoric throughout 2 Corinthians 8–9, it is doubtful to assume that Paul's audience would have understood themselves to be completely free not to participate on the basis of 2 Corinthians 8:8, wherein Paul states he is not commanding their participation; and 9:7: "Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." An over-emphasis on freedom misses the flow of Paul's rhetoric in the passage, which would not have struck notes such as "optional" or "free" in his ancient audience's ears.[49] The surrounding verses constitute an appeal to the Corinthians to do what they had promised, so that the sudden appearance of fundraisers would not result in embarrassing forced preparations. Perhaps the flow of thought leads to the following translation of 9:7: "Each of you *must* give as you have *previously* made up your mind."

Paul does not compel precise amounts, but participation in *koinonia* cannot be said to be merely voluntary. Giving on the basis of cheerfulness and desire is not fundamentally opposed to debt and reciprocity (Rom 13:8; 15:25–27), nor are desire and willingness opposed to responsibility (Gal 2:10). A variety of motives and inspirations stand side-by-side throughout Paul's discussions of the collection.

Notably, Paul never seems embarrassed or ashamed when he speaks of his needs or those of others, including the need to contribute for the sake of others. The same courage he employs in evangelism can be seen in his instruction on *koinonia* as

48. See Joubert. David deSilva offers a readable introduction to benefaction, patronage and reciprocity in *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Leicester and Downers Grove: IVP, 2000) 95–156. He makes the case that when Paul engages in reciprocity, it is frequently *God* who is regarded as the primary benefactor (see especially 153–56), rewarding those who give.

49. S. Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, 339, 358–59; *pace* Schneider, *Good of Affluence*.

the appropriate social and economic response to God's good news. Paul also anticipates and warns against growing weariness in "doing good" (Gal 6:9 ESV, 2 Thess 3:11–13), and his lengthiest address on money, 2 Corinthians 8–9, was a follow-up letter and not an initial appeal for assistance.

The Dimensions of Christian Mission

In Colossians Paul provides grounds for moving application beyond "Jew-Gentile" relationships and into the realm of ethnicity more broadly. The unification of "Jew and Greek . . . barbarian and Scythian" constitutes the "one new humanity" (3:9–10).[50] Not only was the collection cross-cultural, cross-ethnic, and intercontinental in nature; it took place across something like modern denominational fault lines. The recipients of Paul's gifts were Torah-observant: they were keeping Jewish diet and calendar, and at least some were insisting on circumcision. A number of them would have objected to Paul's Torah-free teaching and Gentile communities. In return many Gentiles found Jewish practices repulsive. Accepting fellow believers—or their financial assistance—as one family across such religious, cultural and ethnic barriers required a great deal of charity and no small amount of instruction in Christian sacrifice (for instance, Rom 14–15; Acts 16:3). Like most denominations today, at least some of these Jewish believers would interpret Scripture and apply tradition in ways that amplified and fortified the distinctives that separated them from other parts of the family. Perhaps Paul's collection could be compared to the collection of resources from wine-swilling, covenantal, amillennial, Pentecostal, Korean Presbyterians to be sent to a group of impoverished and marginalized teetotalling, dispensationalist, cessationist, premillennial, pew-sitting, Baptist congregations in Eastern Europe. Such is *koinonia*.

Caveat and Conclusion: The Drama of Christian Mission

Paul's collection for the poor provides a valuable glimpse into the mission required by the gospel. The power of Paul's theology and his crucial role as an evangelist and church planter tempt interpreters to focus only on these aspects of his teaching and ministry. And this much is true: *Paul's collection for the poor could never have occurred without his massive efforts in evangelism and church planting among unreached people groups*. All aspects of Paul's mission—whether "spiritual" or

50. Crucially, this description arises in the context of ethical responsibility and treatment of others (Col 3:5–17). G. Peterman overreaches in his contemporary application of the collection ("Social Reciprocity and Gentile Debt to Jews in Romans 15:26–27," *JETS* 50 [2007], 735–46). He fails to consider adequately Paul's diverse motives, universalizes the work of the first generations of believing Jews, and fails to note the possible ongoing relevance of the collection for ethnic and cultural barrier-breaking: *Paul thinks reciprocity can and should go both ways (2 Cor 8:14)*, not simply to the Jews!

"physical" (to use the unfortunate contemporary terms)—are predicated on the need for conversion, a change of citizenship from "the domain of darkness . . . to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col 1:13). Paul gives no reason to jettison evangelism and church planting for mission to the poor, even if he puts off his mission to Spain in order to deliver the international collection for the poor to Jerusalem (Rom 15:23–28).

Conversely, if mission to the poor lacks an economic, relational, or social dimension, evangelical church planting stands at the threshold of bankruptcy. Generosity, sacrifice, and *koinonia* (sharing) with others in God's family are not optional but integral. With Paul's other teachings, his mission to the poor guides Christians into participation in a family that extends across all manner of social and geographic boundaries.

Contemporary believers must not neglect what can be learned from this advocate for Christian mission to the poor. Thanks to the collection, we know more about Paul's efforts for the poor than those of any other early Christian, including those who offer comparatively fuller theologies on the poor and Christian social concern (such as James and Luke). Paul does not present an abstract theology of social concern, but dramatizes the gospel through his work for the poor. In the collection we see the whole of Paul's theology in action, and we learn that Christian mission to the poor was neither optional nor secondary for the apostle and his churches.

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How to Do Things with Meaning in Biblical Interpretation

Richard S. Briggs
Cranmer Hall, St John's College, Durham University, England

Introduction

Biblical studies today is a fascinating and multi-layered phenomenon. In the various institutional forms in which it manifests itself, particularly in conferences and publications, it betrays an extraordinary diversity, almost to the point where one can wonder whether there is any common denominator which ties it all together. On one level, of course, the common denominator of biblical studies is the Bible itself. Yet as soon as one puts the interpretative endeavor into motion, or brings the Bible into some hermeneutical context, the resultant diversity appears to overwhelm any attempt to say what biblical studies is. The purpose of this paper is not to insist that there should, after all, be one thing at the heart of biblical study, but neither is to sit back with a sense of resignation and say that since the ship has sailed there is no prospect of constructive ways ahead.

Rather, this paper will argue that meaning is one important focus of attention in biblical interpretation, but only when understood in an appropriately low-key and localized way. For some this thesis may sound obvious in any case, but for those aware of various recent debates in biblical interpretation it is no longer a straightforward claim to make. The path to this thesis must therefore take some time to review what has been at stake in such debates, before building to the constructive point at issue, which will utilize some aspects of the work of J. L. Austin, best known for his theory of speech acts, to explore "how to do things with meaning in biblical interpretation."

I begin therefore with a basic question: what is it that readers do when they come to the Bible in the field of biblical studies, as broadly conceived as possible? This "framing" exercise offers a potentially vast number of ways of describing the core interpretative activities, but at least tries to clarify some key features. In particular: Why will there always be interpretative diversity? How does it relate to the differing conceptions of the role of the text and the reader in interpretation? Where does all this leave questions of meaning? I then suggest that many of the things we do with biblical texts fall within the range of occupying ourselves with

meaning, in one way or another, but that in the light of deep interpretative disarray in the pursuit of meaning, it may be time to recognize that we neither need nor can really obtain a proper theoretical account of meaning. In light of J. L. Austin's lesser known work on meaning, I suggest that the conclusions which follow from this are rather modest, namely that we should address ourselves to questions about particular meanings of particular texts, rather than abstract questions about meaning in general, but that, importantly, these remain comprehensible and constructive questions to ask.

Too much hermeneutical theorizing ventures boldly where angels fear to tread. I am about to do likewise. On the whole biblical interpretation, and biblical hermeneutics in general, is best understood by engaging in it, rather than theorizing about it. But on occasion it may be appropriate to step back and recalibrate the frame, as it were. This is such an exercise. It partly represents a first attempt to explore a wider-ranging thesis which I think is worthy of further consideration than it can be given here: that biblical studies can benefit from a broad range of critical and philosophical perspectives in nuancing the kinds of theoretical conceptualizations it offers of itself, without at the same time thinking that such perspectives can in fact shape and drive the discipline in the first place. Rather, I suggest, they offer conceptual resources for reflecting on the coherence or otherwise of ongoing interpretative activities. The shaping and the driving, meanwhile, are provided by the subject matter of the texts themselves, which may be understood theologically, sociologically, historically, or in a variety of ways. Implicit in that broader thesis, as well as in this particular paper, is the underlying argument that the insights of hermeneutics and critical thinking can be turned to constructive interpretative ends in biblical studies.

All in all, then, the present paper has about it something of an overview and prospect. The longer-term question must be: will it bear fruit? And to judge that, one would, on another occasion, have to progress to the actual matters of theology or sociology or history about which the texts discourse.

(1) Framing the Question

The ax is at the root of the historical-critical tree.

We have known this for a long time without achieving much consensus regarding what to do about it. The voice of Walter Wink's *The Bible in Human Transformation* was the voice of one crying in the wilderness: the historical-critical method is bankrupt; make way for the liberating insights of a psychologically-oriented hermeneutic.[1] It was strangely apt that Wink's should be that voice, since his own published doctoral work was a standard historical-critical analysis of New Testament tradition-history which had concerned the John-the-Baptist narratives, where the ax was at the root and the voice was crying in the wilderness.[2] Every so often,

1. See Walter Wink, *The Bible in Human Transformation: Toward a New Paradigm for Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973).

2. Walter Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* (SNTSMS 7; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

Wink's call has been renewed. Probably the project most in line with his has been Schuyler Brown's Jungian account of "biblical empirics" in the somewhat overlooked little work *Text and Psyche*.[3] This suggestive study is significantly subtitled "Experiencing Scripture Today." Brown, as Wink before him, turns to psychology to try and show how the Bible can transform the human soul, and develops what he calls "biblical empirics" in order to look at "the impact of scripture upon the heart."[4] He suggests that while literary criticism makes some significant advances on "doctrinal" and "historical" paradigms, it is ultimately only a knowledge of psychology which will really allow us to transcend the dichotomy of cognitive and affective approaches to the text.[5]

Meanwhile, trends in biblical interpretation continue to develop in a complex relationship with changes in the broader social and academic contexts within which biblical studies situates itself. Approaches to biblical interpretation in recent decades have claimed to hit socio-cultural bedrock in all manner of strangely familiar idioms: to each their own interpretation; or the liberation of the long-silenced female voice; or only the voice of disinterested political correctness; or the consumerist proposition that only interpretations which sell shall survive; or claims to find the Pauline philosophers' stone in the world of political rhetoric, or in the arena of negotiating ethnic diversity and boundaries; or, in a rather different register, the resurgent fundamentalism of the sure and the certain. This should not be so surprising: what we do with texts is just one of our activities in a world marked by all manner of divergences and disagreements between people. But how should we think of this interpretative diversity, cast adrift as we are on the conflicting currents of apathy and aggressive dispute?

The first point to make is just how difficult it is to articulate the nature of the central activity alluded to above: the interaction between human beings and biblical text(s) which occurs in the various acts of reading and interpreting; of "biblical studies" of all sorts. Consider a simple question, something like:

"What is the point, or goal, or *telos*, of interpreting the Bible?"

No sooner is the question shaped on the page than a thousand modifications and challenges immediately present themselves. After MacIntyre, one finds oneself asking "Whose point? Which goal?"[6] Or according to whose criteria? Or which criteria? Or the criteria of which disciplines or traditions (and thus, also, in the end, of people)? Before too long, one finds oneself then asking "which Bible?,"

3. Schuyler Brown, *Text and Psyche: Experiencing Scripture Today* (New York: Continuum, 1998).

4. Brown, *Text and Psyche*, 118, cf. 31–57.

5. Brown, *Text and Psyche*, 37. I have elsewhere suggested that speech act theory offers a more nuanced way of achieving what Brown sets out to do here. See my "Speech-Act Theory" in David G. Firth and Jamie A. Grant (eds.), *Words and the Word: Explorations in Biblical Interpretation and Literary Theory* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 75–110, especially 102.

6. Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

what we mean by "interpret," and eventually disappearing into what Jeffrey Stout so memorably called "endless methodological foreplay."[7] All the while, increasingly neglected in our surrounding culture, there awaits an extraordinary text, or collection of texts, which runs all the way from "In the beginning . . ." to "Even so, come Lord Jesus," with various color-coded appendices, addenda, additions and redactions; poetry, prose, and prophecy; rhetoric, revelation, reflection, and, at least in the NIV, a hut in a field of melons.[8]

Nevertheless, we live at a time of the slow, noisy collapse of some sort of "modern" consensus about what biblical interpretation was all about, and also at the time of the slow implosion and erosion of (Western) Christendom, and if this is not a time of paradigm change then it is at the very least the changing of the guard of the paradigm. The chains are off, the cell doors are open, but the old ways of assuming how we should read the text remain sitting stubbornly in the centre of the cell. As a result, a short reflection on the nature of the question is justified, after all, or perhaps, before or in the midst of the hermeneutical circle of it all.

How we ask our question will of course say a great deal about us as readers/interpreters. The question in effect presents a framework within which our subsequent scholarly activity will find certain avenues opened up and others foreclosed. The question, in turn, is surely at least in part determined by our own scholarly traditions and predispositions. There is a world of difference between, for example, the concerns of redaction criticism and reception history; of feminism and form criticism. One may be tempted to think that these can be entirely unrelated pursuits. Any account of what is going on between people and biblical texts needs to be big enough to allow all of them space, but doubtless most people would evaluate them differently. Our questions, then, are not innocent: they derive from as well as determine our interpretative agendas. Borrowing the wordplay from Jonathan Culler, I suggest that both directions of interpretative flow can be captured by the word "framing": we frame our questions according to our location, and the questions frame our pursuits.[9] How may frames are there? (Or perhaps: how many frames should there be?)

Figure 1 indicates upwards of 55,000 questions that could be asked.[10] The very construction of some of the columns indicates almost limitless ways in which further questions could be added, but over fifty thousand seems enough to be getting along with for now. At this point what was intended as the posing of *a* question, in all its singular glory, has become a handy chart for generating research programs:

7. Jeffrey Stout, *The Flight from Authority. Religion, Morality, and the Quest for Autonomy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 147.

8. Isaiah 1:8. Others (NRSV, ESV) remain more influenced by the KJV's "lodge in a garden of cucumbers" as a way of rendering *kimlunah b^emiqshah*. Scholarly energy expended on this text reflects another tradition, that of the careful philologist, without whom the others cannot even get started.

9. Cf. Jonathan Culler, *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions* (Oxford: Blackwell and Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988).

10. In fact 55,080, a figure arrived at simply by multiplying 6 × 6 × 17 × 9 × 10, being the number of items in each column.

How	should	we	study	the Bible?
Why	might	I/one	read	the New Testament?
When	can	Christians	interpret	the Old Testament?
Where	do	Jews	understand	the Hebrew Bible?
For whom	in the past did	Gentiles	explain	the 66 "books"?
With whom	will	Muslims	live with	the deutero-canonical books?
		agnostics	live in the light of	the Gospel of Thomas, 1 Enoch, and other assorted texts?
		atheists	evade	
		humanists	domesticate	
		Marxists		BHS? (or BHQ?)
		women		UBS4/NA27?
		men		the NRSV?
		children		
		individuals		
		scholars		
		all people		
		donkeys[11]		

Figure 1. On Reading the Bible: Variations on a Question

read off one item from each column and apply for funding to study, say, "Why might Marxists domesticate the Gospel of Thomas?" This was an unintended outcome, but perhaps not to be despised in these financially difficult times.

However, if our interests are hermeneutical rather than fiscal, where might such a mapping of an ever-expanding number of ways of asking the question, or "framing the discipline," leave us?

(2) The Conflict of Biblical Interpretations

The first observation might be the inevitability of interpretative disagreement. There is certainly plenty of evidence of the reality of such disagreement. A lot of energy, some of it quite aggressive, is expended on denouncing the handling of the Bible on the part of fellow scholars. David Clines described this as "the new brutality" in biblical scholarship.[12] A prominent exchange in the mid 1990s asked "Whose Bible is it Anyway?" Did it belong, in some sense, to the academy, apparently thought to include nothing but disinterested pursuers of truth with no ideological blood running in their veins, or did it belong to the church, somewhat optimistically envisaged as a collection of people concerned, like the Bereans in Acts 17:11, to "examine the scriptures every day to see whether these things were so." The stakes were high: social location, at least arguably, reshaped entirely the appropriate interpretative questions to ask.[13] Although the precise shape of such

11. As, for example, in Jonathan Magonet's delightful "How a Donkey Reads the Bible—On Interpretation," in his *A Rabbi Reads the Bible* (new edition, London: SCM, 2004), 66–79.

12. David J. A. Clines, *Interested Parties. The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTS 205; Gender, Culture, Theory 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 93, n. 28.

13. See Philip R. Davies, *Whose Bible is it Anyway?* (JSOTS 204; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 17–55, responding in part to Francis Watson, *Text, Church and World. Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), who then replied with "Bible, Theology and the University: A Response to Philip Davies," *JSOT* 71, (1996): 3–16.

arguments changes, there remains considerable disciplinary introspection regarding the nature and purpose of biblical studies, of which the most pronounced example in recent years is perhaps Hector Avalos' enthusiastic *The End of Biblical Studies*.[14] The result is that there also persists a high level of often quite aggressive rhetoric denouncing other people's interpretations and agendas.[15]

It would I think be unduly optimistic to suggest that all this is simply a result of crossed wires about what question is being asked. Nevertheless, Nicholas Lash reminds us of John Henry Newman's wonderful observation: "Half the controversies in the world are verbal ones; and could they be brought to a plain issue, they would be brought to a prompt termination."[16] So it is certainly worth considering whether the catch-all term "interpretation," or even its erstwhile custom-made disciplinary equivalent "exegesis," is really a clear enough term to help us to know what we are disagreeing about.

Interestingly, few of the participants in recent debates concerning biblical hermeneutics have, so far as I have observed, turned to the work of Paul Ricoeur as a way of negotiating the question of interpretative conflict, an omission all the more surprising given that precisely this question dominates so much of his early and middle-period work on narrative and interpretation, and that his first major collection of hermeneutical essays was entitled *The Conflict of Interpretations*.[17] His *Interpretation Theory* offers an uncharacteristically straightforward account of his open-ended approach to letting texts set their own agendas.[18] One of the key distinctions he makes, between understanding and explanation as two components of the hermeneutical task, seems to offer a fairly clear indication of why authors and readers are both so active in the process of working with texts. Ricoeur urges that interpretation (of written texts) is the dialectic of both understanding and explanation, in a way we might map as follows (see Figure 2). Here are at least two different things which reading might be about, operating within a hermeneutical framework which allows for fixity and fluidity: readers "understand" texts as communicative actions, while remaining engaged in a practice of reading free-standing words on a page which attain to a "surplus" of meaning in comparison to

14. Hector Avalos, *The End of Biblical Studies* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2007).

15. The rhetoric deserves a study of its own. For wider-ranging reflections see some of the comments of J. David Hester Amador, *Academic Constraints in Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction to a Rhetoric of Power* (JSNTS 174; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

16. Nicholas Lash, *Theology on Dover Beach* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979), vii, citing Newman's University Sermons. A somewhat similar perspective underlies the philosophical work of J. L. Austin, to whom the present paper is much indebted in various ways. Cf. Austin's *Sense and Sensibilia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), which "dissolved" much philosophical talk of "sense data" and so forth by clearly defining terms (*Sense*, 5).

17. Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Northwestern University Press Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

18. Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976).

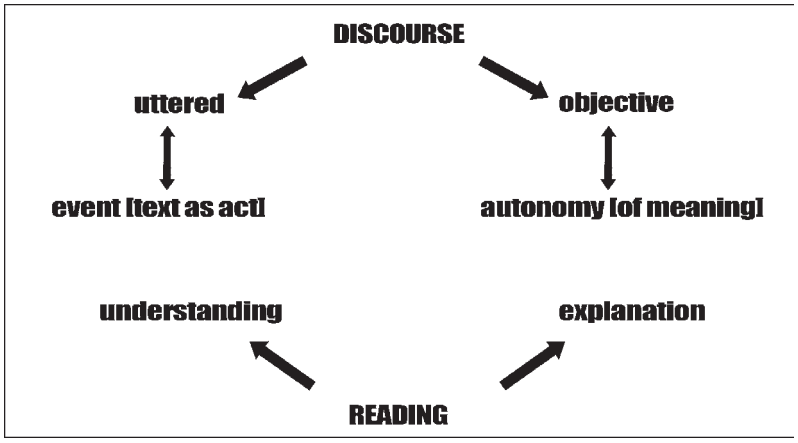

Figure 2. Ricoeur's Analysis of the Two "Polarities" of Interpretation

their original communicative function. In this elegant formulation, somewhere between "the right meaning" and "the reader's choice" lies the practice of interpretative wisdom:

> If it is true that there is always more than one way of construing a text, it is not true that all interpretations are equal. The text presents a limited field of possible constructions. The logic of validation allows us to move between the two limits of dogmatism and scepticism. It is always possible to argue for or against an interpretation, to confront interpretations, to arbitrate between them and to seek agreement, even if this agreement lies beyond our immediate reach.[20]

What happens when instead one tries to imagine that all interpretative activity is of one sort? In my judgment, words like "interpretation" and even "exegesis" become intolerably over-burdened, and then in response some scholars launch rearguard actions attempting to demarcate what can and cannot count as responsible examples of interpretative or exegetical practice.

It would be all to the good to agree, then, that exegesis is an essentially contested concept, although this is not, to labor the point, to say that "anything goes" under the headline of "exegesis." Rather than having a definition, we end up with a range of "working definitions," gathered together in a Wittgensteinian family resemblance. One could do worse that consult the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* to see what passes as the "industry standard." Its definition of exegesis is "The process of careful, analytical study of biblical passages undertaken in order to produce useful interpretations of those passages."[21] Readers might note a certain studied

19. Drawn from Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 71–88.
20. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 79.
21. Douglas Stuart, "Exegesis," in *ABD* 2:682–88, here 682.

ambiguity even here: the "useful interpretations" are not, apparently, part of the careful analytical study, but are built upon them. However, these same readers—alert perhaps to the need to look to context—might note too that this is an offering from Douglas Stuart, whose much-used "handbook" of biblical interpretation, co-authored with Gordon Fee, explicitly divided (and thereby conquered) hermeneutics into two parts: exegesis and application.[22] Maybe Stuart's definition of exegesis is in a certain sense already engineered to feed into a two-step vision of hermeneutics, which would rather foreclose on the very topic at issue, the nature of the interpretative task in the first place.

Most have preferred to take the route of suggesting that what Gadamer had joined together no interpreter should separate: application is to be understood as a part of interpretation, not a separable add-on, and exegesis, therefore, while indeed careful and analytical, cannot be divorced from the broader discussion about what counts as interpretation and why.[23] While readers like Stuart lament the blurring of exegesis into the wider interpretative task, others urge instead that biblical exegesis is too often separated out from these broader interpretative questions in ways which are socially and politically undesirable, such as Temba Mafico's analysis of "Biblical Exegesis and its Shortcomings."[24] Oddly, although they expound the nature of the problem with exegesis in entirely contrary ways, both Stuart and Mafico are fully committed to a more or less common task: "elucidating scripture in a way that highlights its theological and didactic message."[25] Where they disagree is on what exegesis has to be in order to make that task work, because for the one the task of interpretative elucidation is a matter of drawing out what the text first offers of itself, while for the other it is a matter of unmasking the ideology coded in the text so that it would be freed to speak today.

Perhaps one may ask whether all that much is secured, then, by defining some particular part of interpretation as exegesis? What seems more important is how one characterizes the overall interpretative task. The point, however, is precisely that: that we can have that broader discussion about interpretation without having an agreed definition of exegesis.

I want to suggest that something similar holds for "meaning." It is not that "anything goes" with respect to meaning, but neither is it the case that we have to

22. Cf. Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all its worth* (3rd ed; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).

23. Most famously in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2nd ed., London: Sheed and Ward, 1989), especially 308. His full discussion concludes with "Application does not mean first understanding a given universal in itself and then afterward applying it to a concrete case. It is the very understanding of the universal—the text—itself." (341) This is part of his argument that application forms a part of the *historically effective consciousness* (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstein*) whereby tradition and interpretation interact continually through time.

24. Temba L.J. Mafico, "Biblical Exegesis and Its Shortcomings in Theological Education," in Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (eds.), *Teaching the Bible: The Discourses and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 255–71. The article combines a Kierkegaardian critique of irrelevance with an engaged study of Genesis 2–3 and questions of equality.

25. Mafico, "Biblical Exegesis," 256.

be able to define what meaning is in order to make progress with discussing what texts mean. A good deal is obscured in this area by over-confident theoretical discussions on an abstract hermeneutical level. I shall risk adding to them in the hope that a more modest conclusion about meaning will emerge at the end, and prove to be helpful.

(3) The Meanings of Biblical Texts: An Immodest Proposal

The immodest proposal about meanings and biblical texts is that the latter have the former. The modest proposal, on the other hand, was that biblical texts do not have meanings. This has usually been presented with a scattering of scare quotes, e.g., that texts do not "have" meanings, or that texts do not have "meanings." There is a serious point here to which I wish to do justice, but there is an equally serious confusion which requires patient probing. This is not the moment to pursue such general questions about meaning as whether biblical texts have meanings in the same way that all-purpose generic texts do. They by and large do not, despite some formal similarities, because of the way that such texts are sprung into a kind of canonical tension by their setting in the (theologically constructed) Old or New Testaments. Furthermore, not all meanings of biblical texts are equal, or of the same sort. But to get to the matter at hand, we shall need to be more specific.

Modest proposals have been doing quite well for themselves in hermeneutical theory. The original "Modest Proposal," to stand back for a moment, was Jonathan Swift's: "For Preventing The Children of Poor People in Ireland From Being A Burden to Their Parents or Country, and For Making Them Beneficial to The Public." The proposal was simply that the Irish should eat their own children. That was the way to sort out poverty in 1729. Key to the argument was that it was presented dead-pan, with a concerned sincerity to be seen to be arguing on behalf of all those afflicted by over-population and under-nourishment.

We shall focus on one particular modest proposal which has held considerable sway in biblical hermeneutics. It is the claim that texts do not have meanings, and then, *a fortiori*, biblical texts do not have meanings, and thus, one way or another, what matters/counts/wins is that readers do things to texts and should, variously, do something interesting, or edifying, or at least publishable, or at best should do unto texts as they would have done unto themselves.[26]

What Is the Meaning of a Text?

In a short but seminal article in 1982, Jeffrey Stout asked precisely this question: "What is the Meaning of a Text?"[27] The question, he said, does not deserve an answer. Rather, the word "meaning" serves as a kind of place-holder for whatever it is we are really interested in: perhaps we are discussing authorial intention, or

26. This 1-sentence formulation of the modest proposal runs together ideas drawn from a wide variety of authors, some of whom are cited more specifically in what follows.

27. In *New Literary History* 14 (1982), 1–12. Further references to quotations are given in the text.

contextual significance, for example (3). The path best taken is to "eliminate" the troublesome term "meaning" and then get on with whatever is the substantive matter at hand. Then, "with a specific end in view, we could produce a fine-grained explication carefully crafted to achieve that end" (4). The end is chosen elsewhere, and "good commentary is whatever serves our interests and purposes" (6). This is not a worryingly subjective vision of the situation, because these interests and purposes are not "themselves beyond the pale of rational appraisal and critical revision" (8). What we have, then, is that "different interests quite naturally issue in different readings of texts" (7), and can for the most part "be judged according to relatively determinate intersubjective criteria" (8).

Stout's article has the inestimable merit of compressing a large theoretical discussion into coherent and brief compass. It acknowledges its affinity to some of the pragmatism of Stanley Fish and Richard Rorty, and draws its key idea of "explication as elimination" (of the term "meaning" in this case) from W. V. O. Quine. In arguing that his view entails doing without "a hermeneutical *method,*" (7) Stout encapsulates one of Gadamer's basic points about hermeneutics, that the truth of the text demands the subjugation of any interpretative method to the consideration of the text itself.[28] Finally, his appeal to intersubjective criteria for the evaluation of competing views foreshadows his defense of just such an approach to the language of ethics in his own later work, where considerable flesh is put on this bare proposal, thus also demanding that any critic of this view be cautious about suggesting that the proposal simply would not work in practice.[29]

Biblical scholars will be familiar with the fall-out from this article. Stephen Fowl offered a forthrightly titled appropriation of it as "The Ethics of Interpretation or What's Left Over After the Elimination of Meaning."[30] It is a strength of this account, noted by Adam, that it offers a generous way of accounting for interpretative disagreement which is not predicated on blindness, stubbornness or simple error,[31] albeit that it would not be hard to offer examples of all those characteristics in various interpretations.

28. In addition to *Truth and Method*, which expounds his point at length, a useful brief articulation of it with respect to written texts is found in Hans-Georg Gadamer, "On the Truth of the Word," in Lawrence K. Schmidt (ed.), *The Specter of Relativism: Truth, Dialogue, and* Phronesis *in Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy; Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 135–55.

29. See Jeffrey Stout, *Ethics After Babel. The Languages of Morals and Their Discontents* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1988).

30. Stephen E. Fowl, "The Ethics of Interpretation, or What's Left Over after the Elimination of Meaning," in David J. A. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), *The Bible in Three Dimensions* (JSOTS 87; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 379–98, taken up and developed further in his subsequent *Engaging Scripture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

31. See A. K. M. Adam, "Integral and Differential Hermeneutics," in his *Faithful Interpretation: Reading the Bible in a Postmodern World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 81–103, especially 93–95 on "respectful dissent." This is in a book of collected essays in which Adam explores a range of ways of developing something like Fowl's account under the rubric of "faithful interpretation."

Kevin Vanhoozer developed a lengthy apologia for treating the various components identified by Stout as components of the over-arching communicative act between author and reader (via text), answering the title question of his *Is there a Meaning in this Text?* with a resounding "Yes!"[32] Partly in response to Vanhoozer, Fowl has clarified precisely what it is he thinks is the result of Stout's argument:

> Let me state categorically that I am not opposed to people using the word "meaning" in either general conversation or scholarly debate as long as they use it in its everyday, undetermined sense. What this sense of "meaning" cannot do, however, is resolve an interpretive dispute where the parties involved disagree about the nature of their interpretive tasks.[33]

Vanhoozer, in turn, perhaps recognizing that his own book title and generally positive answer to it might have led to his own position being misrepresented as a claim that definite meaning inheres straightforwardly in all texts and the interpreter's task is simply to spot it correctly, offered a lengthy and subtle clarifying essay. Here he made clear that (a) the meaning he had in mind could be a multiple and indeed on occasion elusive one, (b) that it was best understood in speech-act terms by way of the content of the illocutionary acts borne by the text, and (c) that more or less the whole discussion could be had without recourse to the term "meaning" in any case since what was at stake was the content, or subject-matter, of the discourse.[34] The gradual nuancing of the positions taken by Fowl and Vanhoozer is evidence that it is easy to let theoretical statements run away with what must be the case, only to have to seek ways of clarifying how texts do in fact work on closer inspection. The whole area mapped out by these various contributions has been ably reviewed by Christopher Spinks in his detailed study of the two thinkers.[35]

Less explicitly indebted to Stout, but nevertheless in the same boat, is David Clines' suggestion that interpreters are in the business of "customized" or "bespoke interpretation."[36] This is effectively a hermeneutic for consumers of texts and

32. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). Note his own discussion of Stout's article on 102–3.

33. Stephen E. Fowl, "The Role of Authorial Intention in the Theological Interpretation of Scripture," in in Joel B. Green and Max Turner (eds.), *Between Two Horizons. Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 71–87, here 79.

34. See his "From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts: The Covenant of Discourse and the Discourse of the Covenant," in his *First Theology. God, Scripture and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 2000), 159–203. This is even more evident in his extraordinary essay, arguably one of the finest theological articulations of the scope and limitations of hermeneutical theory in theological perspective, "Discourse on Matter: Hermeneutics and the 'Miracle' of Understanding," *IJST* 7 (2005): 5–37.

35. D. Christopher Spinks, *The Bible and the Crisis of Meaning. Debates on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2007). I am less persuaded than Spinks that the matter at hand is a "crisis."

36. David J. A. Clines, "Possibilities and Priorities of Biblical Interpretation in an International Perspective," *Biblical Interpretation* 1 (1993): 67–87: see 78–82, especially 80. See also the article cited in the next note.

interpretations (although probably there is little if any difference between these, in what Clines goes on to describe). Thus "the bespoke interpreter has a professional skill in tailoring interpretations to the needs of the various communities who are in the market for interpretations," and on the question of criteria for evaluating these, Clines offers the rather vague sense of being interested in "identifying shoddy interpretations that are badly stitched together and have no durability, and . . . giving my energies to producing attractive interpretations that represent good value for money."[37] Clines' own interpretations are often attractive, though one may wonder quite how much criteria-sifting work this one word of weighing may have in it. He uses "attractive" not in the sense of *aesthetic*, but in the sense of purchasable . . . and this seems a somewhat thin tool for ethical discernment in the late-capitalist world of today.

Clines even hands us a modest-proposal quote, scare-quotes and all, deferentially framed as "we are recognizing . . ." Here it is:

> Nowadays we are recognizing that texts not only do not have determinate meanings, they do not "have" meanings at all. More and more, we are coming to appreciate the role of the reader, or the hearer, in the making of meaning, and recognizing that, without a reader or a hearer, there is not a lot of "meaning" to any text.[38]

This particular version of the "modest proposal" about meaning is clearly comparable to those versions more directly dependent on Stout's essay.

Three brief observations at this point before we turn to J. L. Austin's work as a way of responding. First, in my judgment, the modest proposal has had considerable influence. Even where not actually adopted, it has led many to feel that talking of "meaning" is somehow inherently problematic and requires justification. Secondly, on occasion, the justification offered has sometimes taken the form of simply asserting that texts do have meanings: that it must be so, and we must insist upon it. Such flat-footed responses do not, it seems to me, feel the force of Stout's argument. Thirdly, some attempts to mount a counter-proposal have taken the form of trying to outflank the modest proposal on a conceptual level. Thus George Caird, in his engaging book on *Language and Imagery in the Bible*, talks of "meaning^{R}" (referent), "meaning^{S}" (sense), and "meaning^{I}" (intention), in an attempt to clarify some ambiguities.[39] A similar parceling out of aspects of meaning, though applied more broadly to discourse, occupies the discussion of Cotterell

37. Clines, "Possibilities and Priorities," 80. In a reuse of this same idea ("A World Established on Water (Psalm 24). Reader-Response, Deconstruction and Bespoke Interpretation," in his *Interested Parties*, 172–86, the word "identifying" becomes "eradicating" (181), which seems both odd and unfortunate.

38. Clines, "World Established on Water," 179.

39. G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980), 37–61 on "The Meaning of Meaning," especially 37–40. His overall account is helpfully influenced by Austin's emphasis on performative language, cf. 7–36 in general and 21–22 in particular.

and Turner.[40] A heavyweight philosophical account of the importance of meaning is offered by Jorge Gracia, who argues that interpretations of texts can be divided into two main types: "meaning interpretations" which are oriented fundamentally toward the intended meaning of the text as originally produced; and "relational interpretations," which use the text to generate some communicative act in relation to a particular interpretative agenda.[41] For Gracia, the goal is to interpret what the revealer (i.e., God) intended to be understood. One oddity of Gracia's book is that he never gets as far as actually saying anything about what God *does* mean through any text. It is an attempt to outflank objections entirely on a conceptual level. This unwillingness to engage specific examples is, to my mind, completely the wrong path to take.

J. L. Austin and "The Meaning of a Word"

The most helpful philosophically-oriented account, scarcely if ever referred to, is J. L. Austin's "The Meaning of a Word?"[42] This is a masterpiece of condensed exposition, approaching a familiar philosophical conundrum with his typical conviction that we are simply not clear enough about what we are talking about. In outline, his main argument is as follows.

People ponder meaningful questions such as "What is the meaning of the word 'cat' or 'mat'?" and can thereby make some progress toward analyzing the truth or falsity of an utterance such as "The cat sat on the mat." But this leads them, all unwary, to suppose that one might generalize such considerations and ask not "what is the meaning of *this or that particular word*," but of any word in general. Hence one asks: "What is the meaning of a word?" But, suggests Austin, this is a question with no real referent at all. It is a spurious question talking about "nothing in particular." Where the specific question might lead one to wonder what a cat is (an activity which at least makes sense), the general (spurious) question would lead to the oddity of pondering "What is anything?" Austin pursues the point through one more twist in the argument: philosophers fall back from this spuriousness to suppose that there is a class of things which are "meanings of words," about which one can ask.[43] But this only leads to such bizarre practices as saying that the "meaning" of "muggy" is "the idea or concept of mugginess" . . . which makes no

40. Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (London: SPCK, 1989), 77–105. Their sophisticated discussion never quite breaks free of following E. D. Hirsch Jr. down the problematic path of separating authorially intended meaning from significance.

41. Jorge J. E. Gracia, *How Can We Know What God Means? The Interpretation of Revelation* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

42. J. L. Austin, "The Meaning of a Word," in his *Philosophical Papers* (3rd ed; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 55–75, originally written in 1940 according to the editorial introduction (vi). The only reference to it of which I am aware is Spinks, *Crisis of Meaning*, 84, n. 28, but he does not make much of it.

43. Indeed, alternatively, one could ask about "meanings," replete with scare quotes built in by definition. Austin, "Meaning," 58–59.

meaningful sense. As per his standard performative emphasis, Austin would insist that the real question would have to be "What does *X* mean by saying 'It is muggy today'?"—a question which could be answered helpfully. Austin's rhetorical tour de force takes an interesting turn at this point, as he ruminates on the predilection for philosophers to generalize out to absurdity: "Lesser men, raising this same question and finding no answer, would very likely commit suicide or join the Church."[44] The article goes on to pursue two further aspects of the tendency to classify questions about meaning in such general terms (to do with analytic meanings and other philosophical niceties), but its work is done in its first five bracing pages.

It is clear that this short, early piece finds Austin on his way to developing his fuller account that many significant aspects of language only make sense when understood in terms of how they perform. He went on to write on "performative language," and eventually to develop an understanding of "speech acts" for which he is probably best known, in his famous work *How to Do Things with Words*.[45] Sometimes lost in this broader theory is the elegant early argument about meaning: that in certain low-key and localized ways it remains important to ask about meanings, without thinking that one needs a generalized theory in place. [46]

What then of the biblical scholar? I suggest that Austin's argument can be transposed straightforwardly to the reading of biblical texts. The meaning of any given biblical text can be various (though not limitless) things, including some with theological dimensions. "The meaning of a text," on the other hand, is a conceptually useless phrase, and the lengthy debate about what texts mean has frequently fallen into confusion as a result. By way of contrast, the meaning of "All the people sat in the open square before the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of the heavy rain" (Ezra 10:9b) is not a matter which is conceptually difficult, especially to British scholars familiar with endless discourse about the weather. This relatively straightforward approach to the concept of meaning does not imply that such meaning is itself either straightforward, or mundane, and so forth.

Let us consider an example, one short enough to allow a certain blurring of the distinction between the meaning of a word and a biblical text: the sixth (or occasionally the fifth) commandment: "*lo' tirtsach*"—"do not murder" or "do not kill." In a thorough study of the history of interpretation of this verse, including a review of many 20th century translations, Wilma Bailey charts the drift towards a

44. Austin, "Meaning," 59.

45. Posthumously edited by J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 1975; 1st ed. 1962). For an account of the key aspects of speech-act theory as they relate to biblical studies see my "Speech-Act Theory" (n. 5 above) and more broadly Richard S. Briggs, *Words in Action: Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark and New York: Continuum, 2001).

46. On another occasion, with philosophical interests to the fore, it would be worth exploring the ways in which Austin's interests do and do not overlap with typically Wittgensteinian ways of understanding meaning as related to use. There is a clear similarity of emphasis here.

view which reads the text as prohibiting murder rather than killing.[47] The reasons which pull interpreters to one or the other interpretation are many and various, and surely not entirely unconnected with their overall theological perspective on killing and its various attempted justifications. But neither are they unrelated to the semantic range of *ratsach* in its various occurrences in the canon, and the contextually-sensitive arguments put forward about how the word is being used in Exodus 20:13 (//Deut 5:17). The complexity in this case, as Bailey points out, is that these arguments pull in conflicting directions. Thus on the one hand, some point to the fact that the death penalty is elsewhere mandated in scripture, and killing in war is clearly understood to derive from the command of YHWH, to argue that *lo' tirtsach* cannot mean simply "do not kill." The assumption here is that there is sufficient coherence across the various contexts in the canon where the verb is used to point to limitations of its meaning in Exodus 20. On the other hand, others point out that different traditions (and sources) may well have used the same word differently, and that in general the ten commandments regulate basic practices relevant to all of (everyone's) life, not particular subsets of those practices specifically defined in legal terms. This would point towards an understanding of not killing alongside not committing adultery and not stealing as a blanket prohibition of a general human activity. It is not my purpose to adjudicate this argument, which would clearly require the interpreter to weigh up the relative merits of the conflicting arguments brought into play.[48]

The more hermeneutical point is this: this is a perfectly intelligible dispute about the meaning of the verb *ratsach* in Exodus 20:13, in which one of the key factors, though not definitive in any one direction, is what the verb *ratsach* means when people use it. It turns out not to have a univocal meaning, which is part of the difficulty in knowing how best to translate the text. But it does not seem helpful to suggest that the way ahead here is to recast the discussion in terms of interpretive interests and ask why some would interpret it to forbid all killing and others only unlawful killing such as murder. One can have that discussion too, but it is not the same one, and neither is it apparent that it is a more finely tuned discussion than the one about the meanings of *ratsach*.[49]

What are the hermeneutical conclusions? I would like to suggest that there is a strong tendency in biblical studies to make such unexamined claims as "texts do not have meanings—it all depends on how people read them" on the one hand, and "texts do have meanings—and people either read them rightly or wrongly and

47. Wilma Ann Bailey, *"You Shall Not Kill" or "You Shall Not Murder"? The Assault on a Biblical Text* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005).

48. And ideally the issues raised by cross-comparing uses of *ratsach* with the other main vocabulary markers for acts of killing in the Old Testament, using the roots *mwt*, *qtl*, and *hrg*, each with their different (and perhaps more clearly-defined) nuances.

49. Bailey does probe both discussions. She sets her sights both on arguing that "murder" is the wrong translation in the ten commandments, but that pragmatically the question is which translation will most help people to stop killing each other: Bailey, *You Shall Not Kill*, 19–20, 79–83.

that is of no basic hermeneutical significance for the correct interpretation" on the other. What attention to specific texts suggests, as per Austin's argument about meaning, is that the level of abstraction attained in such generalized formulations is of no help in assessing what the given text is saying. My own view is that Stout's famous article correctly perceives this with respect to one side of the argument: in other words Stout recognizes that it is unhelpfully abstract to say that a text does have a meaning. But Austin's argument helps us to see that it just as unhelpfully abstract to say that a text does not. Rather, we have to keep pressing toward specific texts, and always remember to ask something like "What does 'do not kill' mean?," which is as practical a discussion as could be imagined. As this particular example suggests, it remains true that sometimes the answer to just such a specific question will be "we do not know" or—less gloomily—"there is more than one possible answer" (although this will rarely equate to "there are any number of possible answers" . . . the number in question is more commonly two or three).

Trained by long immersion in quasi-philosophical debate, biblical interpreters may still find themselves wondering what it is they are asking after when they ask "What does 'Do not kill' mean?" But in practice it seems to me that this is to create a problem where none really exists, except that created by the urge to generalize.

In short, one of the things a reader of text X should be asking is "What does X mean?" There is absolutely no reason why the reader in question should not ask all manner of other questions too (referring to our earlier chart of possibilities), but the possibility (and indeed desirability) of such other interpretative pursuits should not intimidate the unwary into feeling the need to use "scare quotes" when talking of meaning, nor drive them to avoid meaning-language altogether. Neither, on the other hand, does it require such a reader to have "a theory or meaning" or even be able to define what meaning is.[50]

But when the reader comes to a text like: "The seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God—you shall not do any work" (Exod 20:10), it would seem that one entirely appropriate question to ask is "what does 'work' mean?" Note, finally, that by the time one has arrived at a question of appropriate specificity such as this, there is an implicit "here" attached to the question: "what does work mean . . . *here*?" Which reminds us of Austin's over-riding contention that important questions of meaning are not to be addressed divorced from particular contexts of use.

Matters Arising: Bringing Meanings and Readings Together

In hermeneutics, as in so many other aspects of biblical enquiry, almost any account of one particular topic inevitably leads on to considerations of other matters, and one must resist the temptation to try to address all the implications of

50. On the altogether muddled philosophical notion of needing a "theory of meaning" see the strongly argued work of G. P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker, *Language, Sense and Nonsense. A Critical Investigation into Modern Theories of Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

one hermeneutical proposal in short order, since such an attempt would merely over-simplify complex issues. Thus I cannot here consider all the issues which are tied up in an attempt to think wisely about meaning when reading the Bible. My goal was much more limited: to suggest in effect that for all the theoretical musing about meaning which has occupied biblical interpreters in recent decades, we should probably proceed as if not much has changed, and ask non-theorized questions about "what does X mean?" as and when text X requires us so to do. Despite the huge gravitational pull of theory, and hermeneutical theory in particular, I submit that generalizing such ad hoc questions into concerns about "what do texts mean?" (or comparable matters such as "do texts mean what authors intend?" and so forth) does not shed much light on the manifold tasks of reading scripture well.

Along the way we have touched on various further issues which the present discussion has tackled, if at all, in rather blunt and unhelpful terms, such as whether biblical texts mean what they mean in ways comparable with other texts, or how the careful work of philology which underlies almost all biblical interpretation could be characterized if one were to attempt to drop the notion of meaning. Of all the areas which would benefit from further exploration, though, I close with just one.

In his final and still markedly under-rated work of literary theory, C. S. Lewis imagined an "experiment in criticism" in which the usual order of things was reversed. Instead of trying directly to assess the merits of a text, he proposed distinguishing between different, varying types of reading, and then defining a good text as one which sustained certain (good) practices of reading, and a bad text as one which only supported other kinds of reading.[51] Lewis was particularly interested in the power of poetic, literary and mythical texts to remake the reader by way of a reading which could not be equated to such pursuits as reading the newspaper or children's comics. As such, his work lends a largely untapped depth to various notions of literary reading which, in biblical studies at least, have grown considerably more prominent in the intervening fifty years.[52] However, the single point I wish to note here is that at the root of such literary reading was the imaginary figure of Professor Dryasdust. Dryasdust was the expert on details—and in particular precisely the kinds of details which concerns with meaning might unlock on a suitably case-by-case basis. He is seen as the most valuable of all critics:

> At the top comes Dryasdust. Obviously I have owed, and must continue to owe, far more to editors, textual critics, commentators, and lexicographers than to anyone else. Find out what the author actually wrote and what the hard words meant and what the allusions were to, and you have

51. C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961).

52. The only piece I know which makes sustained use of this book in biblical studies is the fine and thought-provoking article of Stephen I. Wright, "An Experiment in Biblical Criticism: Aesthetic Encounter in Reading and Preaching Scripture," in Craig Bartholomew, *et al*. (eds.), *Renewing Biblical Interpretation* (SHS1 ; Grand Rapids, Zondervan and Carlisle : Paternoster, 2000), 240–67.

> done far more for me than a hundred new interpretations or assessments could ever do.[53]

Arguably the critical hierarchy was the way it was for Lewis because he was more than capable of working towards his own imaginative interpretations once fuelled by sufficient grasp of the details of the text before him, and clearly this is not a gift shared by all readers. However, we would be right to conclude that paying due attention to meanings is not to be understood as an *alternative* to focusing on readings in all their conceptual and imaginative literary diversity. Rather, the very heart of letting attention dwell on reading in the hermeneutical process is an appropriate acknowledgment of the importance of working well with meaning. And if the account offered here has any merit, then we shall only be able to work well with meaning once we are engaged in the practices of reading particular biblical texts. Or, to cast one eye back over long centuries of just such reading, we shall only be able to *recover* the ability to work well with meaning when we refocus our attention on the reading of particular texts.

Theologically speaking, it matters relatively little in the end whether one can offer a correct theoretical account of these matters. But it matters a great deal what *lo' tirtsach* means, and myriad other texts of Holy Scripture.

53. Lewis, *Experiment in Criticism*, 121.

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Isaiah 6 in Its Context

Robert L. Cole
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Introduction

Scholars have long observed that between Isa 5 and 10 there appears to be an interpolation of diverse material into a previous whole and unbroken sequence. Indeed, a series of woes in Isa 5 (הוי) and the refrain so-called of Isa 5:25 cease at the end of the chapter, only to begin again in Isa 9:11, 16, 20 and 10:1, 5.[1] The "woe" (הוי) oracles are repeated in Isa 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22, but cease until appearing twice more in 10:1, 5, leaving the impression that the intervening material of chapters 6–9 has been spliced into it. Isaiah 5:25 contains what turns out to be a refrain by its repetition in 9:11, 16, 20, and 10:4: בכל זאת לא שב אפו ועוד ידו נטויה.[2] In addition, since Isaiah's presumed call appeared not in chapter 1 but in chapter 6 (unlike Jeremiah and Ezekiel), the present arrangement has been considered secondary or "of accidental interpolation."[3]

Consequently attempts have been made to reconstruct the "allegedly original literary sequence within a historical setting,"[4] largely ignoring the canonical arrangement. Childs' diagnosis of such a reconstruction is that,

> it substitutes a different theological trajectory for these chapters and thus runs in the face of the canonical intent . . . a critically reconstructed redactional scheme that runs roughshod over the canonical shape of the biblical text itself . . . The obvious weakness in this older literary-critical approach as in failing adequately to deal with the present literary form of the text as a literary composition with its own integrity, which may well

1. See Brevard Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2001), 42–44, for a brief description and history of the *Denkschrift* hypothesis.

2. Note that this repetition links the judgment context of chapters 5 and 9–10 closely together, but as will be seen here, common phraseology and terminology concerning judgment also link chapters 5 and 6.

3. Childs, *Isaiah*, 43.

4. Ibid.

> have intended something of semantic significance in positioning Isaiah's experience at chapter 6 rather than chapter 1.[5]

His suggestion that the present position of chapter 6 had significance for meaning turns out to be correct, as will be argued here. The weakness of traditional literary critics consists principally in failure to deal adequately with the present form of the text. In fact, the possibility that the book's present canonical shape could exhibit a coherent message should be considered from the beginning, before dissection into what are ultimately theoretical sources. As will be seen here, what appears at first glance to be a misplaced or chaotic juxtaposition of texts turns out to be part of a purposeful, cohesive, and coherent composition with major consequences for interpretation. Furthermore, the New Testament's reading of Isaiah 6 will also be examined and found to be remarkably consistent with the literary context.

Isaiah 6 in Context

Berlin also describes the "isolation of units" approach in her commentary on Zephaniah, and her remarks are fitting for Isaiah studies and indeed, the prophetic books in general.[6] She rightly decries a particular commentator who,

> views prophetic books as collections of oracles, analogous to collections of sermons, and stresses that one should not necessarily expect logical ordering or coherence in such collections . . . takes the basic unit of interpretation to be the individual oracle (assuming that it can be isolated) rather than the pericope, chapter, or book as a whole . . . sees little purpose in searching for a line of thought sustained or developed over several contiguous oracles because he views the ordering of these oracles as more or less random; or even if there is a logic to the ordering (chronological or thematic), it is secondary and not to be used in understanding the meaning of the original unit . . . denies or minimizes the existence of the book *qua* book, a work in its own right with a coherent design.[7]

Indeed, the approach described represents a reading of prophetic texts that ignores the *context* in which the writer located them. Berlin's diagnosis of the Zephaniah commentator applies *mutatis mutandis* to the case of Isaiah 6.

The focus of the present study will be on the function of the text of Isaiah 6 as it is in its canonical shape. Diachronic reconstructions of a separate source separating a supposed original unity of chapters 5 and 10 may appear cogent on the surface, but analysis of the linguistic evidence linking not only 5 and 6 but the entirety of chapters 2 through 12 reveals an overarching unity and continuity throughout. The

5. Ibid., 43, 44, 49. Childs' use of the term "composition" is appropriate as opposed to "redactor" or "editor" in this case given the numerous and persistent examples of linguistic ties across these chapters. he evidence, as will be shown below, belies a straightforward stitching at the seams of preexistent sources.

6. Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah* (AB 25A; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 21.

7. Ibid., 21–22.

so-called "seams" begin to fade as the depth of consistency and coherence between presumed discrete textual chunks are recognized.

Further comments by Berlin addressing the concept of context are incisive and bear repeating:

> most if not all compilers, ancient and modern, have a purpose and seek to make their compilations coherent . . . most readers . . . read as though the compilers did . . . rejecting the claim that the juxtaposition of units affects their meaning . . . denies . . . readers a powerful interpretive device–the use of immediate context to make sense of an oracle . . . telling us . . . to look only to the original context of the oracle, the prophet's first utterance of it, and to discount its present context in the prophetic book. But the original context is lost to us; we do not know exactly, when, where, and why the prophet delivered a particular oracle. The only context we have is in the book.[. . . the] primary task of the exegete is to explain the *book*, not only its pieces. The exegete will therefore assume coherence (as readers do for all texts), until all attempts to find it fail.[8]

While we do know the "when" of Isaiah 6 (year of Uzziah's death), the book's composer has indicated that these words should be understood and received by his *readers* (who receive it after the fact of the vision) as pertinent to them. As will be seen, the entirety of Isa 2–12 is wrapped in an eschatological time frame, indicating their particular relevancy for yet future generations,[9] and Isaiah 6 in particular is the culmination of the divine exaltation first promised in chapter 2. Repeated themes and language across these chapters suggests authorially motivated coherence, which is confirmed upon further reflection.

Rendtorff addresses the topic of Isaiah 6 in a chapter concerning "the framework of the composition of the book," and poses the question, "what is its context?"[10] He suggests first the "memoir" of 6:1–8:18/9:6 and specifically 8:17,[11] but not its relation to chapters 5 immediately previous and 7 following. The bulk of discussion centers on connections, undoubtedly legitimate, between the hardening verses of chapter 6 and chapter 40 ff.[12] He does note the fact that the Hebrew term שׁממה of 6:11 is found also twice in 1:7 and then again in chapters 49 and 54.[13] However, לשׁמה in 5:9 and the numerous verbal links between this verse and 6:11, as will be discussed below, are overlooked, as are the repeated terms and topics stretching from chapters 2 through 5 that culminate in chapter 6. His neglect of the preceding chapters and their possible connections to chapter 6 is undoubtedly

8. Ibid., 22.

9. The entire book of Isaiah ends as it began with an eschatologically restored Zion/Jerusalem–Isa 2:2–5 and Isa 65:18–25–66:10–14.

10. Rolf Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 170–80, 173.

11. Ibid. 174.

12. Ibid. 177–80.

13. Ibid. 176–77.

due to acceptance of the memoir-as-interruption theory: "between there is a connected body of texts with *quite a different set of themes* (6.1–9.6)," (emphasis mine).[14] On the contrary, there is in fact a discernible continuity of language and theme from chapter 5 into 6.

Williamson's study on the composition and redaction of the book also includes a discussion of Isaiah 6.[15] Defending the notion that "speculations about the growth of the book of Isaiah" are legitimate he confidently dates 6:13*bβ* to the post-exilic period and on that basis he removes it from further consideration.[16] This is followed by the assertion that "with the exception of the final clause of the chapter, the whole was in place before the closing years of the exilic period," and as a result "virtually the whole of Isaiah 6" can be used for "examining the possible influence of the first part of Isaiah on the later chapters."[17]

As with Rendtorff's analysis, Williamson's discussion is focused primarily on the relationship of chapter 6 with Isaiah 40–55 and not the immediate context.[18] One exception to this is the observation of links between Isa 2:12, 14 and 6:1 which will be explored further here, along with many further connections throughout Isa 2–5. However, the excision of 6:13*bβ* overlooks its role in the transition to material in chapter 7 immediately following. A remaining stump with a holy seed in it is a fitting precursor for the idea of a returning remnant (name of Isaiah's son in 7:3) and the child born in 7:14 whose diet (7:15) is that of desolation (7:22). Desolation and exile as described in Isaiah 7 are anticipated already in the preceding chapter 6 and before. Furthermore, this child's unique blamelessness (7:15–16, cf. opposite of the people at large in 5:20) qualifies it as holy (6:13) and the latter adjective (קדוֹשׁ) suggests a link to the threefold holiness of the deity in 6:3 (קדוֹשׁ). As will be discussed below, the seemingly enigmatic vision of the deity as king in blatant anthropomorphic form of 6:1 is further explained in 7 by a child named עמנואל.

The effect of the traditional chapter division often results in the same isolated reading at the popular or homiletic level. Isaiah 6 is a favorite text of contemporary preachers but rarely if ever is the full context of previous or following chapters taken into account.[19] The division does reflect a recognizable change in style and reference from oracle in chapter 5 to the more prosaic account of the call of the prophet in chapter 6, also introduced by a specific date. Likewise the ancient scribe responsible for 1QIsa[a] recognized the seam and left a lengthy space at the end of

14. Rolf Rendtorff, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. David E. Orton; Leiden: Deo, 2005), 172.

15. H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. repr. 2002), 30–56.

16. Ibid. 35, "can hardly be conceived before the time of Ezra . . . therefore, be discounted from the remainder of our analysis."

17. Ibid. 37.

18. Ibid. 39.

19. One exception to this may be the connection sometimes drawn between the series of woes (הוי) across chapter 5 directed to the people at large, and the woe (אוי) in 6:5 directed by the prophet against himself.

5:30,[20] being probably an ancient form of אחותפ.[21] Nonetheless, it is shortsighted to erect high walls of interpretive isolation at these junctures. While chapter divisions certainly aid in ease of reference, their effect can be deleterious for interpretation, as is certainly the case here.

Other attempts have been made in the past to explain the present location of chapter 6. Liebreich asserts that chapter 6 "was placed in its present position because it was felt that it constitutes an appropriate climax to the five preceding chapters, which are linked together by a similar opening and closing (1:4 and 5:24)."[22] He observed that while the divine title "Lord of hosts" (יהוה צבאות) occurs nine times throughout all the first five chapters (1:9, 24, 2:12, 3:1, 15, 5:7, 9, 16, 24) excepting chapter 4, the epithet "Holy One of Israel" (קדוֹשׁ ישׂראל) is repeated only in 1:4 and 5:19, 24.[23] In the case of 5:24, it is the object of the same verbal predicate as 1:4,[24] and thus envelopes the first five chapters:

1:4 – נאצו את קדוֹשׁ ישׂראל
5:24 – ואת אמרת קדוֹשׁ ישׂראל

Chapter 6 then unites these two epithets into one in v. 3 by predicating three times the holiness (קדוֹשׁ) of the Lord of hosts (יהוה צבאות). Thrice repeated as well is the same adjective קדוֹשׁ in the immediately preceding 5:16, 19, 25.[25] From this evidence Leibreich concludes that chapters 1–5 particularize God while 6:3 universalizes Him.[26]

Seitz sees hints of the call of chapter 6 in the preceding 5:9, understanding the clause באזני יהוה צבאות as reference to the divine council, translating it as "the Lord of Hosts has sworn in my hearing."[27] So chapter 5 gives us clear intimations of the call of Isaiah, which then receives fuller expression in chapter 6.[28]

Childs offers reasons for the juxtaposition of chapters 5–6, as well as of 6–7.[29] He sees a transition to judgment in chapter 5 where Israel the vineyard is to be destroyed, which destruction chapter 6 reiterates from another point of view.[30] Reference to the destruction of Israel (5:25) because it despised the Holy One of Israel (קדוֹשׁ ישׂראל) in 5:24 precedes revelation to the prophet himself of its

20. John C. Trever, *Scrolls from Qumran Cave I* (Jerusalem: The Albright Institute of Archaeological Research and The Shrine of the Book, 1974), 12. If the space in 1QIsa[a] here is compared with those between 5:25 and 26, between 5:19 and 20, 5:20 and 21, or 5:21 and 22, it becomes clear that the ancient tradition recognized it as a major break.

21. Marked in the MT by פ, see BHS.

22. Leon J. Liebreich, "The Position of Chapter Six in the Book of Isaiah," *HUCA* 25 (1954): 38.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 39.

26. Ibid.

27. Christopher Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 52.

28. Ibid.

29. Childs, *Isaiah*, 49, 57–59.

30. Ibid., 57.

enduring hardening and destruction in chapter 6 and of the glory of the same Holy One (קדוֹשׁ קדוֹשׁ קדוֹשׁ, 6:3). So both Childs and Liebreich see significance in the use of distinct divine epithets as a bridge between chapters 5 and 6. Childs notes as well how the divine eschatological rule of chapter 6 resonates with the same in 2:1–4 and 4:2–6.[31]

Oswalt understands chapter 6 as a suitable conclusion to what precedes and introduction to what follows, a hinge of sorts.[32] He finds the "broad issues" such as sin of the nation in chapters 1–5 finding a solution in the experience of Isaiah in chapter 6, and the more specific occasions in 7–12 are a fulfillment of what the prophet had seen in his call of chapter 6.[33] However, the numerous linguistic correspondences permeating these chapters and their interpretive implications are not addressed.

Alter reads the immediately preceding Isa 5:26–30 as shifting "from the here and now to the end of things that recall the beginning . . . the poetic transformation of history into the stuff of apocalypse."[34] The here and now in his view is "a concrete historical menace–the armies of Assyria or Babylonia, or even a natural disaster like locusts."[35] Indeed, his observation of reference to "the end of things"[36] is correct, but the equivocation on which historical situation might be in view is telling.[37] There is no explicit reference to a historical entity, and the writer, as will be shown, seeks to portray the oracles of chapters 2–5 (ביום ההוא, note 5:30) and 6 as eschatological in thrust, pointing far beyond the particular contemporary circumstances.

Beuken discusses the relationship between chapters 1 and 6 and asserts what a reader might logically expect: chapters 1–5 "provide the readers with information that is absolutely necessary for the understanding of chapter 6."[38] His focus, however, is limited primarily to comparing chapters 1 and 6.[39] A brief comment given on the role of Isaiah 1–5 concerns the repeated indictments of sin found therein, culminating in the hardening of 6:9–10.[40] He also appends to his study an impressive list of vocabulary items common to chapters 1 and 6.[41] Further examples of semantic links noted are common references to desolation (שׁממה) in 1:7 and 6:11,[42] restoration (שׁוב) in 1:25–26 and 6:10, 13, and the oak simile (כאלה) in 1:30

31. Ibid., 59.

32. J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39,* NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 171–77.

33. Ibid.

34. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 151.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Alter seems to opt for an "Assyrian invasion" (p. 152).

38. Willem A. M. Beuken, "The Manifestation of Yahweh and the Commission of Isaiah: Isaiah 6 Read against the Background of Isaiah 1," *CTJ* 39 (2004): 72–87, (78).

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., 78–79.

41. Ibid., 84, 24 items in the list.

42. As noted above, the form לשׁמה is found in 5:9 as well.

and 6:13.[43] For the latter, burning (בער) brings destruction in either case (1:31, 6:13),[44] but nevertheless a holy seed survives in 6:13.[45] So, chapter 1 portrays vividly the destruction of the land and city, which is then reaffirmed in chapter 6. However, left unmentioned are numerous preparatory topics in chapters 2–5 that lead into chapter 6. Furthermore, chapter 5 itself shares a number of vocabulary items, even entire phrases with the following chapter 6, as will be seen.

Beuken's argument that the use of terms "cognate" to חצרי (1:12) in chapter 6 (היכל and בית), outweighs the identical use of בית and נשׂא in 6:4 and 2:2–3 is unconvincing.[46] Crucial to understanding chapter 2 is the constellation of terms repeated in 2:2–4 (exaltation of Zion) and 2:5–17 (exaltation of the Lord).[47] The house of the Lord (2:2) and the Lord Himself (2:11ff.) will be exalted. The latter is described especially by the repeated use of רום and נשׂא (2:9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17) and thus prepares for the same two verbal roots in 6:1. Likewise thematic and lexical material from 2:5ff. permeates the sequence of chapters 2–5 (e.g., גבה in 2:11, 15, 17, 3:16, 5:15, 16, cf. especially 2:9 and 5:15) and so provide linkage between chapters 6 and 2.[48]

Young holds that the position of chapter 6 is to present first, "the heart of his message" followed by, "an account of his prophetic call."[49] He sees it not only as a description of his initial call but also introducing the "Messianic trilogy" which follows.[50] The prophetic call account "reinforces what he has already proclaimed" in previous chapters and his preaching in them of final judgment is proven to have been given to him directly by God Himself.[51] Included is a list of unifying language and themes across chapters 2–5 but also between 5 and 6 specifically.[52] Indeed, the evidence he lists is impressive and demonstrates the compositional coherence across the "seam" of chapters 5–6.[53] Nonetheless, the interpretive implications resulting from this data are not explored. Furthermore, the vital connection between 5:26, 6:1 and 11:10, 12 is overlooked, along with the eschatological thrust (אוהה סויב) from chapters 2 through 12. Perhaps for this reason Young does not wholeheartedly endorse John the apostle's identification of Adonay as Christ

43. Ibid.

44. But note also the same root in 4:4, 5:5. Chapter 6 indeed is consistent with chapter 1 but the intervening chapters 2–5 are of vital importance in its understanding.

45. Reference to a remnant is also found in 1:8, 9.

46. Beuken, "The Manifestation . . ." 79.

47. הרים/הר – vv. 2, 3 and 14; נשׂא – vv. 2, 4 and 9, 12, 13, 14; גבעות – 2:2, 14; הלך – 2:3, (2), 5; and last but not least באחרית הימים in 2:2 which is antecedent to ביום ההוא in 2:11, 17.

48. Cf. felled oak/s (אלון) in 2:13 and 6:13. Two parallel themes – debasement of the proud and the Lord's exaltation – are found in chapters 2 and 6.

49. Edward G. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965, repr. 1992), 232–33.

50. Ibid., n. 3.

51. Ibid., 234.

52. Ibid., 233, n. 4.

53. 3:4 compared with 5:5; 2:9, 11, 17 with 5:5; 5:9, 10, 13, 14, 17 with 6:11–13; 5:9 with 6:11; 5:5 with 6:13; 5:24 with 6:13b; 5:26 with 7:18; 5:5, 6 with 7:23–25; 5:30 with 8:22.

(John 12:41).[54] Isaiah "does not stress the person of Christ" and yet "this appearance we learn *from John* was an appearance of Christ" (emphasis mine).[55]

The preceding examples represent the scholars who make rather minimal attempts to consider the context of Isaiah 6. However there is much more linguistic evidence to be noted along with its "semantic significance" to use the words of Childs.[56] Furthermore, the meaning of chapter 6 should be considered in light, not only of those chapters preceding but also those immediately following.

From the initial superscription of the book are topics that find expression throughout the ensuing chapters including 6. Isaiah 1 opens with a sequence of four Davidic kings, with Uzziah, the king mentioned in 6:1 being the first. The initial vision portrays a desolate land and its capital Zion (1:8), although not without a surviving remnant (1:9) and promise of restoration (1:26–28).[57] The "last days" of 2:2 (באחרית הימים)[58] although not entirely specific, do clearly point to a distant future, i.e., eschaton, in which Jerusalem/Zion is not only restored but exalted and elevated to an unprecedented position and condition. In addition, the language of universal worship at Jerusalem (2:2–3) and absolute peace between all nations (2:4) is unparalleled and cannot be understood simply as "strongly continuous with the present," nor as "the end of days as they are currently experienced."[59]

Similarily 4:2–6 portrays a Jerusalem *fundamentally* transformed,[60] and the description is introduced by the ubiquitous phrase "in that day": ביום ההוא. This shorter phrase is anaphoric to the initial "last days" of 2:2.[61] However, the material

54. Ibid., 237.

55. Ibid.

56. Childs, *Isaiah*, 43.

57. Chapter 1 ends with burning judgment much as does the entire book, although Jerusalem is restored (66:10). Cf. פשׁעים . . . ואין מכבה in 1:28, 31 with 66:24 – הפשׁעים . . . לא תכבה.

58. Note the following three descriptions of the phrase in scholarly dictionaries:

(1) "*the end of the days*, i.e., the latter days, the future [Gen 49:1; Num 24:14 . . . Isa 2:2; Mic 4:1]," *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, vol. I, s.v. אחרית.

(2) "'אחרית הימים'–לרוב–קץ הימים (במובן אסכטולוגי)." מנחם־צבי קדרי, מלון העברית המקראית (רמת־גן תוצאת–אוניברסיטת בר־אילן, 2006), 29.

(3) "La expresión puede adquirir sentido escatológico: tiempo último, final, definitivo Is 2,2 Ez 38,16, Os 3:5." Luis Alonso Schoekel, *Diccionario bíblico hebreo-español* (Valencia: Institución San Jerónimo, 1990), s.v. אחרית.

59. H. G.M. Williamson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 1–27* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2006), 180. Furthermore, individual members of the construct chain (אחרית) this phrase represents cannot be analyzed in isolation (ibid., p. 179). The city's description here in Isa 2 simply does not qualify as part of the writer's experience.

60. Note that Isa 2:3 and 4:3, 4–5 mention the restored Zion/Jerusalem directly. Another portrayal of the eschatological Jerusalem appears in Isa 65:18, where it is transformed (בורא) in conjunction with the recreation (בורא) of the heavens and earth (v. 17).

61. As already noted, the repeated phrase ביום ההוא continues through chapter 12:1, 4. Isaiah 12 portrays a restored Zion (v. 6) and exalted Lord (נשׂגב שׁמו, v. 4), exactly as was promised in 2:11, 17 – ונשׂגב יהוה לבדו ביום ההוא. From chapters 2 to 12 there is then a continuity and cohesiveness across what may at first glance appear to be disparate material. A closer reading reveals compositional integration in spite of the seams, whether real or imagined. It is worthwhile to

intervening from 2:6–4:1 and following in 5:1–30 reveal that "in that day" a great end-time judgment on the proud will precede restoration as well as an enduring desolation. Iin that same time period the Lord alone will be exalted "in that day" (ביום ההוא –2:11) of wrath on all pride, a theme repeated in 2:17, 20. That sorrowful period ends in the eschatological (ביום ההוא) salvation of 4:2.

Chapter 5 is another extended discourse on the coming judgment and it ends with the same reference (ביום ההוא) in the final v. 30, immediately followed by the vision of divine exaltation in 6:1. The entirety of chapters 2 to 5 are thus to be read as visions of the final judgment and also eventual restoration "in that day." As noted above, this temporal phrase is again repeated in chapter 7 (vv. 18, 20, 21, 23) and likewise through 12, so that the eschatological focus permeates entirely the content of these oracles. While chapter 7 twice identifies the king of Assyria (vv. 17, 20) as the immediate agent of destruction described in these contexts, he is simply initiating a desolation that will endure long into the future, and which was already described since chapter 2. By repetition of common themes and vocabulary across chapters 2–7, and even beyond up to chapter 12 as well, the composer of the book of Isaiah has left evidence of a consistent message of judgment and eventual restoration in "that day" across various seams and segments that make up their content.

Proof that chapter 6 reiterates the same eschatological judgment seen in 5 is found by the numerous verbal parallels concentrated in 6:11–13 and 5:9–10. For example, the inhabitant-less houses of 5:9 (בבית . . . מאין יושב) correspond closely with the inhabitant-less (מאין יושב) cities and houses (ובתים מאין אדם) of 6:11. Likewise the desolation of the same in 5:9 (לשמה) is reiterated in 6:11 (שממה). A remnant tenth of 6:13 (ועוד בה עשׂריה) after its destruction recalls the ten sections of a vineyard (כי עשׂרת צמדי כרם) in 5:10 required to produce one measure of wine. Exile for God's people is due to their lack of knowledge (מבלי דעת) in 5:13, and previous to that (5:12) they did not see the deeds of his hand (לא ראו). In fact, they ask to see and know in 5:19 in an apparently sarcastic manner (ונראה . . . ונדעה), and are thus condemned. This situation persists, or is described again in chapter 6:9–10 with further details (וראו ראו ואל תדעו . . . פן יראה). Consequently the ignorance and blindness of chapter 5 is seen as well in chapter 6, but now divinely induced and persisting to an indefinite future. In fact, 5:25 had already hinted at the enduring judgment upon his people ועוד ידו נטויה, a phrase that probably anticipates those in chapter 6 such as ועוד בה עשׂריה (v. 13), and the question עד מתי, along with its answer עד אשׁר (v. 11). Such concrete linguistic parallels demonstrate continuity in chapter 6 with the previous material.

Chapter 2 also initiates another running theme that culminates deliberately in 6:1. Just as the *mountain* of the house of the Lord will be *exalted* above the *hills* in (2:2) so the Lord himself will be raised over the *mountains*, and *exalted hills*:

2:2 – יהוה הר בית יהוה בראשׁ ההרים ונשׂא מגבעות
2:14 – ועל כל ההרים הרמים ועל כל הגבעות הנשׂאות

note how the same reference (אחרית הימים) of Hos 4:1 (vv. 1–3 essentially repeat Is 2:1–4) is carried on likewise as in Isaiah by ביום ההוא (Hos 4:6, 5:9).

His exaltation is eschatological in 2:11 (ביום ההוא) even as is the exaltation of his house of 2:2 (באחרית הימים). As already noted, the former is anaphoric to the latter and begins a sequence continuing through chapter 12. Every proud thing, be it human or material will be debased in that day (2:9–19). This idea is repeated again in 3:16–26 where the exalted pride of the daughters of Zion (כי גבהו בנות ציון, 3:16) is removed "in that day," i.e., the eschatological judgment day (ביום ההוא, 3:18). In "that day" Jerusalem will be restored (ביום ההוא, 4:2), repeating essentially the promise of its eschatological (באחרית הימים) exaltation. Here then is further evidence that the phrase in question, (ביום ההוא) found first in 2:11 and repeatedly through chapter 12, resumes באחרית הימים of 2:2.

The refrain promising divine exaltation and human debasement appears again in 5:15 with identical terminology and it repeating verbatim the entire clause of 2:9:

2:9a – וישח אדם וישפל איש
5:15a – וישח אדם וישפל איש

The humiliation of man is then followed in 5:16 with the exaltation (ויגבה) of the Lord, the holy God in judgment, as previously declared in chapter 2:10–22 (cf. the same root גבה in 2:14, 15, 17).

In this way, chapters 2–5 sustain the promise of ultimate divine exaltation and debasing of human achievement and pride. Following immediately in 6:1 is a vision of the Lord being exalted using verbs (רם ונשׂא) found repeatedly in chapter 2, sometimes the complete pair (2:9, 11, 12-both, 13, 14-both). Undoubtedly 6:1 is to be read in context as a vision of that ultimate eschatological exaltation of the Lord promised repeatedly between chapters 2 and 5. Additionally the vision is of a decidedly anthropomorphic and visible king representing the ultimate elevation of the Lord himself. Within exalted Zion (ונשׂא, 2:2) will sit an exalted (ונשׂא, 6:1) monarch of visible (וארא, 6:1, cf. also עיני ראו, v. 5) anthropomorphic features.

Immediately preceding chapter 6 the verb נשׂא ("to raise," 5:26) is found, repeating the same root seen in 2:9–14 (vv. 9, 12, 14) to condemn human pride. Isa 2:11, 17 had declared the Lord alone would be exalted (ונשׂגב יהוה לבדו ביום ההוא) inn that day and the exaltation of the sign (ונשׂא נס) of 5:26 takes place in the same "day" (ביום ההוא, 5:30). Undoubtedly the נס of 5:26 also represents that repeated promise of eschatological divine exaltation. This is confirmed by the fact that immediately following in 6:1 the same verb is found in the pair רם ונשׂא ("high and exalted") describing the exaltation of Adonay. Implied is an identity between the raised signal of 5:26 (נס) and the raised Lord (אדני) of 6:1. Furthermore, the evident consonance between נס and נשׂא in 5:26 highlights the intrinsic attribute of exaltation to a נס, the signal, banner, or standard. This figure, and its association with exaltation, links implicitly to the concrete and actual person: the king of 6:1. Additional support for this identification of 5:26 and 6:1 derives from their similar worldwide dominance. Thus the signal of 5:26 is to distant nations (לגוים מרחק) and to the end of the earth (מקצה הארץ). The king's glory in 6:3 fills the earth (מלא כל הארץ כבודו) in similar fashion.

Further information is given in chapter 11 on the נס seen first in 5:26. In 11:10 the root of Jesse will stand as a sign to the peoples (לנס עמים), again in "that day" ביום

ההוא. This text is clearly resumptive of the first reference of the sign to the nations (ונשׂא נס לגוים, 5:26) also in "that day" (ביום ההוא, 5:30). Confirmation is found then two verses later in 11:12 where the language is even closer to 5:26:

5:26 – ונשׂא נס לגוים מרחוק
11:12 – ונשׂא נס לגוים

The ubiquitous temporal reference "in that day" of 5:30 is also found in 11:11, adding further support to the identification. Furthermore, the repeated refrain across chapters 2–5 announcing the exaltation of the Lord and debasing of man finds its parallel as well in the immediate context of chapter 11. So in 10:33 (as in 2:9–17), the exalted ones will be debased, ורמי הקומה גדועים והגבהים ישׁפלו, and Lebanon will also fall, והלבנון באדיר יפול (10:34), which 2:13 had already previously predicted על כן ארזי הלבנון הרמים, and situated in the same eschatological future (cf. ביום ההוא in 10:27 with 2:11, 20).

Given that the נס of 5:26 can be identified as the root of Jesse by comparison with 11:10, then it follows that the same is true of the king in 6:1, to which 5:26 is linked expressly through the verb נשׂא. Indeed, the similarity of expression between 6:3 and 11:9cd confirms the association:

6:3 – מלא כל הארץ כבודו
11:9cd – כי מלאה הארץ דעת את יהוה

Identification of the divine king in 6:1 as the Davidic root of Jesse from 11:10 raises the distinct possibility that intervening material, such as the immediately following chapter 7, provides further comment regarding the same. Suffice it to say at this point that the promised eschatological elevation of the Lord and his divine judgment on pride and haughtiness of chapters 2–5 is fulfilled in the vision of an exalted human, and yet at the same time divine, Davidic king/priest in 6:1. Eschatological desolation precedes the vision of 6:1–7 in chapter 5 and also follows in 6:9–13, as already noted, with identical terminology and expression. Consequently the vision of 6:1 is to be read likewise as representing the eschatological exaltation of Israel's deity in a context of fiery judgment and desolation. Chapter 7 will also describe devastation in language identical to chapter 5 (cf. 7:23–25 and 5:6), as will be discussed shortly. The obvious continuity maintained throughout this sequence of texts implies reading chapter 7 in the context of the preceding 6, with important consequences for interpretation. As an example, the desolation of 6:11–12 (האדמה . . . העזובה) and of 7:16 (תעזב האדמה) are one and the same likewise, and so indicate further evidence for the integration of chapters 6 and 7.

So the controverted identity of the son of 7:14 must be read in the context not only of chapter 7, but also of chapter 6 and those previous. Since it has been shown that 6:1 is the vision of a divine and exalted root of Jesse, it is most probable that the son given as a miraculous sign (אות)[62] to the house of David in 7:14 is

62. Found in both vv. 11 and 14. These two verses also highlight through consonance the miracle of divinely caused conception and birth of a son to a young unmarried woman

further comment on his identity. Note in addition the linkage between the king of 6:1 (על כסא) and the monarch of 9:6 (על כסא), both of whom occupy the throne, presumably Davidic in both cases.[63] Indeed, the darkness of 8:22–23 precedes the birth of a divine, Davidic child in chapter 9, being identical to that darkness of 5:30, which also precedes the appearance of a divine Davidic monarch in 6:1, and child in 7:14.

Beuken suggests an intertextual connetion between Isaiah's cleansing with a coal from the *incense altar* in chapter 6 (vv. 5–7) in the year of Uzziah's death and the Chronicler's reference to Uzziah's punishment with leprosy for offering *incense* on the *altar*.[64] Indeed it is not coincidence that the vision of Adonay as priest king in 6:1 should be dated to the year in which another king, Uzziah, attempted unsuccesfully to function in both roles. Isaiah's vision of a divine monarch dressed in sacerdotal garments and seated in the temple resonates with the Chronicler's narrative of Uzziah's hubristic attempt to offer incense as a king. He also recognizes correctly the sacerdotal language from Exod 28:33ff., 39:24ff. used for the king's robes in Isa 6:1.[65]

It appears then that the date of this vision to the year of King Uzziah's death is a very calculated and considered reference. Uzziah was the epitome of pride according to 2 Chronicles 26:16 (גבה לבו). The verb גבה is found repeatedly in Isa 2–5, namely, 2:15, 17, 3:6, to describe human pride, while in 5:15 of haughty eyes and finally in 5:16 it is predicated of the Lord's exaltation in judgment. In 2:15 it is used to describe the pride of all lofty towers (כל מגדל גבה) and edifices which Uzziah constructed in 2 Chron 26:9, 15. Immediately following in (Chron 26:16) his prideful heart (גבה לבו), is shown as the cause of his downfall. Verse 21 then records his death (מותו), as in Isa 6:1: מות המלך עזיהו. Furthermore, in 2 Chron 26:22 we read that Isaiah himself recorded all the events of King Uzziah's life. He was a fitting example of human pride rebelling treacherously against the Lord as is mentioned twice in 2 Chron 26, וימעל ביהוה in v. 16, מעלת in v. 18. Isaiah's eschatological vision is thus appropriately dated to the year of that king's death.

Historical notice of that year served not simply chronological or historical purposes, but rather those illustrative, contrastive, and indeed theological. His pride led him to offer incense in the temple, a duty reserved exclusively for the priests (2 Chron 26:16–19). By contrast, the vision of the Lord in Isa 6:1 as a king wearing priestly garments is of his ultimate exalted state: ישב על כסא רם ונשא ושוליו מלאים את ההיכל in Isa 6:1. He is able to perform both sacerdotal and royal duties in direct contrast with Uzziah.

(העלמה – fornication is excluded by its divine origin and so virginity is required) by reference to the sign's elevation (למעלה) and depth (העמק).

63. The throne of 6:1 is in the temple, but as will be argued below, represents rule in contrast and in place of the Davidic King Uzziah who also sought to function as priest and king. Note as well the identification of the Davidic throne as divine in 1 Chron 28:5, 29:23, and eternal in 1 Chron 17:12, 14.

64. W. A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, (trans. Ulrich Berges; Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 167–68.

65. Ibid., 168.

Along with the location within the temple, the particular form for Adonay's garments in this verse supports a sacerdotal emphasis. In six out of eleven total instances in the MT the term שׁוליו refers to the high priest's robes (Exod 28, 39).[66] So his priestly dress and designation as "the king" (המלך, v. 5) seated on a throne indicates he is the ultimate replacement of Uzziah. Uzziah, the epitome of human pride is now dead while the Lord will be the ultimate exalted monarch. His sin of transgressing the bounds of a king's authority contrasts with and serves to highlight the coming divine, eschatological, and Davidic monarch.[67]

Alexander notes that if the vision took place after the death of Uzziah then it also took place in the first year of Jotham's reign.[68] Why then did the writer not date it to the son's first year? Such an observation underscores the writer's intention and purpose in the choice of proud and now dead Uzziah who sought to occupy both positions, as a foil for the now exalted divine, and yet indubitably human, priest-king Adonay. Dating it to the first year of Jotham would not have had the desired effect.

There are further evidences of the eschatological nature of Isaiah 6 beyond those mentioned previously. Isaiah 4:2–6 is undoubtedly a vision of the ultimately restored Jerusalem (cf. again in v. 2 the anaphoric phrase ביום ההוא). There the

66. H. M. Wolf, *Interpreting Isaiah: The Suffering and Glory of the Messiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 86: "The long, flowing robe is reminiscent of the garb of the high priest (Exod. 39:24)."

67. Hans Wilderberger, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary* (trans. T. H. Trapp: Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 259, who quotes Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology II* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker: New York: Harper, 1965), 363, as follows, "The way in which the prophets give the exact time at which they received certain revelations, dating them by events in the historical and political world, and thereby emphasizing their character as real historical events, has no parallel in any other religions," may be true. But this misses the entire point of the dating of the vision to Uzziah's death. It is the contrast between attempted and failed royal sacerdotal function through pride and the true king/priest's exaltation, which explains this specification of the vision to this year. This can be shown by his extended historical discussion (p. 259) of this particular year, while ignoring the real reason for its inclusion. Knowing the exact day and hour of this vision would not shed any light on its use here in the text at hand. John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33* (WBC 33: Waco, TX: Word Book, 1985), 73, states that "the co-regencies of Judean kings makes the precise date difficult to determine," which if it were possible to ascertain with specificity would not make the meaning any more transparent at all. He then assumes a chronological sequencing of these oracles by stating that the vision here marks the close of events portrayed in chaps. 1–5. Of that there is no evidence, but he overlooks the abundant linguistic evidence that accounts for their textual order. G.B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah*, I–XXVII, (vol. 1: Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd., 1912), 102, is likewise interested in chronological and calendrical questions in comments on 6:1. For Wolf , *Interpreting Isaiah*, 85, the transition from chapter 5 to 6 is simply an illustration of Isaiah's many contrasts, which in this case is from one "about darkness and sin to one about glory and holiness." Concerns with chronological issues in 6:1 has a long history among commentators dating to Ibn Ezra, *The Commentary of Ibn Ezra on Isaiah:* (vol. I, trans. and ed. M. Friedländer; New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1873), 34. For another modern example, R. E. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39* (New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 70–74.

68. Joseph A. Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, (rev. ed. John Eadie, 1875; repr. Grand Rapids: MI: Zondervan, 1980), 146.

branch (צמח) in the midst of a remnant (לפליטת ישׂראל והיה הנשׁאר, vv. 2–3), has been purified by burning (לבער, v. 4) in a new Jerusalem where a cloud by day and smoke (עשׁן, v. 5) by night are present. Chapter 6 then characterizes the temple and priest/king in similar fashion. So there is smoke (עשׁן, v. 4) and a purification of the prophet in a fiery context of burning coal by fiery beings (שׂרפים), as well as purification of a future remnant of one-tenth by burning (לבער, 6:13). The purified remnant in chapter 4 is called holy (קדושׁ, v. 3) while in chapter 6 only the Lord, the king–not even the prophet, is holy (קדושׁ קדושׁ קדושׁ, v. 3). So the fiery vision of the Lord in the temple of chapter 6 is a further revelation of the flame-purified atmosphere of Jerusalem in chapter 4, the ultimate eschatological sanctuary.[69]

Another element common to both chapters 4 and 6 is the term "glory" (לכבוד in 4:2, כבוד in 4:5, and כבודו in 6:3). The צמח of 4:2 possesses glory while the same is attributed to the Lord in 6:3, implying the divinity of the former. To the branch in 4:2 is attributed another divine characteristic, "majestic exaltation" (גאון). Twice in preceding texts this is attributed to the deity himself (גאונו, 2:10, 21), in his eschatological judgment. So the branch in the restored temple of chapter 4 possesses divine characteristics attributed to the sanctuarily-seated anthropomorphic Adonay in chapter 6, and to the Lord of hosts in chapter 2.

The specific transition of 5:30 to 6:1 is not unique in the book. The same is found in the transition between the end of chapter 8 and beginning of 9, as noted above:

5:30 – ץ ונבט לארצ והנה חשׁך ואור חשׁך בעריפיה

> "and he looked to the earth and behold there was distressing darkness and light became darkness in its clouds"

8:22 – ואל ארץ יביט והנה צרה וחשׁכה מעוף צוקה ואפלה מנדח
9:1 – העם ההלכים בחשׁך ראו אור גדול

> "and he looked to the earth and behold distress and darkness . . . the people walking in darkness saw a great light"

So a general situation of darkness and distress in chapter 8 is dispelled by the birth of a divine Davidic son in chapter 9 (cf. אל גבור in 9:5 and 10:21) who reigns forever. The same gloom in chapter 5 is followed by a vision of a reigning divine and yet human in form king/priest in chapter 6 (in contrast to once proud but now debased King Uzziah who sought to function as priest), followed by further details regarding his birth in chapter 7. Undoubtedly the book's composer located the two similar descriptions of darkness and distress as a purposeful prelude to the visible appearance of Adonay in 6:1 and the light-bringing son of 9:5.

Immediately following the highly anthropomorphic vision of God in chapter 6 is the account in chapter 7 of the birth of a child bearing the name עמנואל, "God is with us." This child rejects evil and chooses good (מאוס ברע ובחור בטוב, 7:15–16)

69. The imagery drawn from the wilderness tabernacle in 4:5 implies a sanctuarial context for both chapters 4 and 6.

in stark contrast to the people of 5:20, who choose the very opposite (האמרים לרע טוב ולטוב רע, 5:20). Thus this child partakes apparently of the same holiness as the divine king of 6:1. The child appears during a time of desolation (תעזב האדמה, 7:15–25), the same already foreseen in 6:11–13 (עזובה . . . האדמה). That time of abandonment is predicted in chapter 7 but foreseen already in the likewise eschatological context of 6:11–13.

The writer has also closely bound these two chapters by linking Ahaz back to Uzziah his grandfather through Jotham in 7:1 – "Ahaz, son of Jotham, son of Uzziah." Uzziah's patrilineality is never mentioned in 6:1, nor is Ahaz' in 14:28, nor Hezekiah's in 36:1. So the three royal names in 7:1 do not simply link Ahaz genealogically with his grandfather, but rather function to bind closely the content of chapters 6 and 7 together. Common terminology between these two chapters, along with their overall cohesive nature, confirm such a purpose for the threefold genealogical sequence.

These two kings resemble each other in unfaithfulness as well. Uzziah was the proud rebel against God who dies as a result, and Ahaz is the unbelieving king who will not be established (7:9), and who will not see the child. This is due to the fact that 65 years later (Isa 7:9) the land of Ephraim will be destroyed and this will take place before the child of 7:14 is grown (7:16). The historical references to Assyria in 7:19, 18, 20 (also 8:7) as the agent of destruction of these two powers Ahaz feared (7:16) do not lessen the eschatological thrust maintained throughout since chapter 2. Assyria will do away with these two kingdoms feared by Ahaz, but sixty-five years down the road (7:8), beyond his lifetime. So the prophet is already directing his message beyond Ahaz himself in 7:8 and the use of consistent terminology since chapter 2 tying all these chapters together confirms the long-term perspective. Assyria is the immediate agent of destruction upon both the powers threatening Ahaz and upon the Judean king himself. However it inaugurates a desolation that extends far into the future, as repeated patterns of language from previous chapters reveal. It is only the beginning of a devastation that still endures in 8:22, 23 (and already seen in 5:30), only to be dispelled by the birth of a divine child (9:1–5). But further desolation and judgment is implied in 9:7ff. by the use of the same refrain seen in 5:25 (בכל זאת לא שב אפו ועוד ידו נטויה).

Language expressing restoration also links both chapters 6 and 7. The possibility of a return/repentance in 6:10 (ושב) appears remote, but v. 13 confirms its ultimate reality (ושבה) in spite of further judgment. Immediately following in 7:3 this hope is reiterated by the otherwise otiose naming of the prophet's son שאר ישוב. Subsequent to this ray of hope linking the end of chapter 6 and beginning of 7 there is little optimism expressed before 8:23ff. apart from the birth of the child of 7:14–16. Promise of a remnant (שאר) in the son's name recalls the same in 4:3 (והיה הנשאר). Both the general context and *weqatal* verbal predicate of 4:3 are explicitly eschatological (note ביום ההוא in 4:2), and so the resumption of the remnant theme here in 7:3 indicates the same. Repetition of identical terms to 7:3 in 10:21, 22 (שאר ישוב) confirms it again. The latter verses (10:21, 22) are also placed in that distant eschatological day (ביום ההוא, 10:20).

Further linguistic parallels also connect chapters 6 and 7. In 6:4 the threshold of the temple shook (וינעו) from the sound of the seraphs and the house (הבית) was filled with smoke (עשן). Likewise in 7:2 the heart of the house (הבית) of David shook (וינע) from the threat of attack by the northern coalition, like the shaking (כנוע) of leaves before the wind. The two threatening kings are characterized in 7:4 as two smoking (העשנים) firebrands. Within the first house (the temple) sits the root of Jesse as divine priest/king (6:1), while the second house (of David) will be given a son whose name signifies God's presence with his people. Here are echoes of the well-known covenant with David (2 Sam 7), in which the divine residence is contemplated.

The prophet Isaiah himself sought to know how long the desolation would last (עד מתי, 6:11) and was told only that there would be a remnant. No specific timetable is given in response to his question. Indeed, this desolation will endure until "that day," as its repetition in the judgment context of 7:20, 21 and 23 reveals. Assyria is identified in chapter 7 as the initial cause, but that darkness will endure until a light dispels it (8:22–9:6).

Reading Isaiah 6 Eschatologically

Support for the ultimate and eschatological thrust of Isaiah's utterance in chapter 7 is supported by further evidence. Within 7: 8–17 are the two phrases, שׂמיר ושׂית (vv. 23, 24, 25), and the ubiquitous ביום ההוא (vv. 20, 21, 23), that provide a direct connection to the eschatological time period of chapters 2–5 (ביום ההוא, 2:11, 20, 3:7, 4:2, 5:30, 7:18–23), and to its conditions (שׂמיר ושׂית, "thorns and thistles") as described already in 5:6. For good reason then the prophet addresses the "house of David" at large in 7:13, 14 (מכם . . . לכם) and not Ahaz directly as in 7:11 (לך). The eschatological thrust and focus, seen since 2:2, continues by means of explicit reference to that day through chapter 7. The miraculous child will not appear until after the destruction of the land of the two kings (7:16), which is itself sixty-five years in the future (7:8). Indeed his diet as described in 7:15 as חמאה ודבשׁ is identical to the meager fare remaining in the judgment context of 7:22 (חמאה ודבשׁ), food of the type produced by a land filled with שׂמיר ושׂית. So the linguistic evidence points to his birth occurring during the desolation of "that day." Prophecies given in the days of the historical kings Uzziah (ch. 6) and Ahaz (ch. 7) inform the reader of events that stretch into the distant future, "in that day."[70] The evidence indicates that the book's composer and writer reflected upon and recognized the ultimate and eschatological import of these prophetic events and words, providing comfort for generations yet to come.

In the same context of the word pair שׂמיר ושׂית of 5:6 and 7:23–25 is found another lexical parallel (the root עדר, "to till") that again deliberately ties the desolation of chapter 5 with that of 7. So the vineyard of Isa 5 will be made a waste, not pruned "and not tilled" (ולא יעדר, 5:6). Likewise in chapter 7 among the multiple

70. As noted already, the same can be said of chapters 2–5.

references to "thorns and thistles" (שמיר ושׁית) it is said that on the mountains where "they till with a hoe" (במעדר יעדרון), will be for grazing of cattle and sheep. Only in these two places in the entire book is this particular root found, and thus constitutes a dislegomenon (or trislegomenon if the noun is included from 7:25) in Isaiah. So again there is a deliberate placement of the desolation of chapters 5 and 7 in the identical ultimate time period.

Finally, as noted previously, Isa 6:10 (along with Isa 53:1), is cited in the New Testament Gospel of John, in a context emphasizing unbelief among the people. Isaiah 53 addresses this subject in the rhetorical question of 53:1, which presumes few believers, and 6:9–10 in the same vein foresees a general hardening of the nation. Vocabulary of hearing and healing is common to these two texts (רפא in 6:10, 53:5; שׁמע in 6:9, 10, 53:1). Furthermore, the collocation of the two roots רם ונשׂא (6:1) is also found in the opening description of the Lord's servant in 52:13, implying the divinity of the latter as well. These verbal roots נשׂא and רם expressing exaltation occur again in Isa 33:10 and 57:15 for a total of four instances in the entire book. Since the first three examples are predicated of the deity the same is implied for the fourth. The first example (6:1) is accompanied by highly anthropomorphic language including the prophet's claim to have seen (ואראה in v. 1 and ראו עיני in v. 5) the Lord. The last example in 52:13ff. repeats the same root three times, מראה in 52:14, 53:2, ונראהו in 53:2. Consequently the linking of these two texts by the Gospel writer is amply supported beyond the common context of faithlessness.

John 12:41 declares that Isaiah saw δοξαν αυτου, "his glory."[71] The referent of this pronoun is clear from the context. The immediately following clause declares that the prophet spoke "concerning him" (περι αυτου), as does the preceding αυτον of v. 37, whose referent in each case is Christ. Indeed the antecedent to "his glory" is unambiguous, but it is not immediately clear why John refers to his glory, not to the Lord himself, as stated in Isa 6:1 and 5. In the latter two verses the verbal root ראה expresses the prophet's direct (cf. עיני in v. 5) vision of the deity.

The Targum of Isa 6:1 reads חזיתי ית יקרא דיהוה ("I saw the glory of the Lord") and so removes the offensive anthropomorphism.[72] Traditions found in the later written Targumim may have been know to the first century Gospel writers but this cannot be proven. Neither is there any reason to believe the writer of Christological statements such as those found in John 5:18, 23, 26, 6:46, 10:30, 14:9, etc., would seek to diminish the force of the anthropomorphism found in 6:1.

71. John's use of glory in 12:41 (οτι ειδεν την δοξαν αυτου) can also be compared to 1:14: και εθεασαμεθα την δοξαν αυτου. The latter follows immediately upon reference in the same 1:14 to his incarnation among them (και εσκηνωσεν εν ημιν). So John has seen him incarnate in form and yet through the eyes of faith seen his divine glory (δοξαν ως μονογενους παρα πατρος). What John and his fellow faithful saw (John 1:14), Isaiah likewise perceived. The prophet has seen him in very human or anthropomorphic form (6:1), affirmed his glory (6:3) and confessed whom he saw (6:5) with his very own eyes. It is the people who cannot see (6:9–10), and likewise in John 12 the inability of the people to see and believe is emphasized (12:37–40).

72. J. F. Stenning, *The Targum of Isaiah*, (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1949), ix, xii, 20.

Before dealing with the use of δοξαν in 12:41, it is of interest that the last clause of this verse affirms that Isaiah the prophet spoke of Christ, immediately after citing Isa 6:10 in v. 40. The subject of the latter is the people (cf. לעם הזה in Isa 6:9) but the voice speaking is of אדני, as 6:8 demonstrates explicitly. Apparently John is indicating that the words of Isa 6:10 are those of Christ. The foregoing analysis of the discourse of Isa 1–12 supports the identification of Adonay in 6:1 as the king descended from Jesse and consequently the same must be said for 6:8. Indeed, 6:8 repeats the same divine name found in 6:1, and thus the prophet "saw" Adonay (ואראה, 6:1), first and then "heard" his voice (ואשמע, 8:1).[73]

John's particular wording (ειδεν την δοξαν αυτου) may be a deliberate summation of Isa 6:1–5. The Hebrew verb ראה, corresponding to ειδεν is repeated at the outset in v. 1 and again in v. 5. Between them is found the Hebrew noun כבודו, which corresponds precisely to John's expression. Thus the twofold use of ראה nicely envelopes the prophet's vision whose essence was the glory of Adonay.

The apostle's reference to glory may also have a wider scope in view when the context of both John 12 and Isa 5–11 is considered. First of all, the term מלא, referring to the fullness, (or filling)[74] of all the earth in Isa 6:3 reiterates the same root of v. 1 (מלאים). Not only is the temple filled with his presence (6:1), and smoke (6:4), but also his glory permeates the earth.[75] Filling of the entire earth in 6:3 (כל הארץ), not only links to the filled temple of v. 1 but also to the entirety of the earth in 5:26 (הארץ). Both of the latter portray his exalted (נשׂא) status which draws the nations to him (5:26). The same of course is expressed in 11:9–12 where the association with glory (כבוד) is made explicit. So the glory of the Lord in 6:3 and its implied association with the exalted Lord in 6:1 and 5:26 is unambiguous. John's reference to his glory as of Christ is consistent with this web of interlocking concepts of glory and exaltedness in Isaiah.

Isaiah also combines through juxtaposition the exaltedness (ירום ונשׂא) in 52:13 of the servant along with recognition by the nations and their kings (52:15), to his (expiatory)[76] death in 53:1ff.[77] Isaiah 5–6 focus on glory in exaltation while the Servant Song of Isa 53 reveals his death as part of this exaltation. In fact the entire poem is enveloped by the same root נשׂא, first portraying his exaltation (52:13), then his bearing of sickness (53:4) and sin (53:12). In fact, the juxtaposition of his

73. These two 1st person singular, *wayyiqtol* verb forms divide the pericope neatly into two halves–vision and message. Furthermore, these two verbal roots are repeated twice again in Isa 6:9, 10, but to affirm the people's inability to understand inwardly in spite of an outward sensory perception. The distribution of these forms contrasts distinctly the prophet and people.

74. The collocation of מלא and כבוד in Exod 40:34, 35, where the tabernacle is filled with the glory of YHWH, as well as the indicative in Isa 11:10 (מלאה) supports the reading מלא with כבודו (masculine singular noun) as the subject.

75. "Smoke" (עשׁן) of v. 4 simply reiterates the eschatological smoke and cloud of the sanctuary in 4:5 (ענן . . . עשׁן), which of course recalls the tabernacle filled with a cloud of glory in Exod 40:34, 35. Implied is an eschatological reading by Isaiah of the tabernacle narrative at Sinai.

76. Isa 53:4, 5, 12.

77. Exploiting undoubtedly the double sense of נשׂא as "to lift," and "to take away transgression" (BDB, pp. 670–72), found in that order in Isa 52:13 and 53:12 successively.

extraordinary elevation in 52:13 and astonishment at the marring of his features in 52:14 combines the two concepts from the poem's beginning. The result is that the "many" (רבים) who are astonished, are also the many sprinkled from sin (52:15–who are nations and kings), the many justified (53:11), and forgiven (53:12).

Likewise in John 12:32–33 the exaltation of Christ in his death is the means to draw all to him. Glorification of God's name (John 12:28) precedes the reference to Christ's death in 12:32–33 and the attendant drawing of many. This is consistent as well with reference to the nations seeking the root of Jesse in Isa 11:9–10 (עמים) along with their recognition of his deeds and exalted name (בעמים . . . נשׂגב שׁמו)[78] in 12:4.[79]

Distribution of the noun נס across the Hebrew canon also undergirds the aforementioned linkage of exaltation and redemptive death seen in Isa 5, 6, 11, 52–53 and John 12:32–33. It appears a total of twenty-one times: once in each of Exodus, Ezekiel and Psalms, 5× in Jeremiah, 10× in Isaiah, 3× in Numbers. Comparison of the context of its deliberate clustering in Isa 5, 11 (3×) and Num 21 (2×) will be noted here. The occurrences in Isa 5:26, 11:10, 12, and accompanying collocation with נשׂא creates verbal resonance, as noted previously, with 6:1 and 52:13–53:12.[80] In other words, the exaltation of the נס in 5:26, 11:10, 12 is linked through use of the same verb נשׂא to 6:1ff. and 52:13ff. Common to the latter two is the concept forgiveness. The sins of many are borne (חטא רבים נשׂא, 53:12) at the exaltation (נשׂא) of the servant in 52:13ff. So also the sin (חטאה) of the prophet is removed in 6:7 at the sight (ראה, 6:1, 5) of the exalted (נשׂא) king, when one of the burning beings (שׂרפים) touches his lips with coals. Likewise the confessed sin of the people (חטאנו) in Num 21:7 is removed by looking (ראה) at the נס (Num 21:8–9, twice). On the standard was a שׂרף (Num 21:8) modeled after the שׂרפים, which are the burning serpents who had bitten the people.[81]

Conclusion

Linguistic evidence cited here supports not only the cohesive integration of Isa 1–12, but also a unity stretching across the book to Isa 52–53. Furthermore, the

78. Exaltation of the name in that day (ביום ההוא . . . נשׂגב שׁמו) in 12:4, wraps up a theme begun in 2:11, 17: נשׂגב יהוה לבדו ביום ההוא.

79. It is worth noting as well that the seeking of the root of Jesse by the nations in 11:10 (אליו גוים ידרשׁו) provides further details to a similar description of them streaming to Zion in 2:2 (ונהרו אליו כל הגוים). They will stream to Zion seeking the root of Jesse, its king.

80. Recall that both roots רם and נשׂא are found in 52:13 and 6:1, providing further evidence of deliberate intertextuality. Note also the use of שׂרשׁ in 11:1, 10 and 53:2.

81. Distribution of the noun שׂרף or שׂרפים is also limited, totaling only seven in the MT. Four of those seven–twice in Isaiah 6 and twice in Num 21, provide further evidence of intertextuality. Note how John 3:14 and 12:32 repeat the identical verb υψοω implying recognition of the linking evidence presented here between the cited texts from Isaiah 5–11, 53 and Num 21. The LXX does not express the lifting of the serpent through this verb repeated in John and so presumably the link was produced based on lexical data presented here.

apostle John's interpretation is entirely in harmony with the literary data and its implications. Contemporary New Testament scholars often cannot hide their surprise at John's christological understanding of Isaiah 6. Terms such as "startling,"[82] "somewhat perplexing,"[83] or in more guarded fashion that John, "speaks as if the words of Isaiah . . . had the situation of Jesus in mind."[84] Similar are comments such as, "Isaiah is alleged to have said this, according to verse 41, because he saw his, that is, Jesus' glory and spoke of him,"[85] or that it, "illustrates well the freedom, so to speak, with which Jn. treats the O. T."[86] But as has been shown here, John's identification of Christ in Isaiah 6 is consistent with its immediate and wider context, and not surprising at all. The discourse of Isa 1–12 evinces an integrated unity, regardless of real or imagined pre-canonical sources. In spite of overtures by some to the established shape, much of this unitary evidence has been overlooked. The sixth chapter of Isaiah, when read in its context, portrays in its opening verses the glorious eschatological exaltation of Adonay as a visible and anthropomorphic priest/king from the line of Jesse.

82. Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Prophetic Gospel: A Study of John and the Old Testament* (T & T Clark, 1991), 166, and Merrill C. Tenney, *The Gospel of John* (EBC 9; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 133.

83. Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21* (NAC 25B; Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 65–66.

84. Urban C. von Wahlde, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (The Gospel and Letters of John 2: Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 560.

85. Ernst Haenchen, *John 2* (Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 7–21; trans. by Robert W. Funk, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1994), 101.

86. J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1949), 452.

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Book Reviews

John Piper. *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010). 224 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-1-4335-2071-6. $19.99. Hardback.

John Piper's *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God* rolled off the press at the same time as Alister McGrath's *The Passionate Intellect: Christian Faith and the Discipleship of the Mind*, Bradley Green's *The Gospel and the Mind: Recovering and Shaping the Intellectual Life*, and several other books were being published on the life of the mind. In spite of a glut in the "life of the mind" market, however, Piper manages to write a uniquely helpful little book.

The book is composed of thirteen chapters which fall under eight major headings. Piper begins by clarifying his aim in writing the book. In the Introduction, he makes clear that the book is intended to challenge God's people to embrace serious thinking as a way of knowing and loving God, and loving his people. In the first chapter, Piper tells a bit of his own intellectual pilgrimage as an entry into the subject matter, and as an encouragement to the reader. In the second chapter, he shows how Jonathan Edwards grounded the task of thinking in the Trinitarian nature of God and declared that the aim of thinking is to awaken the affections by means of comprehending truth.

In the third chapter, Piper clarifies the meaning of thinking by arguing that God has declared himself in the Bible, that we know God through the Bible, and that the Bible enables us to expand outwardly, thinking about any and all dimensions of life. The fourth and fifth chapters argue that thinking is vital to the process of coming to faith in Christ, while the sixth chapter explores the role of thinking in loving God. Piper avers that to love God is to treasure him, and to treasure him with the mind means to comprehend his truth, his infinite worth, and his all-encompassing beauty. For Christians, therefore, "our thinking should be wholly engaged to do all it can to awaken and express the heartfelt fullness of treasuring God above all things" (83).

Over the course of the next six chapters, Piper targets relativism and anti-intellectualism. In the seventh and eighth chapters, he argues that relativism fails

intellectually and morally. In particular, relativism commits treason against God, creates intellectual duplicity, conceals doctrinal defection, cloaks greed with flattery, cloaks pride with the guise of humility, enslaves people, puts them in bondage, and eventually leads to totalitarianism. In the ninth through eleventh chapters, Piper takes aim at the anti-intellectualism that characterizes vast swathes of American evangelicalism, doing so by debunking anti-intellectual arguments often made from Luke 10:21 and 1 Corinthians 1:20.

The final two chapters are Piper's encouragement for Christians to find a *humble* way of knowing. In the twelfth chapter, he focuses on Romans 10:1–4 and 1 Corinthians 8:1–3, arguing that intellectual pursuit is vain unless it is consciously, carefully, and consistently undertaken in light of God's profound work of grace in our hearts. In the thirteenth chapter, Piper argues that all learning exists for the ultimate purpose of knowing and loving God, and consequently loving humanity through Christ Jesus. Piper's concluding chapter encourages both thinkers and non-thinkers to pursue the life of the mind for the glory of God. The book also includes two appendixes. The first is "The Earth is the Lord's: The Supremacy of Christ in Christian Learning (Biblical Foundations for Bethlehem College and Seminary)," which is a message Piper delivered at Bethlehem Baptist Church in November 2008 to mark out the creation of Bethlehem College and Seminary. The second is "The Student, the Fish, and the Agassiz," which is a brief narrative Piper first encountered at Fuller Seminary, which Piper uses to teach students to think carefully.

Perhaps the greatest strength of Piper's book is his argument that Christian thinking should be God-centered and Word-centered. It should be God-centered because God is the author of our twin foci of study (the canon of Scripture and entirety of the created order), because he is the one who created us in his image and likeness and enabled us to study those foci (by endowing us with spiritual, moral, rational, creative, relational, and volitional capacities), and because He repeatedly tells us in Scripture that we are to do all that we do for His name's sake, for His renown, and for His glory. Further, Christian thinking should be Word-Centered because the written Word is inspired by God and indeed points us to the incarnate Word, who Himself holds all things together (Col 1:17). Anything a Christian would study is created by Christ and sustained by Christ, and is inherently worthy of attention.

If Piper were to provide a revised and expanded edition of *Think*, one would like to see him (1) treat the broad sweep of redemptive history, from creation through to new creation, with an eye toward the life of the mind, and (2) treat the importance of Christian intellectual presence in the various dimensions of human culture, such as the arts, the sciences, and the public square. Until then, however, the reader is thankful for this compact, stimulating, and biblically faithful treatment of the life of the mind.

Bruce Riley Ashford
Wake Forest, North Carolina

William A. Dembski. *The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World*. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009. xviii + 238 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-0-8054-2743-1. $22.99. Hardback.

Regardless if one is familiar with the debates surrounding the Intelligent Design movement, William A. Dembski has emerged as one of North America's finest Evangelical scholars. Like his earlier publications, Dembski takes on some of the most intellectually divisive issues in the culture wars in *The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World*. Though one might think Dembski is addressing the phenomenon of de-christianization, he is more concerned with the problem of natural evil in light of the Fall. "The end of Christianity" therefore refers to the final triumph of good over evil.

According to Dembski, it is evident that natural evil (i.e., destructive hurricanes, diseases, premature death, famines, etc.) preceded the first human beings. Not only does the consensus of scientists support the existence of an old earth (i.e., one that is billions of years old), they also contend that natural evils can be traced back to the beginning of time itself. On the other hand, Christians have traditionally held that natural evil (and its correlate, existential suffering) is linked to the sin of Adam and Eve. Thus the question must be pressed: How could there be death and suffering before the original sin?

Dembski responds to this perplexing dilemma by noting that just as the Redemption won by Christ has both proactive and retroactive effects, so also does original sin (169). The effects of the Fall can literally precede their temporal cause in human history: "just as the death and Resurrection of Christ is responsible for the salvation of repentant people throughout all time, so the Fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden is responsible for every natural evil throughout all time (future, present, past, and distant past preceding the Fall)" (110; cf. 112). In support of this contention, Dembski appeals to the New Testament word for time which has two distinct meanings: *chronos* denotes temporal duration, and *kairos* refers to divine purposes. Time, then, operates in two different ways. *Kairos* is certainly not constrained by *chronos* (124–26; see also 131–37), but works in and though the latter in ways that remain incomprehensible to finite, limited minds. Dembski also utilizes philosophy and chaos theory to illustrate his point (127–30, 138–41).

Though Dembski provides defensible arguments in response to these problems, I am not convinced that he makes all that significant of a contribution to the wider academic community of theologians. The alternatives in this debate cannot be reduced to young earth creationism and pan-en-theistic scientist-theologians (and a few other theologians who, in Dembski's words, "don't take the Fall seriously"). In response to young earth creationists, for example, Dembski rightly points out that "Although the truth of Scripture is inviolable, our interpretations of it are not. The history of biblical interpretation simply does not support that a well-established interpretation of Scripture should always trump alternative interpretations" (75). Dembski should apply this observation to his own argument with more consistency. Why cannot the opening chapters of Genesis be read as

an etiology? I maintain that all of Sacred Scripture is true, and only some of it happened. To read Genesis in this way is to take Scripture seriously. It respects the texts enough to take their literary forms into more serious consideration than simply falling back on literalistic understandings which all too often fuel the fire of critics who oppose our faith.

In the etiological view, one can retain the doctrine of original sin and all of modern science, not just some of it. Hence, I depart from Dembski when insists that "creationists" will hold that God created persons in the image of God when they *entered* the Garden of Eden—*a place that was somehow immune from the outside world and natural evil* (158–61)! I consider myself a creationist, but I am also an evolutionist. So there is no good reason to drive yet another wedge in between these two camps. Although Dembski is at pains to defend a "traditional view of the Fall," which is ambiguous in and of itself, his incredulous contention about the isolated location of the Garden of Eden eventually backs him into a corner in light of his concern to defend the Fall in lieu of our current "mental environment." Dembski shows little interest in the broader debates about exegesis and the history of biblical interpretation, and instead assumes that one must defend his understanding of the Fall in order for one to be in continuity with Church Tradition.

This book brings to light many deep seated problems that are too often put on the believer's backburner. I obviously found myself disagreeing with Dembski at times, but he still does an excellent job of covering all of the major issues in short, digestible chapters that are clearly, crisply, and courageously written. I would not use this book as a course text in my classes, but it can provide professors and other intelligent laymen with a skeletal outline of all the issues that need to be addressed in any adequate response to the challenge of reconciling modern science, natural evil, and original sin.

Glenn B. Siniscalchi
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Xun, Chen. *Theological Exegesis in the Canonical Context. Brevard Springs Childs's Methodology of Biblical Theology*. Studies in Biblical Literature 137. New York: Peter Lang, 2010. xiv + 307 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-1-4331-0955-3. $83.95. Hardback.

Chen Xun offers a dense reading of multiple aspects of the work of Brevard Childs (1923–2007) in this published PhD thesis originally completed under the supervision of Miikka Ruokanen in Helsinki. All the hallmarks of a thesis remain, and indeed this is probably the work's greatest strength: there is copious citation of primary and secondary literature and quite extraordinarily extensive listings of who has said what in the wide world of Childs scholarship. I almost wished Xun had in fact written a handbook to the work of Brevard Childs, since he effectively offers a convenient way of tracking down quotes and opinions on the vastly contested oeuvre of surely one of the modern era's most significant

biblical scholars. There is, though, a problem with how he does it, to which I shall return below.

As to the actual thesis of the work, this is handicapped by the decision to let "methodology" be the key lens through which Childs' work is read. After a brief introduction, chapter 2 offers a sketch of Childs' academic biography, entitled "the three stages of Childs' academic development." These Xun characterizes as a period of dissatisfaction with historical criticism in the 1950s and 1960s; the turn to a canonical approach with *Biblical Theology in Crisis* in 1970; and then "canonical theological exegesis" from the 1990s onwards. This seemed a fairly unpersuasive mapping of Childs' work, and highlights from the outset a recurrent tendency to evaluate Childs through a largely unexamined grid of "historical criticism," seen here as a singular method with various manifestations in form criticism, redaction criticism, and so forth. Given that Childs was largely occupied with trying to redraw the map of what counts as responsibly critical reading of scripture, such repeated comparisons between his work and "historical criticism" turn out, unsurprisingly, to find that Childs only partially measures up to this standard.

The preoccupation with method recurs in the three substantive chapters which follow. One looks at "the canonical approach," considering the implications of canon, the *regula fidei*, and what is at stake in setting canon as a context for biblical theology. Xun concludes an exhaustive survey with: "Childs' understanding of the canon can be described as one possibility among others." Of course this is true phenomenologically, as it were (and it is not far from the views of Brett and Barton before him), but substantively it is effectively the judgment that Childs' whole program was misconceived, although Xen does not write in a way which suggests that he sees this. The next chapter considers "the inadequacies of historical criticism," which, allowing for the singularity of "criticism" noted above, is a thorough survey of Childs' complex relationship with the practices of modern approaches. A chapter on "theological exegesis" follows, though here the traditional ways of construing systematics (or dogmatics) are taken as read, and the conclusion is reached that Childs offers an "idealized scenario" for theological exegesis which falls short of exemplifying his approach in practice.

There is finally a lengthy chapter of evaluation, which rightly draws attention to the influence of Barth, and the importance of not reducing theology to sociology or philosophy. But other aspects inspire less confidence: pursuing the question of whether Childs is conservative or liberal, for example, is a clear case of measuring by an unhelpful yardstick.

Overall, this is a thesis which dissects Childs' wide-ranging corpus into a series of topics which are then evaluated through the criteria which that corpus wanted to challenge. The result is an impressive sequence of detailed reviews of specific points at issue in Childs' work, but with little feel for the point or purpose of them. One consequence of this, which is the caveat to my opening comments about the "handbook" nature of this project, is that one occasionally finds scholars ranged together for their views on specific points when in fact one knows that they have very little in common in their overall understandings. To see Childs and Barr, for

example, described as "not too far from each other" on any topic tells the reader little of value about what is at stake. The thesis as a whole suffers from this kind of "over-realized irenicism." It is instructive to compare it with Daniel Driver's *Brevard Childs, Biblical Theologian*, published almost simultaneously by Mohr Siebeck, which offers an account which grapples precisely with how Childs' attempted to redraw the map, and how he has been received by scholars who are—sometimes aggressively—unconvinced.

Richard S. Briggs
Durham, United Kingdom

Robert B. Stewart and Gary R. Habermas (eds.) ***Memories of Jesus: A Critical Appraisal of James D. G. Dunn's Jesus Remembered.*** **Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010.** vii-xviii + 352 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8054-4840-5. $29.99. Paperback.

The present book is an anthology of thirteen essays in dialogue with James D. G. Dunn's *Jesus Remembered.* The first of a multivolumed *The Making of Early Christianity* (the second volume *Beginning from Jerusalem* came out in 2008) *Jesus Remembered* tackles the topic of the Historical Jesus as recorded in the gospels.

Dunn's thesis is that the historical Jesus cannot be retrieved. This is true of any figure of history that left no direct writing. Instead, what we have are the memories of Jesus from his earliest followers, reperformed over a couple of generations resulting in the Gospels. Thus, what we have is Jesus remembered. Dunn's thesis is a corrective to the "simple" cut-and-paste literary thesis that has dominated theories of synoptic origins for 200 plus years. It is not a total repudiation of the standard two-source theory but an elaboration that includes a large portion of oral tradition rather than a simple literary solution (especially regarding Q). While there is much evangelicals would find as negative results, positively, the gospels arise from an encounter with Jesus. Thus, the Jesus Remembered is an accessible Jesus to some degree.

Yet, we should not usher Dunn into the halls of conservative evangelical scholarship. Most, notably to me, and unmentioned in the present book, the witness of John is disregarded because it was "imagined" by the evangelist. And furthermore, much of what he says of Jesus fails to affirm major contours of Christian conviction (the deity of Christ, virgin birth, resurrection, ascension).

The work under review, is not Dunn's but a response to Dunn. In such a work it is axiomatic that some essays are more effective than others (insert the word "uneven" here). Let me recommend the reader approach the book in the way that I eventually read it. Read each essay and then go to the end of the book to read Dunn's response to each essay. (Dunn is to be commended for commenting on each essay more or less substantively.) This helps us to keep track of the nuanced criticisms and guage Dunn's response. The following essays left a positive impression on me.

The book begins with a review of the quests of the historical Jesus by Robert Stewart, it is a nice rehearsal, however it does not include the impact the Tübingen school's impact on the quest. The First Quest employed source criticism to find the earliest source (and then apply historical criticism to it). C. H. Weisse seized upon Markan priority to attack the source theory of the Tübingen school (Griesbach). Otherwise, it is a fine overview and fairly places Dunn in the tradition. He is neither postmodern or modern in his hermeneutic but more postmodern in his expectations (i.e., a bit pessimistic about getting back to the historical Jesus—at least less so than Wright).

Marcus Bockmuehl's (#2) essay is a must read to discuss the main thesis of the book and five questions regarding it. The best is the third. Dunn refers to remembering and apostolic custodians but does not really address who they were. "What such early Christian preference for the apostolicity of individual memory might mean, however, is perhaps insufficiently explored in this book" (40).

Next, essay #4 by Samuel Byrskog is a must-read. Dunn's view is that an oral tradition is behind the synoptic gospels. It, however, is an orality that is a living tradition, performed and reperformed. The eye-witness testimony is only the beginning of it. Byrskog takes us through a long list of questions regarding a theory of oral tradition that helps us set the stage for questions regarding Dunn's view.

The next must-read essay is essay #9 by Charles Quarles. Quarles takes Dunn to task on his slight treatment and estimation of the virgin birth. Dunn's response to Dr. Quarles is interesting in that he replies first, space doesn't allow a full response (read "ouch"). Second, he rejects that he rejects the birth narratives but remains agnostic about their historical worth (sounds like rejection to me), Third, Luke is not accurate (the problem of the Census and Quirinius). This assumes there is no plausible answer to the question and, again, sounds like rejection. He also notes that he did not have access to Charles' *Midrash Criticism.* (I have a copy, are you telling me the vast resources at Durham does not?). Finally, he argues that to take the narratives as primarily historical pays less respect to the spirit of Matthew and Luke. It is unlikely that we are faced with an either/or situation. The stories had to be a fabrication to relay spiritual truth? Certainly not.

Ben Witherington's essay (#10) Oral History or Eyewitness Testimony is the best of the collection, in my opinion. He hits to the two most important questions in my mind. First, for oral traditions to be repeatedly performed beyond the control of the eyewitnesses, it takes time beyond the life of the eyewitnesses. We simply do not have this time. Second, related question, whose remembrances are we dealing with in the NT? Witherington calls forth Byrskog via Bauckham in the debate to suggest it is eyewitness testimony. Witherington has a fair treatment of Dunn's work, and an equally fair critique. If you can read one essay in this book, this is it.

Finally, Gary Habermas' essay (#12) on Dunn and the Resurrection is both a rehearsal of Dunn's view and a defense of the traditional view that Jesus was resurrected in a physical body. In response, Dunn does not deny the belief of the apostles that Jesus rose from the dead, but that is an interpretation of the facts. Dunn, as a historian, respects the belief of the eyewitnesses, and that Christians

need no qualms about affirming their faith in the risen Christ. But the historian's conclusion is that it is a second order fact, an interpretation of an interpretation.

In general, the book is an informative and helpful digest, critique, and interaction with Dunn's *Jesus Remembered*. That is comes eight years after the publication of the book should attest to Dunn's affect on scholarship. I highly recommend it for all who wish to do serious study into Dunn's thesis.

Scott Kellum
Wake Forest, North Carolina

Bradley G. Green. *The Gospel and the Mind: Recovering and Shaping the Intellectual Life*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010. 192 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-1-4335-1442-5. $16.99. Paperback.

Bradley Green's *The Gospel and the Mind* is a deeply theological treatment of the intellectual life, a treatment which suggests that the life of the mind must be grounded in a Christian vision of things, which in turn is grounded in Christ and the cross. The book is made up of an Introduction, six chapters, and an Epilogue.

The first chapter, "Creation and the Importance of the Past," argues that the intellectual life must be rooted in a proper appreciation of creation and history. The doctrine of creation is particularly important in that it gives us reason to speak of "reality" and seek epistemic access to reality. The world is both real and ordered; therefore, it can be studied. The notion of history is also central to the intellectual life. The Christian Scriptures set forth the gospel embedded in a historical narrative. The gospel is at the heart of reality and shapes all of reality. In a profound manner, the past matters for the present.

The second chapter, "The Centrality of a Telos to All Things," argues that pre-modern world, in particular as it was shaped by Christianity, held forth a telos which structured and animated all reality and history, which served as the context for the intellectual life, and which endowed all of life with meaning and purpose. The modern world, however, has mostly given up on such a telos and therefore is confused and tends toward nihilism. Even those contemporary secular scholars who seek to retain teleology do so without sufficient reason and in an insufficiently robust manner, precisely because they do not acknowledge the Triune God as telos. Roger Scruton, for example, follows Confucius and asks us to live "as if" we lived in a created and sacred world. Allan Bloom, likewise, gives religion a nod by acknowledging it as a precondition for a well-developed cultural and intellectual life.

The third chapter, "Understanding the Cross," argues that the intellectual life must be cruciform. The cross is vital to the intellectual life precisely because sin has infected, distorted, and degraded the intellectual life. The human mind is not cordoned off from the effects of sin, and therefore the human life must be reconnected to God through the cross. We must take all thoughts captive to Christ. The human mind is like a drunkard which cannot find its way home (Boethius), is deleteriously affected by inordinate love (Augustine), is an idol factory (Calvin),

and must be brought under the lordship of Christ (Kuyper). In a sentence, our minds are to be transformed by the gospel.

The fourth chapter, "Words, Language, and Modern Culture," argues that "there is an inextricable link between the Christian gospel and attentiveness to words" (103). Indeed, when language finds itself in an environment of transcendent realities and goals, it is glorious, but when it is robbed of transcendence, it breaks down and loses its glory. Deconstruction serves to illustrate. Deconstruction is rooted in nihilism, Green argues, rendering meaning indeterminate and language meaningless. In response to Derrida and the deconstructionists, Green suggests that we take language back to church, which is the community of eternal and meaningful linguistic discourse.

The fifth chapter, "Toward a Christian Understanding of Words," argues that Christian theology provides a coherent and compelling account of language. Indeed the Word stands at the center of all reality. God is a "talking" God. God created by means of the Word and he redeems by means of the Word. All human words ultimately find their end in God, who is himself the transcendental signified. Green argues that the Incarnation matters by helping us to understand the way language works, that Christ is the Pedagogue who teaches by way of illumination, and that Christianity offers the supreme "logocentrism," a logocentrism much more coherent than the one targeted by Derrida.

The sixth chapter, "The Moral Nature of Knowledge and the Human Heart," is a sustained argument for the deep connection between knowing and loving God, between knowledge and practice. True knowledge always entails a proper response, and if our response is not correct, our vision is obstructed. Furthermore, Green argues, there is the deepest of connections between knowledge and grace. We can only know God if he graciously enables us to know him. Even when we deny God's existence, we use the brains and vocal chords with which he graciously endowed us.

The greatest strength of *The Gospel and the Mind* is its theological depth. In the midst of a multitude of books on the life of the mind, Green's book stands out for its willingness to deal with the entire sweep of the biblical narrative, from creation and fall to redemption and consummation, rather than relying exclusively or primarily upon proof-texts and verses from the wisdom passages. A further strength is Green's interaction with a broad variety of sources from Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin to Derrida, Eco, and Scruton. A final strength is the author's ability to write with clarity, which renders it useful even for undergraduate courses. Perhaps the only exception to this is his treatment of language (chs. 4–5) which is less lucid due to the complex and obtuse nature of the subjects with which he deals. One further note for the reader: Green is a robustly Augustinian thinker, and those of a more Aristotelian bent will obviously take exception to some aspects of Green's approach. *The Gospel and the Mind* is recommended as a stimulating and distinctively Christian treatment of the intellectual life, written in such a manner that it will likely benefit both undergraduate and graduate level courses.

Bruce Riley Ashford
Wake Forest, North Carolina

Miroslav Volf. *Captive to the Word of God: Engaging the Scriptures for Contemporary Theological Reflection*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. viii + 180 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6590-8. $18.00 Paperback.

Representing the culmination of many years of engagement with the biblical texts this book is fronted by a wide ranging opening essay, setting out the principles with which Volf engages the Bible as Scripture. Theology and the church itself, Volf insists, is nourished by its attention to the Bible and starved of life if it turns away from the text. The Bible's status as a historical text is not in competition with its living voice for today—precisely as a sacred text '[t]he Bible is about all of us' (21). This non-competitive understanding of Scripture as text is played out in Volf's insistence that the Bible 'tells a single basic story' (23) through its diversity. Precisely because of the Bible's various contexts we should not expect anything less than a polyphonic witness to its overarching truth—Jesus Christ. Volf proceeds to resist carefully the idea that the text is a plaything in the hands of its readers. Talk of the text's meaning is located within a relationship that properly inheres between the author of the text and the reader—a relationship that imposes upon us readers the obligation to seek out what 'the writer wanted to say' (32). There then follow 5 self-contained essays.

In the second essay Volf considers the relationship between belief and practices, in an attempt to meet the argument that systematic theology deals in abstractions removed from 'real' life and faith. In Christianity beliefs and practices shape one another—to speak about God is to implicate ourselves in a way of life and appropriate response. If beliefs and practices inform one another clarifying what we believe (the task of theology) is for the sake of those who embody Christian practices.

In the third essay of this volume Volf explores the relationship between the church and its social context as imagined by the text of 1 Peter. What are the implications of Christian belief for how the church relates to its surrounding culture? Keen to rescue 1 Peter from a reading which supposes that it is a text that is oppositionally *against* its culture, Volf understands the text as representing a *soft* difference. The community is distinguished less by what it deprecates and more by its hope. This is a difference from within; a difference lived out by a people whose new life is lived out in the space of the old order. What emerges is a complex way of engaging the world that moves beyond 'stark polarities' (88). The third essay engages in a nuanced way with what Volf terms the 'peculiar' politics of the Fourth Gospel. As with 1 Peter, in Volf's reading what emerges is a text that is complexly political—that is it cannot be glibly dismissed as world-denying. Rather, the radical love that drives the mission of Jesus is the love of a God who dies for his enemies. The kind of love that God is is elegantly brought out in the next essay which is an extended reflection on 1 John 4.7–12. That God *is* love is a triune claim. Love is the very being of the triune God who loves the world *first*, that is love is the cause of the world. The priority of God's love also reminds us that God's love is not earned or generated by what we do. This love makes possible the love we are called—commanded—to share with one another. Or as Volf articulates all this,

'Love of neighbour is not the condition of God's presence in us: God's presence in us is the condition of love of neighbour' (149). A final essay speaks to the insatiable drive of consumerism with the help of Ecclesiastes. Deftly moving between those who would co-opt God in pursuit of capital and those who would allow God to be displaced Volf demonstrates how a theo-centric imagination restores the dignity of work.

Some readers will recognize most of the essays here from previous publications—those who don't will enjoy the way that Volf consistently allows the biblical text to speak to contemporary challenges and contexts. All this is done with a refreshing lack of hermeneutical anxiety. The introductory essay may emphasize the role of the author but what emerges more strongly in the way that Volf actually engages with the Bible is his invitation to imagine the world through the texts. Overall, a very welcome addition to the literature on Scripture's theological interpretation. Pastors and ministers will find much to nourish their ministry in this book.

Angus Paddison
Winchester, England

Steven E. Runge. *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis.* Lexham Bible Reference Series. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010. xx + 404 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-1-59856-583-6. $49.95. Hardback.

Steven E. Runge (D. Litt in biblical languages at University of Stellenbosch-SA) is a scholar-in – residence at Logos Bible Software in Seattle, Washington. At Logos he has developed the Lexham Discourse Greek New Testament and the English Lexham High Definition New Testament (unfortunately both are only available through Logos as digital editions). His present book (hereafter DGGNT) introduces discourse concepts to Greek Grammar.

Most Greek grammars avoid discourse analysis concepts in favor of pure syntax. Such a syntax-only approach creates a series of problems regarding exegesis. First, it cannot completely describe the information flow the biblical author presents (it is limited to clause/sentence-level relationships between words). The second problem is that it only describes the possible uses of a word and usually doesn't attempt to answer *why* a writer would express himself as he did. Third, highlighting, prominence, and coherence are almost completely ignored. Certainly these are important to exegesis. Thus, a gap exists in traditional grammars that hinders a well-rounded exegesis. In DGGNT Runge's seeks to lay a conceptual foundation for understanding the information structure of koine Greek that can bridge this gap. His book is largely successful at this goal and is arranged in four major sections.

Part One: Foundations contains two chapters. Chapter one lays out Runge's purpose and philosophy. He states "The purpose of this book is to introduce a function-based approach to language using discourse grammar." (3) In doing so,

he intends not to replace formal syntactical approaches, but to complement them (5). Runge's approach is similar to the Wycliff Bible Translators (SIL). Still, the work is eclectic incorporating other discourse analysis methodologies. As Runge executes his project he notably will have a section in each chapter on conventional explanation followed by a "discourse explanation." These occasionally will overturn conventional wisdom but more often than not are complementary, giving a more complete picture.

His philosophy is essentially functional approach to understanding language. He describes his core principles thus: (1) Choice implies meaning. (2) Semantic or inherent meaning should be differentiated from pragmatic effect and (3) Default patterns of usage should be distinguished from marked ones. Chapter 2 completes part 1 by discussing Greek connectives. Runge notes that Greek connectives are more diverse than simply conjunctions. Other elements also connect sentences and clauses. He describes *why* a writer would choose his connectives. Runge's chapter answers this question identifying the individual constraints a conjunction brings on its context.

At Part 2, Runge takes up the subject of "forward pointing devices," defined as "conventions used to attract attention to something significant in the discourse, something that would not have garnered the same attention" otherwise (59). The first are forward pointing reference and target sets. Here several elements are grouped together because of their ability to highlight a forward targeted constituent when normally they are back-referencing, thus creating prominence. Another set of forward pointing devices are point/counterpoint sets that are the subject of chapter 4. Metacomments (authorial comments about what is to be said) form the substance of chapter 5. In chapter 6 Runge defends the proposition that the historic present is a highlighting function often used at discourse boundaries to highlight the speech that follows. Redundant quotative frames (unnecessary instances of "And he said . . ." or the like) also highlight in a variety of ways that which follows. Finally, tail-head linkage (narrowly defined) slows down and transitions to the next section.

Part 3 contains Runge's discussion of information structuring devices in six chapters (one wonders why chapter 2 [connectives] was not included here?) The chapter on Information Structure describes word order in koine Greek as a prominence marking device. The next two chapters Framing Devices 1 & 2 contain a description of clauses that provide a frame of reference for what follows whether it be topical, temporal, conditional, spatial, etc.). Chapter 12, Circumstantial Frames is Runge's chapter on adverbial participles as backgrounding information (when placed before the finite verb clause) or elaborate the action of the main verb (when placed after the finite verb). Chapter 13, Emphasis is not about highlighting or prominence, but is used in a technical sense. Finally, Runge handles Left-Dislocations (a preverbal element that is used with a resumptive pronoun to highlight a readily accessible entity).

Part 4: Thematic Highlighting Devices concludes the major portion of the book. Runge discusses a series of devices that guide the readers thinking about

something or someone. The chapters include Overspecification and Right-Dislocation (elaborating redundant material); Thematic Addition (traditionally the ascensive or adverbial use of conjunctions); Changed Reference and Thematic Address (identifying referents through renaming or identifying). And finally, Near/Far Distinction (the use of ekeinos and outos used for thematic purposes).

Finally a summary is included that lists the discourse features enumerated and notes which genre it is associated with, among other things. Runge ends with a far too short section (three short paragraphs) noting the importance of genre, on exegesis.

DGGNT is not a handbook for discourse analysis. It seems to be intended as a companion to traditional Greek grammars. As such there is no major discussion about elements above the clause/sentence level. However, the exclusion of markers in higher level discourse could have been easily included. This is especially true regarding the discussion of connectives/conjunctions. There is no major discussion of the use of de in higher level discourse, prepositional connectives like meta tauta, or standardized verbal forms like egeneto + infinitive and the like. There is also little discussion of boundary features (i.e., what marks a new paragraph, section, unit, etc.?). The book also suffers from no discussion of genre. I was disappointed these were not included in the book, although admittedly, the book is already 404 pages long!

There are a number of places that I disagree with Dr. Runge in his analysis of specific texts (see, for example, Ephesians 5; Galatians 5:13–14) And occasionally there is more to information that could be included. For example, there is almost no attention given to an individual writer's idiolect—Matthew's use of tote, John's use of intersentence conjunctions and far demonstrative pronouns (John's unusual usage goes unstated in the chapter on near and far demonstratives!). But, these issues aside, overall the book does what it was designed to do, complement a traditional grammar, and if provides a much needed corrective to our approach to koine Greek.

I heartily recommend the book in spite of my nit-picking observations. The question is where would I employ it in the pedagogical series of NT Greek? Dr. Runge is confident that first year students can understand the concepts. I disagree unless these students have high IQs, no other classes, no spouses, no children, and no cable TV. Perhaps it could be used in intermediate Greek in consultation with a traditional grammar, but it looks best suited for students already exposed to the complete battery of syntax and grammar. Wherever we fit it in, we should do so.

Dr. Steven Runge is to be congratulated for producing a fine textbook and a valuable resource for all future study of the Greek NT. While we await for his more detailed analysis of the Greek NT (the Lexham discourse GNT) to be released to a larger audience (in print or otherwise), Runge's DGGNT should sit on every Greek students shelf of resources.

L. Scott Kellum
Wake Forest, North Carolina

Richard S. Briggs. *The Virtuous Reader: Old Testament Narrative and Interpretive Virtue.* Studies in Theological Interpretation. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010. 270 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8010-3843-3. $26.99. Paperback.

Richard Briggs has a well-established reputation as a careful and informed thinker in the field of hermeneutics. In particular, he has shown his awareness of the importance of philosophy for interpreting the Bible in his earlier studies on speech act theory and biblical interpretation, though even his more popular works (such as *Reading the Bible Wisely*) have had this underpinning even if it wasn't paraded before us. This new study fits somewhere between his highly technical *Words in Action* and his popular works, showing an awareness of philosophical matters, and in particular the nature of virtue, whilst showing the payoff this brings for how we read narrative texts in the Old Testament. While many studies in hermeneutics are concerned with the process of reading the text, Briggs here seeks to bring a fresh approach to the table by reflecting on the sort of person we are meant to be if we are to read the Bible well. This cannot mean, however, that we set aside all questions associated with the nature of the text because there are always issues which any text generates but it does refocus the question somewhat. If, with Ricoeur, meaning is generated in the conversation between text and reader, then Briggs' voice is an important one, because the issue of who can read the Bible well is an important one. What emerges here is that there is a process by which readers are shaped by the text even as they bring their questions and issues to it.

The key methodological issues are laid out in the first chapter which goes in pursuit of the virtues of the implied reader of the Old Testament. There is much grist for the interpretive mill here as Briggs builds on the work of Kevin Vanhoozer in applying the concept of virtue to hermeneutics. Briggs engages with some key discussion partners (e.g., MacIntyre), though in his preface he candidly admits he would have liked to draw more on classical sources, especially Aristotle and through him Aquinas, before deciding that their inclusion would not significantly impact his argument. From this general reflection on virtue he seeks to build up a picture of the type of person who is implied as a reader of the Old Testament. There is a degree of circularity here as the text shapes readers towards certain interpretive virtues and so summons them to express those virtues in interpretation, but as Briggs notes this is a problem faced by all theorists who draw on the theory of virtue. From this, Briggs notes the virtues of humility, wisdom, trust, love and receptivity as the keys to reading the Old Testament.

In a sense, the rest of the book then works this out, asking what each virtue means in specifically Old Testament terms. This is important if one is to avoid the problem of imposing a grid of meaning for them from outside, though of course we can only ever do this imperfectly. Briggs method is to identify an Old Testament narrative where the particular virtue is central and then to explore how this informs our understanding of that virtue. This starts with Moses in Numbers 12:3 to explore humility, then Solomon in 1 Kings 3 for wisdom, Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18 for trust, Ruth in Ruth 1 and Elijah in 2 Kings 5 for love, and finally Isaiah for receptivity in

Isaiah 6. On the whole, these are successful readings of these texts, informed by a literary sensitivity as well as theological acumen. However, in highlighting a specific virtue within each narrative there is also a great deal that is passed over. What Briggs succeeds in doing here is to show the place of the virtue within the text so that it in turn models to the reader something of what this virtue is like. A closing chapter then considers how we move from the implied reader of the text to real readers.

This is a bold proposal in hermeneutical theory, though with boldness inevitably come points of disagreement or at least uncertainty. Although the idea that the text is shaping us with the result that we become better and more sensitive readers seems a helpful starting point, I remain uncomfortable with the language of virtue. Are we indeed virtuous to read in a certain way, or are we speaking of the character of a sensitive reader, so that as readers we read with the grain of the text? More importantly, even if we decide that a difference between virtue and character here is a dispute about semantics, why do we choose these particular aspects as most important? I accept that they are crucial, but there are others too. For example, although we read the Old Testament from a perspective of faith, might doubt not also be important? It is certainly evident in the psalms, but is arguably present in narratives as well. What of courage? The list could go on, but it is not clear why these particular themes emerge as most important. But perhaps this is to quibble, because although I come away from this book with questions, it seems to me that this is entirely healthy, and a focus on the nature of the reader is an important step in reflecting on hermeneutics.

David Firth
Nottingham, United Kingdom

Charles Talbert. *Matthew*. Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010. xxiii + 376. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8010-3192-2. $29.99. Paperback.

This commentary begins with brief introductory comments that tell us more about Talbert's perspective than the state of scholarship, for instance, that the gospels are not "occasional documents" to a local community so much as "foundational documents" written to provide the basic values upon which many readers' lives would be based and by which their lives would be evaluated. He spends a great deal of time coordinating Matthean soteriology in the introduction, but only in personal terms. (Redemptive historical aspects such as the importance of Davidic sonship for salvation are addressed later in the text.) He carefully coordinates the indicative and imperative in Matthew, rejecting any notion that Matthew is about works righteousness.

In the commentary proper one finds three features that address each text unit: brief discussion of "introductory matters," usually addressing the outline and the major themes and rhetorical objectives of the passage in question; "tracing the narrative flow," a section-by-section explanation of the text (in these sections

Talbert never bogs down nor loses the thrust of the textual forest by focusing on the trees); and a concluding "theological reflections" passage that is sometimes helpful but less consistent.

Talbert's attention to the literary flow is almost always very good. He is perhaps more interested in determining tight literary divisions than Matthew himself, (arguably) overly fond of chiastic structure. My argument for chapters 23–25 as the extent of Jesus' fifth discourse in Matthew (*JBL* in 2009) did not appear in time to sway him.

Linguistically, he addresses some important problems (Matt 16 and theological perspectives on "rock"; "hoi de" in Matt 28:17) but otherwise does not feature a great deal of Greek. For instance, he discuses the significance of being a "carpenter" in antiquity, but not the range of meaning for *tekton*.

His use of background text becomes particularly helpful after the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, from which point Jesus' teachings and actions are helpfully set in context by parallels and discussion of rhetorical strategies, exegetical practices, and other literary tendencies. A massive number of Jewish and Mediterranean texts are mined, with insights helpfully—even attractively—presented in a variety of ways: during exegetical explanation, in sidebars, narrative asides, summaries, etc. Many examples have no direct exegetical relevance but rather function as samples of "local flavor" for those of us visiting the ancient world with Talbert as our tour guide. To cite but one example, Talbert includes sample illustrations of Jewish and Greco-Roman miracle stories as well as illustrations of similar miracles—hardly a floodlight, but perhaps nice backlighting as one considers the landscape of Jesus' and Matthew's audiences. If Talbert can affirm uniqueness, he can also undercut the notion that so often floats in one's head as a student of the NT, that the sorts of things taught, said, or done by Jesus were always *sui generis*.

Talbert's approach often results in a much more useful resource than one gets via (say) the lumps of texts heaped in Keener's footnotes. This work often contains more useful, focused commentary than (say) Luz and Nolland. Students will probably need to be warned about the difficulty of dating rabbinic material and the problem of parallelomania. Talbert himself is almost never guilty of error in this regard, but those with lesser skills seem inevitably to head in that direction with this sort of material. In sum, students will gain a great deal of appreciation for Jesus and Matthew in their historical setting.

The beneficial, broad focus on culture, texts, and rhetoric may be distracting for readers more interested in OT and biblical theological dimensions of the "background" of Matthew; but there is value in reconnoitering the cultural setting. Some of the literary and theological asides are not always located in the most obvious place: the good discussion on rejection of prophets and judgment in Jewish tradition and in Matthew (212–13) could go many places, as could his summary of Pennington's thesis on the difference between heaven and heavens (297—and we see not the bulk of Pennington's thesis, but a minor point!).

In his introduction Talbert insists that he does not want to bog down in debates on historicity. He would seem to have little time for (say) the resurrection proof

project undertaken by N. T. Wright. He insists that revelation can occur even if passages like Matt 1–2 are best understand as haggadah ("edifying narrative"), emphasizing God's grace rather than human initiative. For Talbert, revelation does not guarantee historicity given the use of various genres as a vehicle for truth in a variety of ways. The theological section on chapter one is by my count far longer than the average such section, with lengthy discussions of the implications of divine begetting in the ancient world that will at least help orient students to the impressions that might have been made by Matthew's presentation of Jesus' birth. In other words, he brackets historicity here and elsewhere in favor of a focus on other matters. Many will question whether history and historicity are as neatly separable from theology as this position seems to indicate.

Unlike many a-historical enterprises that become naked literary engagement, Talbert is elsewhere loaded with historical insight into theological questions. When viewed in a Jewish and Mediterranean setting, the Sermon on the Mount is more about broad task of character formation than the strict tasks of law and command. (One would have to read the whole presentation, however, to avoid the impression that law is pitted against character formation.) That is why Jesus addresses perceptions, dispositions, intentions, motives, and matters of piety (i.e., prayer), rather than strictly on ethics. Of course, character formation has to result in action. Talbert puts Snodgrass's dictum for parables to good use (they rely on correspondence between two processes). Chapters 19–20 address the common ancient concern for the four aspects of household responsibility; Talbert sees Jesus subverting cultural norms and responsibilities here and elsewhere. Matthew 24 is informed by two questions, and the people of God are not involved in final judgment in 25:31–46.

In sum, this text is very useful in meeting the aims of the series and contains many enlightening and interesting observations, but does not fulfill every desideratum. Readers who want insights on theology, redemptive history, and historicity will want to supplement Talbert's work with other resources. Talbert's focus on ancient texts, culture and rhetoric fills an important niche.

When he wrote this text, I am not sure that Talbert was really "arriving at what seemed to be a 'fresh' approach in nearly every section of the gospel," as he suggests in his introduction. But he certainly engages Matthew's "cultural, literary and theological setting" with "lucid brevity."

Jason Hood
Memphis, Tennessee

David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke (editors), *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism {Reflections from the John 3:16 Conference}*. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010. 298 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8054-6416-0. $24.99. Paperback.

Whosoever Will is the product of the November 2008 John 3:16 conference held in Woodstock, GA. The book constitutes a response to the resurgence of Calvinism

within the Southern Baptist Convention. The first chapter is a rousing sermon on John 3:16 by Jerry Vines, followed by informative responses to five-point Calvinism by leading scholars in the SBC. Paige Patterson examines total depravity—perhaps the one point of Calvinism where Calvinists and non-Calvinists are the closest. Although Patterson agrees that humans are totally depraved and unable to save themselves, he does note that, with God's prevenient grace, one can and must freely respond to the salvation that Christ offers to sinners.

Richard Land rejects the view that election is grounded in divine decree and offers an alternative to unconditional election which he calls "Congruent Election." If successful, this model would avoid strict monergism while preserving a strong view of divine foreknowledge regarding the elect. Land's model, moreover, appears to have the conceptual resources to avoid traditional grounding objections regarding truth-values for counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. A worry about this view, however, is that it seems to commit one to a genuinely perplexing perdurantist view of time and diachronic persistence.

One of the true gems of this book is David Allen's critique of limited atonement. Allen provides important clarity concerning the relevant notions involved in analyzing the extent of the atonement. He then marshals an impressive array of historical, exegetical, logical, theological, and practical arguments to undermine the credibility of views which affirm limited imputation of sin to Christ. Allen's historical case is especially impressive. It reveals the relative historical novelty of limited atonement in church history. His chapter exemplifies deep historical and theological expertise. The historical case, while impressive, is certainly not sufficient to settle the matter of the extent of the atonement. Yet its conjunction with the detailed exegetical, theological, and logical arguments constitute a compelling assault on the limited view.

Steve Lemke provides an extensive biblical critique of irresistible grace. The passages to which he refers highlight the relentless biblical demand for human response in order to benefit from God's grace. Marshalling the biblical data is a valuable contribution in its own right, but Lemke also provides an extensive theological critique. Many of his criticisms are well known and well taken by opponents of irresistible grace.

Lemke's critique of compatibilist agency, however, is more controversial. Compatibilists will undoubtedly object to Lemke apparently equating the lack of alternative possibilities with coercion (151–52). Neither is it clear that his own brand of soft libertarianism secures the freedom-level control that libertarians really want. Indeed, most, if not all, contemporary theories of libertarian freedom have been subject to intense criticisms. Despite my own sympathies with libertarianism, it should be noted that although a variety of highly sophisticated libertarian accounts have been developed in recent years, no contemporary account has garnered widespread acceptance among advocates of libertarianism. Libertarians still have much work to do in terms of formulating and defending their accounts of human freedom.

Kenneth Keathly's offers a provocative treatment of Calvinist construals of perseverance and assurance. He notes important deficiencies on the Calvinist view while developing a biblically and theologically robust model of assurance based on justification rather than sanctification.

While subsequent chapters on Calvin's Calvinism, the potential impact of Calvinism in the local churches, and the significance of Calvinism for the public invitation all make important contributions to issues concerning Southern Baptist theology and praxis, a good deal of the material in these chapters recapitulates ground covered in earlier chapters.

Jeremy Evans and Bruce Little contribute important chapters critiquing compatibilist views of divine and human agency and the significance of strong sovereignty in connection with the problem of evil. These chapters offer penetrating insights, but especially significant is how these authors highlight the differences in the dialectical structure. Compatibilists and libertarians both have skeletons in their closets—one must pick one's poison, as it were. But compatibilist views of human and divine agency promptly appeal to mystery where the logic of their views appears to implicate the character of God, whereas libertarian appeals to mystery typically concern the mechanisms of God.

Though *Whosoever Will* is characterized by thorough scholarship and theological rigor, one of its limitations is the lack of biblical argumentation for the oft-deployed notion of prevenient grace. Several of the contributors rely heavily on this doctrine, but provide only minimal biblical support. Future editions would profit from critical examination of this crucial doctrine for non-Calvinists. One of the strengths of this book is its consistent clarion call to charity and tolerance concerning intramural debates between Calvinists and non-Calvinists. Despite the limitations inherent in a volume that must briefly treat issues that command numerous volumes, I urgently recommend this book to all interested leaders and laypersons, both Calvinist an non-Calvinists within the SBC and beyond. Those who ignore this important work do so to their own theological detriment.

Ben Kimmell
Perry, Florida

Ernst Käsemann, *On Being a Disciple of the Crucified Nazarene.* Edited by Rudolf Landau. With Wolfgang Kraus. Translated by Roy A. Harrisville. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 359 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6026-2. $30.00. Paperback.

Students of the history of Interpretation of the New Testament readily recognize the name of Ernst Käsemann. We know of his studies as one of Rudolph Bultmann's students. We know that he and a few other students of Bultmann started the second quest of the historical Jesus in post WWII Europe. We know the man who coined the twin criteria of dissimilarity and multiple attestation (in his famous

1954 essay). We know the man who thought John was a Docetic Gospel. We know of the thoroughly fascinating effect this man has had on the landscape of New Testament Studies. The passionate preacher presented in this book of previously unpublished sermons is less common fare.

Ernst Käsemann (1906–98) was described at his 1998 funeral as a lone wolf and a voice for radical living for Christ. He described himself as a partisan revolutionary and had battles with liberals and pietists alike. One may not always agree with the interpretations that Dr. Käsemann espoused, but he was always thought-provoking and and a voice for "swimming against the stream." And more than a voice, he had the scars to justify listening. The present book gives a picture of this part of the man.

The book is divided into two parts: "Biblical Essays" and "Church Conflicts." In the first section, the sermons are more based on selected biblical texts. The sermons are not strictly exegetical but neither are they rambling flights of liberal theology. Dr. Käsemann's style produces a very readable essay, so I would classify it as more of a literary production. In this sense, it reminds me of classical rhetoric (although not strictly so).

The first essay, *a Theological Review,* is a goldmine of biographical information. This alone was worth reading the book. Here we read of Käsemann's unhappy childhood, his conversion under the leadership of a youth minister and his first trip through academia at Bonn. He was so enamored with the Catholic faculty there that he retreated to Bultmann's historical criticism as "an antidote" (xv). His quest to reconcile his historical criticism with his pietist faith led him to Tübingen and Adolf Schlatter. He was disappointed because Schlatter loved to provoke, but not to public dispute. Yet he considered Schlatter his third teacher in New Testament (i.e., Barth, Schlatter, Bultmann). We also learn of his early support of Hitler that quickly turned to opposition, his embrace of the confessing church, and his imprisonment by the Gestapo. He was a bold and popular preacher that was a consistent presence in the confessing church. He would later state ". . . we must not forget that the truth is not an ecclesiastical product but the judge of all churchly proclamation and theology" (156).

I see three interesting, foundational topics to which Käsemann repeatedly turns: Christ (and discipleship), the Scriptures, and Salvation (although many other topics are addressed). First, the Scriptures. Throughout the series of sermons we see Käsemann's view of the Word of God. He sees the Bible as a thoroughly human book that has the stamp of God's inspiration on it. However, he (without saying the words often) has a canon within the canon. This is not surprising of one of Lutheran heritage. Clearly this is filtered through his historical criticism. The upshot is that the scholars become the priests deciding what is to be heard and what is to be demythologized, and what is to be rejected (see page 158 for a more telling description). Yet, he is adamant of it's usefulness. He confesses a "scandalous thesis" . . . "none of us should give up on the Bible, that we cannot do without it if we would hear the voice of the true God" (173). And, "Plainly put, we should open the Bible daily and from it hear the voice of love

addressed personally to us. Grace makes use of the divine word to bring us out of earthly confusion before the face of the eternal lord, to set us in the kinship of the disciples and urge us to mutual love, which prays, 'Keep my heart to the one thing, that I fear your name.'" (218).

Salvation is described in reformation terms but focussed heavily on the relationship with Christ. Elsewhere Käsemann rejects Bultmann's (and Luther's) individualism for a more cosmic righteousness. Faith is not merely being pious, nor belonging to a church, instead it begins in the sovereign choice of God, or in a repeated idea, the sovereign voice of God. "God has willed us and called us by name" (217). And having learned to believe we are betrothed to Christ "as one in love is promised to another" (160). Christ, for us, became man, died, and rose again. We allow oursleves to be set under the lordship of Christ and not succumbing to the temptation to be quelled by neither powers nor suffering (225). "Christian faith is encountered in only one shape: 'This one was with Jesus of Nazareth'"(161).

Christ is consistently, "the Nazarene." Käsemann refers to Him as the crucified son of God. In Christ, the face of God is revealed to humanity. Christ is both the risen one and the crucified one and these cannot be separated. "The Risen One wold have no face if it were not that of the Nazarene, and his lordship is unique only so long as it sets us beneath the cross of Golgotha" (265). The cross sets the course of discipleship not away from the world but toward it. In other words, Discipleship is not reflected in inner transformation where one retreats from the world (a shot at pietism?) but toward the world for transformation. Thus, "present day Christianity neither can correctly see itself now nor can correctly see its past or future except in the mirror of the Third and Fourth worlds" (268).

In a book like this there are a series of caveats I would suggest. First, let us not throw the baby out with the bathwater. There is much that I disagree in this volume, particularly his approach and evaluation of Scripture (among other things). But there is much from which to drink deeply and think deeply. Second, and opposite, let us do throw out the bathwater. Third, Käsemann often doesn't address the *tertium quid* when dealing with contrasts. Things are not always black/white; either/or. Sometimes there is a both/and dynamic. For example, in the discipleship question above, I would suggest that inner transformation is what leads to a redemptive mission to the world.

Finally, in my opinion, Käsemann's theology is complicated and nuanced (I am sure my brief representation of it here does not do it justice). We are constantly running the risk of importing our own ideas into his descriptions. Even though this is the case, there is much that I find surprisingly nourishing and confronts my own commitments to Christ in a beneficial way. N. T. Wright has said that if he had one NT interpreter to be stranded on a desert island it would be Ernst Käsemann. After reading this book, I think I would put him on the short list as well.

L. Scott Kellum
Wake Forest, North Carolina

Michael E. W. Thompson. *Where Is the God of Justice? The Old Testament and Suffering*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011. ix-xiii + 221 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-1-61097-262-8. $26.00. Paperback.

Where is the God of Justice fills an enormous gap in Old Testament theology. To this reviewer's knowledge, this is the first monograph length exploration of the theme of suffering in the Old Testament. Other monographs in the past have focused, of course, on theodicy and particular portions of the Old Testament. This is true especially for work in the wisdom literature in general and Job in particular. Other books have explored the theme of suffering in individual prophets like Isaiah or Jeremiah (or Habakkuk). And other volumes have explored in detail facets of suffering in terms of Old Testament literary genres (lament and complaint), prayer (Jeremiah's so-called "confessions"), or the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. Yet Thompson's monograph is unique in its scope: it aims to distil and present the major theodicies present in the corpus of the Old Testament. As such, it provides a "bird's eye" view on the question of suffering in the Old Testament while diving down to get closer looks at significant points of the terrain.

The structure of the book is as follows. Chapter 1 introduces the problem of suffering in the Old Testament as it is multivocal, with many rationales as to the sources of suffering and thereby potential solutions. Chapter 2 explores the teaching of Qoheleth as Thompson sees it. He suggests that suffering in Qoheleth is a result of the incomprehensibility of both God and life. Chapter 3 then addresses suffering in Jeremiah through an analysis of his "confessions." Thompson suggests that Jeremiah responds to suffering not by acquiescing to sinfulness and thereby producing penitence, but rather by highlighting the suffering that comes as a result of serving the Lord. This is not a point of retributive suffering due to sin, but suffering for righteousness. He finds no answer to this suffering: it is to be endured. Chapter 4 then addresses Habakkuk and Joseph. Although differently placed in the canon, these figures share in the reality of an "extended pause" between suffering and its resolution. The major teaching on suffering as Thompson sees it is that the faithful should learn to watch and wait upon God. Chapter 5 draws in the figure of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, and the "new light" it sheds upon suffering in the Old Testament. Thompson suggests that Isaiah teaches that suffering is borne on behalf of others and in the midst of others, for the glory of God. Chapter 6 engages the book of Job. Thompson states that Job teaches a number of theodicies rather than just one. He argues that this is one of the major aims of the book. Chapter 7 deals with the apocalyptic hope, or the ultimate eclipse of suffering in the future. Future hope frames human suffering in the present. Chapters 1–6 are interspersed with brief psalmic interludes that create space for readerly reflection and deepen the points that Thompson has made in the preceding chapter.

This is an ambitious and interesting volume. Thompson should be commended for his effort and the skill in which he has delivered the major argument of the book. Still the benefits of the book—its scope and depth despite its relative brevity—highlight its major drawback. There are many texts not considered in this

volume that could nuance and deepen each of his chapters. For instance, how does servant suffering in Isaiah 40–55 relate to the suffering of the world in Isaiah 1–66? How does Habakkuk's suffering of "waiting" fit within the message of the Twelve on the issue of suffering? What does Joesph's experience of suffering have to do with the suffering that is on display in the primeval and patriarchal stories? The narrative shaping of the Old Testament may have helpfully informed his discussion as well, as suffering is rooted in the biblical story as deriving from Genesis 3, which is not fully addressed by Thompson. Because it is not a systematic exploration, a good bit is left out of the discussion. What remains is a very helpful but selective portrayal of suffering in the Old Testament. Nonetheless, this volume is one that should be accessed by anyone interested in the topic of suffering in the Bible. There is much here to learn, and Thompson is a good teacher.

Heath Thomas
Wake Forest, North Carolina.

E. O. Wilson. *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2007. 175 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-3930-6217-5. $13.95. Paperback.

In view of his nearly five-decade tenure as professor of biology at Harvard University, his twenty books covering a wide range of environmental issues, and his 400 technical articles on numerous ecological topics, it seems evident that E. O. Wilson is well qualified to pen a book on preserving the environment. Yet, while the breadth of Wilson's knowledge of the field is indeed manifest in *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*, this text is unlike any of his previous literary works. This book is not primarily written for those in the academic community who endorse naturalistic evolution, but rather Wilson's intended audience is evangelical Christians who accept special theistic creation as presented in the Bible.

In short, Wilson's purpose in producing *The Creation* is to bring together supporters of naturalistic evolution and advocates of theistic creation with the common goal of preserving the environment. Wilson writes, "Religion and science are the two most powerful forces in the world today. . . . If religion and science could be united on the common ground of biological conservation, the problem [of environmental destruction] would soon be solved" (p. 5). In order to facilitate this odd coalition, Wilson has penned this text as an open invitation to evangelical Christians to join him, as the book's subtitle reads, to save life on earth. Structurally speaking, this invitation is given in *The Creation* in the form of seventeen letters, each constituting a chapter of the book, in which Wilson explains to a fictional Southern Baptist pastor the importance of preserving the environment.

There are many facets of this text for which Wilson is to be commended. For example, the prose of *The Creation* is not overly technical; and there are many illustrations throughout the book, undoubtedly designed to keep the attention of his intended audience. Additionally, Wilson's personal accounts of his field

expeditions, such as his encounter with fire ants as a boy in rural Alabama (chapter 5), are entertaining and informative. Moreover, the description of unique and lesser known animals, such as wolverines and pitchfork ants (chapter 6), are sure to capture the reader's attention as well as produce altruistic feelings toward the environment. Yet, the aspect of *The Creation* for which Wilson deserves the most credit is his stinging observation that most evangelical Christians, especially church leaders, seem to care little about the environment. Wilson writes, "I am puzzled that so many religious leaders, who spiritually represent a large majority of people around the world, have hesitated to make protection of the Creation an important part of their magisterium" (p. 5). Indeed, this fact ought to puzzle many within the Body of Christ.

Despite the many positive features of *The Creation*, there are several drawbacks to this text of which the prospective reader should be aware. First, Wilson describes himself as an atheistic "secular humanist . . . [who] thinks existence is what we make of it as individuals" (p. 3). While he surely tries to be fair and balanced in his discussion, Wilson's biases are evident throughout the book. For instance, in his discussion of Darwin, Wilson refers to the "dogma" of creationism, as compared with the "intellectual freedom" of evolutionary theory (p. 7). Moreover, in an attempt to gain credibility, Wilson repeatedly notes that he was raised as an evangelical Christian; yet, the Christianity that Wilson describes is exactly that which he left as a boy in the 1940s—that is, the rural Southern Baptist Christianity of the Deep South. Upon reading his description of church life and Christian theology, many modern evangelicals will conclude that Wilson is either trying to caricaturize their religion, or that he has misunderstood Christianity to the point that he cannot authoritatively speak to it. Either way, Wilson's invitation to evangelicals to join his coalition is lost.

A second, perhaps more weighty shortcoming of *The Creation* is a problem that plagues most non-theistic environmentalists—that is, answering the question, "Why?" In other words, the burden upon atheistic evolutionists who desire to save the earth is to generate a reason for doing so. In this book Wilson tentatively offers several cryptic, pragmatic reasons for ecological conservation such as the complexity of biology (p. 5), the potential for furtherance of knowledge (pp. 12–13), and our own physical well-being (p. 26); however, it seems that none of these answers provide a truly sufficient impetus for conservationism. Biblical creationists, on the other hand, have a built-in rationale for being good stewards of the created order—that is, it is commanded by the Creator (cf. Gen. 1:26–28).

In conclusion, the above criticisms notwithstanding, *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth* is a good book that ought to be read by those within the evangelical community. Although Wilson misses on his goal of uniting creationists and evolutionists together in a coalition to save the earth, this book is a good reminder to believers of their duty to interact properly and responsibly with the environment.

David W. Jones
Wake Forest, North Carolina

Robert J. Spitzer. *New Proofs for the Existence of God: Contributions of Contemporary Physics and Philosophy*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010. xiii + 319 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6383-6. $28.00. Paperback.

New Proofs for the Existence of God is Robert J. Spitzer's case for the existence of God based on contemporary physics and philosophy. The book is divided into three parts. The first part summarizes relevant parts of contemporary physics for the purpose of showing how these findings strongly support theism. Spitzer succeeds in providing an accurate, yet accessible, account of how contemporary physics is being used to support theism in two ways. First, he explains how contemporary physics supports that the universe has a temporal beginning. Second, he points to a number of findings in physics that support the fine-tuning argument from design. Bruce Gordon has written a valuable postscript to the first part of the book, which provides a rigorous explanation of many of the facets of contemporary physics to which Spitzer has written a popular and more accessible account. However, Gordon's postscript is likely to be inscrutable to those who do not have a strong background in physics.

In the second part of the book, Spitzer presents three philosophical arguments for the existence of God. Contrary to the overall theme of the book, these philosophical arguments are reminiscent of some of the traditional ancient and medieval arguments for theism. In the first argument he makes the distinction between conditioned reality (i.e., existing on some condition) and unconditioned reality (i.e., existing without condition), and then he argues that all reality cannot exist as unconditioned reality. This argument is similar to Thomas Aquinas's third way (based on necessity and contingency), however, Spitzer incorporates aspects of contemporary physics to bolster his account. The second philosophical argument relies heavily on the philosophical work of Bernard Lonergan, a Thomist thinker of the previous century. The main idea in this second argument is that unconditioned reality implies unrestricted intelligibility. The third philosophical argument is Spitzer's version of the kalam cosmological argument, which has garnered interest in some circles of contemporary philosophy. The kalam argument justifies the existence of God on the grounds that it is conceptually impossible for the universe to have an actual infinite temporal past. If the universe's temporal past is not infinite, then it must have a beginning, and if the universe has a beginning, then it has a cause—which must be God. The second part of the book ends with a discussion of some objections to his arguments as well as a variety of problems that Spitzer believes makes justifying atheism conceptually impossible.

The third and final part of the book discusses the five transcendentals (being, love, the good, the true, the beautiful). Spitzer contends that the transcendentals are identical with God. Then, he maintains that human longing for these transcendentals are a kind of existential yearning to know God. Spitzer draws heavily on the work of Plato and Saint Augustine to make this case.

Spitzer's *New Proofs* is commendable for presenting a number of arguments that are worth considering. However, the book has some weaknesses as well. The first weakness is that most of the book does not live up to its title, "new proofs." Rather, most of the arguments are Spitzer's recapitulation of old arguments for theism, and sometimes the arguments themselves seem to come primarily from ancient and medieval sources. Even though good arguments have no expiration date, the reader may have a sense that this book is not living up to its title. A second problem is that Spitzer is trying to do too much in one book. In addition to presenting arguments for theism, Spitzer devotes a few pages to a theory of space and time, the problem of evil, and finite interpretations of mathematics. These topics take more than a few pages to address adequately. A final difficulty is that some of Spitzer's ideas rely on ancient and medieval philosophical assumptions that most contemporary philosophers (Christian and non-Christian alike) would find spurious. For example, most contemporary philosophers think it is a category mistake to think that being, love, truth, goodness, and beauty are existing things. (Many believe that truth, goodness, and beauty are properties of things.) As a result, the book may fail to connect with most contemporary philosophers.

Consequently, *New Proofs* is going to have limited value for scholars and pastors. Scholars will benefit the most from the first part, but they will benefit more from studying the newest developments in natural theology from contemporary scholars like William Lane Craig, Richard Swinburne, Jordan Howard Sobel, and Graham Oppy (to give an incomplete list). Ministers will struggle with some of the ancient and medieval metaphysics that is laden throughout the second and third parts of the book, which can make some chapters appear unintelligible to those untutored in the proper philosophical background. Ministers will probably be better off reading Timothy Keller's *Reason for God* or Dean Overman's *A Case for the Existence of God* to find accessible and accurate portrayals of recent work on the existence of God.

John M. DePoe
Iowa City, Iowa

David T. Lamb. *God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist and Racist?* Downers Grove: IVP, 2010. 205 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8308-3826-4. $15.00. Paperback.

God Behaving Badly is a fine introduction to the troubling portraits of God in the Old Testament. Dr. David Lamb of Biblical Seminary in Pennsylvania is a helpful guide. And the book is timely, as the God of the Bible has come under attack from a number of different fronts on its apparent lack of concern for modern sensibilities that inform current (western) ideas of religion.

In the modern world, racism, sexism, and abusive violence are rightly deemed unjust and wrong. But because the biblical and especially the Old Testament portrayals of God harbor examples of these ills, the Bible and its God remain the very

things that should be eschewed rather than embraced in our society. This is true especially when they reveal latent or explicit violence, racism, sexism, abuse, or the like. Attempts to bridge the gap in this problematic area have ranged: to deny that the Bible or God displays these features, or to turn the tables on the interrogators and offer a "who are we to judge—is God not God and free to do as he wishes?" approach, amongst other options.

What remains wonderfully refreshing about Dr. Lamb's volume is that it is neither reactionary nor demeaning to modern conceptions of what God *should* be like. Rather, he attempts to bridge the gap between modern notions of God and Biblical notions of the same by close examination of both the ideology of text itself in its ancient Near Eastern context as well as the ideologies of potential interrogators. What Lamb finds, then, is that oftentimes modern readers with modern sensibilities have read the Bible and its God in a naïve and undeveloped manner. But the Old Testament especially reveals a complex and nuanced divine characterization. The presentation of God that Lamb provides is lucid, reasonable and helpful. This is a book particularly suited to undergraduate students who are working their way through the Old Testament and finding a good amount of difficulty rectifying what they perceive to be the biblical presentation of God and what they learned growing up, oftentimes in church.

Lamb's analysis proceeds along several fronts. He addresses a number of interrelated topics, all revolving around the centre of a problematic God with a bad reputation in the Old Testament. Chapter 1 explores this point. Chapter 2 then begins tackling the first topic: is God angry or loving? Chapter 3 then addresses the issue of sexism and God whilst Chapter 4 tackles the very important question of racism and the Bible. Chapters 5 and 6 are helpful in that they expose the violence of God and the law of God in the Old Testament, respectively. Chapters 7 and 8 then deal with the thorny questions of divine mutability/immutability and divine transcendence/nearness. At first, these may seem a bit out of step with the remainder of the book, but Lamb successfully reveals how these issues inform a robust theology of divine goodness and love. Lamb then helpfully summarizes his work in an epilogue and provides a series of discussion questions for each chapter of the book, reinforcing the usefulness of the book in the classroom.

Any quibbles with the book are minor, but a one might be pointed out. His mention in Chapter 3 that Adam and Eve were standing next to one another (p. 54) is a point that may be accurate, but nonetheless is an interpretation based upon inference rather than unambiguous evidence. His suggestion that the plural forms of the verbs spoken by the serpent then indicates that the man was with the woman may be true, but it may be that the serpent is merely quoting God's speech to the woman, and the man is not present at all. After all, the serpent uses a 2f.sg. verb when speaking to the woman as well (Gen 3:4). Still this is not a major point and does not detract from the overall argument of the book.

There are a number of strengths in this volume, one of which is the fine accessibility of quite complex topics that require nuance and a critical eye. Lamb is up to the task and is to be commended for the readability of the volume as well as

its nuance. Another strength lay in Lamb's irenic approach, even with those with whom he disagrees. The benefit of his approach here is that it allows the reader to have a fair hearing of opposing viewpoints. He is not out to "strike a point" against someone else but rather to get to the bottom of an issue. One could say that he successfully goes to the heart of an idea rather than the jugular of his interlocutors.

God Behaving Badly should be used in consultation with a number of other books in this genre, notably Paul Copan's *Is God a Moral Monster* and C. J. H. Wright's *The God I Don't Understand*. All told, Lamb's work is to be commended and it is one I will use in my classes.

Heath Thomas
Wake Forest, North Carolina

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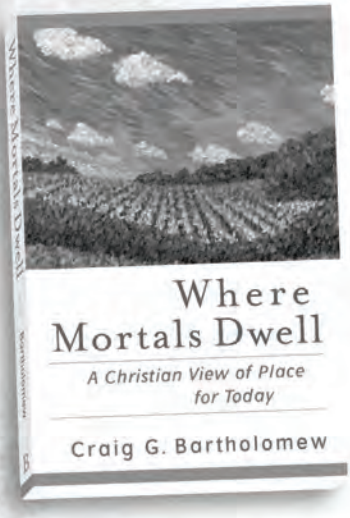

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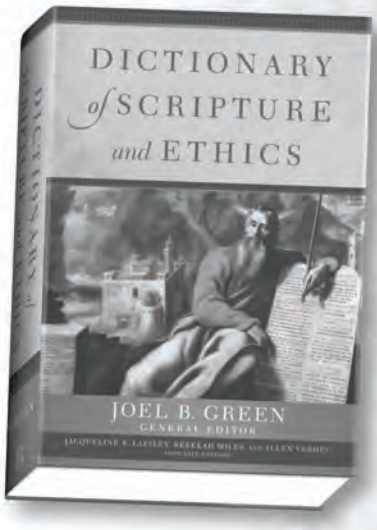

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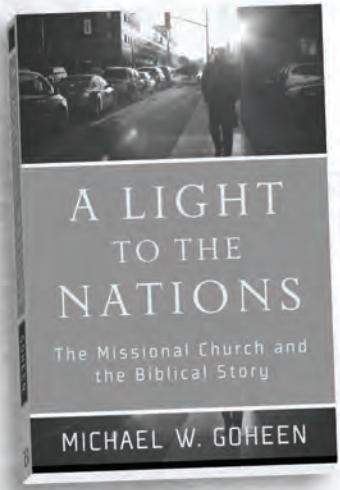

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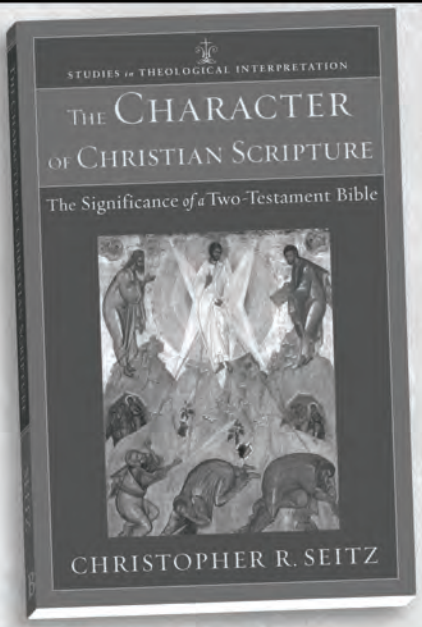

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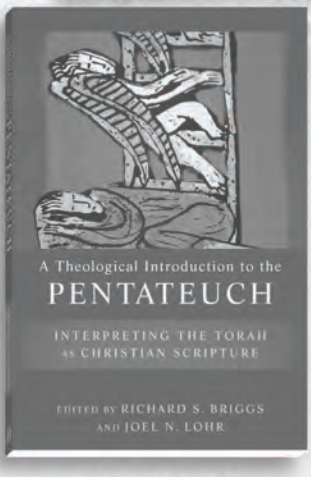

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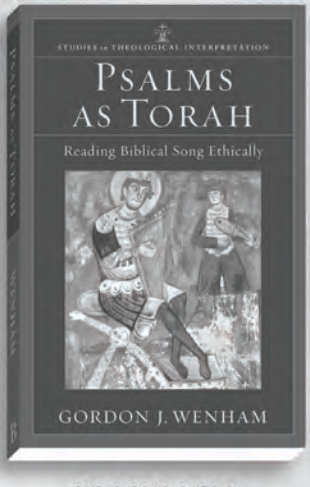

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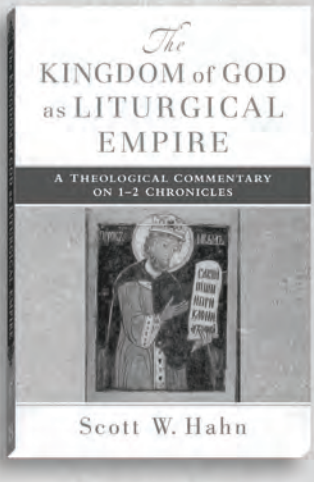

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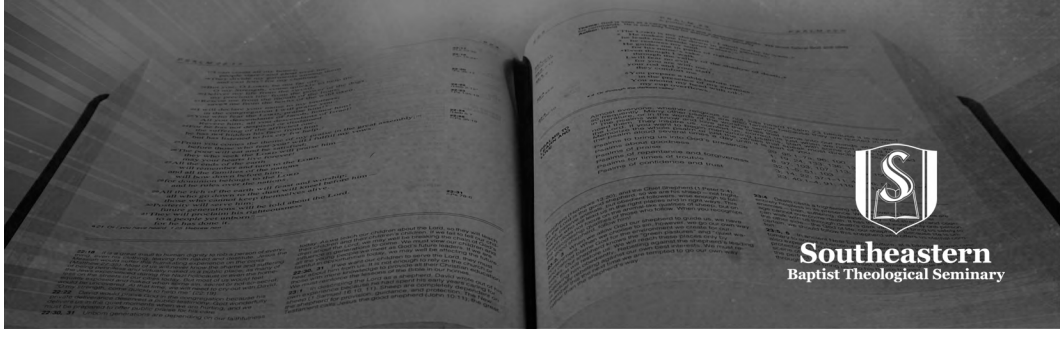

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