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The Gospel of Jesus Christ: Its Meaning, Implications, and Modern Understanding

STR Editor

Introduction

Advent marks the time in the Christian calendar where the Church celebrates the coming of Christ. We prepare our hearts and minds for the reality of the incarnation of Jesus in his world: "the Word became flesh and dwelled among us," says the beloved disciple (John 1:14). The Gospel of Matthew announces Jesus' coming and unveils the meaning of this event: Jesus is the king who will be the Savior of the world. He will be called "Immanuel," which is translated "God is with us" (Matt. 1:23). The Gospel of Luke presents the announcement, which is given to Mary rather than Joseph, and reveals that the Christ is in the royal line of King David; he will have a kingdom that will never end (Luke 1:33). It is no wonder that Jesus comes preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. The King has come! The messiah has made his entrance into the world to begin the redemptive work that God has anointed and appointed him to do (Luke 4:16-21). In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus' preaching ministry begins with the paradigmatic proclamation of the gospel: Jesus came "proclaiming the good news [*gospel*] of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news'!" (Mark 1:14-15).

Those who hear the gospel message are called to respond in repentance and belief. Repentance is necessary because as one hears the good news of the kingdom, one begins to recognize that his or her own personal "kingdom" is an empty phantom. One must turn away from one's own kingdom and turn towards the reign and rule of the living God. And belief is essential, as the *gospel* of the kingdom has a particular shape: one submits to the vision of God and his reign and rule as disclosed in the Old Testament story. One submits to what God is doing redemptively in and through Israel and climactically in the *true* Davidic King: Jesus the Messiah. Advent opens our eyes to the beauty of God's gospel.

Yet the gospel of Jesus Christ remains, unfortunately, unclear within the Church. It is a "trade-term" amongst Christians today. One sees "gospel-centered" churches, "gospel-choirs," "gospel-tabernacles," "gospel-driven" lives, and even a "gospel coalition." "Gospel" is thrown about like a mantra or held onto tightly like a totem. The term peppers sermons and speakers invoke it, often without explanation, as a way of activating the Church into action. The "gospel" can be bandied about in the Church in *many* ways! The danger is that "gospel" becomes such a used (and perhaps abused) word that tragically, for many Christians, it becomes an *empty* word. This indeed would be a tragedy! So it is appropriate that some, like Matt Chandler, have called

those within the Church to think and re-think about the all-too-familiar word, "gospel," and its implications for life.[1]

For those outside of the Church, the gospel is irrelevant and ignored. Lesslie Newbigin prophetically envisioned this reality long ago. The challenge for the Church is how to communicate the truth of the gospel in a world that is indifferent to its message:

> "The gospel is news of what has happened [in and through Jesus Christ]. The problem of communicating it in a pluralist society is that it simply disappears into the undifferentiated ocean of information. It represents one opinion among millions of others. It cannot be 'the truth,' since in a pluralist society truth is not one but many."[2]

Yet in the face of this, the world *is* confronted with the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Its very force, as Newbigin maintains, is that it *is true* and that it is "public truth."[3] A pressing challenge for the Church today lies in her embrace of *this public truth*, the good news message that reaches as far and wide as God's kingdom.

The Present Volume

The present volume of *Southeastern Theological Review* (*STR*) offers one avenue to address this challenge. *STR* engages the theme of "the gospel" in order to provide greater clarity and nuance on its meaning and implications. The first essay is an interview with Dr. Scot McKnight, whose influential book *The King Jesus Gospel* encourages Christians to think very carefully about the meaning of the good news of Jesus Christ. His blog, "Jesus Creed," is a leading Christian blog that addresses matters of faith. Dr. McKnight is now Professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary. He has spent the greater part of his working life exploring (in one way or another) the gospel. *STR* is grateful for the opportunity to share his thoughts with its readership. The second essay is by Dr. Harry Lee ("Hal") Poe, Charles Colson Professor of Faith and Culture at Union University. His 1996 book, *The Gospel and its Meaning* (Zondervan) was a landmark volume that expounded upon the different emphases that the Church has laid on "the gospel" in her history. His is a detailed engagement of the meaning the gospel in that volume, and here he explores how the gospel has been understood in the twentieth century among the evangelical Church. His analysis is pointed, and whether all agree with it, nonetheless it demands close attention and reflection.

Following upon Dr. Poe's essay are three interpretative and exegetical essays. Dr. Matthew Emerson, Assistant Professor of Christian Studies and Lead Faculty for Christian Studies (OPS) at California Baptist University,

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[1] Matt Chandler with Jared Wilson, *The Explicit Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

[2] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 242.

[3] Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth* (London: SPCK, 1991).

suggests that on the testimony of the New Testament, as well as on a reading of its canonical shape, the gospel is "holistic" and carries with it a number of aspects that are irreducible to its meaning. Still, he argues that there is a need for proper individual response in light of the gospel's "holistic" scope. Second, *STR* is happy to reproduce for its readership an essay by Dr. Daniel I. Block, Gunther H. Knoedler Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College. It is sometimes thought that the Old Testament law remains fundamentally opposed to Christ's gospel. Dr. Block asserts, however, that this polarization is neither helpful nor true to either the teaching of the Old Testament in particular, or Scripture in general. His essay focuses upon the question, "How should one preach Old Testament Law to New Testament Christians?" We are delighted to have his essay here, and are grateful to both Dr. Block and to Dr. Jens B. Kofoed, the editor of the Scandanavian journal *Hiphil*, for the opportunity to reproduce it in this forum. Finally, Dr. Francis Macatangay, professor at the University of St. Thomas School of Theology, offers an exegetical essay that explores Martha's "perfect" statement in John 11:27. This essay thematically connects to the gospel them in a significant way. If the gospel requires "repentance" and "belief" as Mark 1:14-15 conveys, then it is precisely the nature of "belief" in Jesus that is central to Martha's statement. What is the interpreter to make of Martha's belief in Jesus? Dr. Macatangay offers insight on this question.

For the first time in its history, *STR* has invited a formal sermon as part of its contents. The sermon is given by Dr. J.D. Greear (PhD, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary). Dr. Greear is the lead pastor of The Summit Church in Durham, North Carolina. He is known world-wide for his gospel-centered exposition as well as (more recently) for his influential work *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary* (B&H Books, 2011). In light of our interest in receiving essays in practical theology, homiletics, and missiology, we are very happy to produce this insightful sermon for *STR*'s readership. It is hoped that this edition of *STR* will explore once again the centrality of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Christian message and identity.

This volume closes with a series of reviews. We are happy to have a critical essay-length review of *The Encyclopaedia of the Bible and its Reception* (Walter de Gruyter) as a way to conclude the essays and introduce the book reviews. This is a major ongoing effort in the renaissance of studies in the reception of the Bible, and Dr. Christoph Stenschke has ably provided a provocative review. His analysis shows the potential and potential drawbacks of the project. Dr. Stenschke focuses upon the entries of "Atonement," "Baptism," and "Bathsheba" as examples of how the encyclopaedia proceeds. *STR* hopes this volume will stimulate mind and heart as you read.

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The King Jesus Gospel

STR Interviews Dr. Scot McKnight

Introduction

STR has the privilege of talking with Dr. Scot McKnight about his recent monograph *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited* (Zondervan, 2011). Dr. McKnight is Professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary and a prolific writer. He is the author of more than thirty books, and his research spans both academic and pastoral contexts. His recent book, ably bridges both contexts. In it he builds a case for a truly *evangelical* understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ as opposed to a *soterian* gospel and the practical implications that emerge as a result. This will be discussed throughout the course of the stimulating interview below. He blogs at Jesus Creed (http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/) and explores the significance of Jesus and the Christian faith for the twenty-first century. Despite his many and significant academic achievements, Scot embodies the heart of a pastor-teacher. He is a sought-after speaker in local churches around the globe.

Interview with Scot McKnight

STR: Scot, thank you for speaking with STR. Why did you write this book?

McKnight: For seventeen years, I taught undergraduates a course called "Introduction to Biblical Studies," a course that surveyed the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation in one semester. Connected to that General Education requirement, a sizable proportion of my introduction students took Jesus of Nazareth, and that combination – in the grace of God – yielded annual conversion stories as young college students told me their faith journeys. Something was happening, and I began to investigate what it was, and that investigation led me in two directions: studies in conversion (*Turning to Jesus* and *Finding Faith, Losing Faith*)[1] where I sought to map how conversion took place. The second area was the "message" of the Bible. I was thoroughly convinced that the message of the Bible was compelling students to surrender themselves. But what I knew was that, in spite of the number of conversions – and for a few years when my classes were quite large it was between 10 and 20 stu-

[1] Scot McKnight, *Turning to Jesus: The Sociology of Conversion in the Gospels* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002); *Finding Faith, Losing Faith: Stories of Conversion and Apostasy* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008).

dents who gave themselves to God in Christ – I was not "presenting the gospel" as many understood "presenting" or "gospel."

So I began to work more carefully on gospel and it yielded three attempts to sort out gospel and atonement – *Embracing Grace*,[2] which was a sketch of the holistic salvation God brings, *Jesus and His Death*,[3] which was an academic study of how Jesus understood his death as atoning and how his atoning theory developed in the New Testament, and *A Community Called Atonement*,[4] which contended that atonement needs to be seen in more than one model. But I was unsatisfied and I knew why, but I wasn't finding a way through the thicket. In all my "gospel" research and work I could make sense of gospel and salvation but could not make sense of the sermons in Acts. Because neither my teaching nor my writing plans included working on Acts, I simply kept that dissatisfaction on the shelf; until I was invited to Stellenbosch for a wonderful conference on the importance of Acts for the life of the church in South Africa. I was given permission to write on the sermons in Acts, and my aim was to examine them squarely for what light they shed on the meaning of gospel.

That was a life-shaping time of study and delivery. For in studying Acts, everything fell together for me. I realized that I had equate "gospel" with the "plan of salvation" and that "gospel" in Acts was first and foremost Christology. At the same time of working on Acts I was also aware that 1 Cor. 15:3-5 had to be part of any definition of gospel, but it was not central enough for my own liking to my earlier gospel, salvation and atonement works. It was in studying the sermons in Acts alongside the tradition in 1 Corinthians 15 that I came to the conclusion that we must re-calibrate how we define gospel. Instead of equating with the plan for personal salvation we have to define it as Christology, a Christology that includes Jesus who saves us from our sins. That's the genesis of *The King Jesus Gospel*,[5] but behind all of this has been a career-long dissatisfaction with how evangelicalism does evangelism, some of which story I tell in *King Jesus Gospel.*

STR: In what way(s) do you hope that your book serves Christ and his Church?

McKnight: As I said above, I have been teaching students for 17 years in a way that yields conversion stories. I consider myself an evangelist at

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[2] Scot McKnight, *Embracing Grace: A Gospel for all of Us* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete, 2005).

[3] Scot McKnight, *Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005).

[4] Scot McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement: Living Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2007).

[5] Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

heart, which for me means a vocal advocate for Jesus, and so I'm hoping and praying this book will produce genuine discussions about the meaning of gospel – and I get letters weekly that this is already happening. And I hope it will encourage more people to see that they are already doing some evangelism and that others will reshape their evangelism to be more consistent with what the Bible teaches. I do think the book deserves a follow-up book that provides examples of evangelistic sermons, and I have it in mind how that would be done … if I could but find time in my already committed publication schedule.

STR: You distinguish between "evangelical" (where we get the English word "gospel") from "soterian" (where we get the English word "salvation"). You suggest that the modern evangelical church is enmeshed in a "salvation culture" instead of being rooted in a "gospel culture." In light of the strong gospel-centered movement in today's church (e.g., The Gospel Coalition, or Together for the Gospel), how can (and why do) you say this?

McKnight: I say that we have established a "salvation" culture and not a "gospel" culture because I believe we have equated gospel with the plan for personal salvation. If the aim of the gospel is to get people saved, then we should have a salvation culture, one that marks off those who are saved from those who are not saved. As a result of what I see in the meaning of "gospel," I am convinced a salvation culture is hollow shadow of what the gospel intends to create. The gospel, if 1 Corinthians 15 and the sermons in Acts are going to be our defining points, will create more than a salvation culture. How so? The gospel is about declaring that Jesus is King, or Messiah, and that he is Lord and that those who are connected to him by repentance, faith and baptism (this is the standard response in Acts) will be saved from sins and ushered into a new life under King Jesus. A gospel culture then is a kingdom culture, a culture in which kingdom citizens live under the king, a king who utters his law for his people, and a king who both empowers us and sends from his throne the Spirit to empower us to live out kingdom realities as we await the second coming of the king. This means a "salvation" culture is part of a gospel culture, but it is only part. We have too often equated the part with the whole, and this explains in part why our churches have so many "believers" and so few "followers of Jesus."

It is my conclusion, after watching the rise of the "Neo-Reformed," a term I think I first used for the surging tide of Calvinism, and I now think "Neo-Puritan" might be even more accurate, that this movement and I are responding to and reacting to and seeking to correct the same problem: superficial theology in the evangelical church. I wrestle with these folks out of respect for what they are doing. They see the solution in a robust Reformation theology; I see the solution in a more adequate grasp of the New Testament's gospel. They see the New

Testament gospel in terms of a robust Reformation theology of justification; I see it in a robust New Testament Christology shaped by the narrative of the Bible. We disagree on how the solution is articulated at times, but we agree on the problem.

So I would say the "gospel-centered" stuff of the Neo-Puritan crowd is a ramped up and robust version of the Reformation understanding of justification, from double imputation and the sovereignty of God to an Augustinian anthropology. That theology is one of the most potent theologies the church has ever articulated. I am convinced a "gospel-centered" approach needs to be first a Christology of Jesus as King/Messiah and Lord who saves and then – but always then – the robust soteriology that flows from it.

STR: In your book, the Old Testament – or "The Story of Israel" – stands as a vital component in the gospel. Why is this so?

McKnight: Because the short articulation of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15 twice has "according to Scriptures" and any reading of 1 Cor. 15:3-28 finds one allusion after another to the Old Testament work of God with Israel; because the sermons in Acts, and I focus on Acts 2 and Acts 10—11, one to a Jewish audience and the other to a Gentile, are laced up with quotations to the Old Testament; because the first word of the gospel – That Jesus is Messiah/King – makes sense only if we know the Story of Israel coming to completion; because when Jesus announced the gospel of the kingdom he said it was about to arrive (Mark 1:15), and that arrival theme is the theme of Israel's Story coming to fulfillment; because when Jesus stood up to preach his first sermon, in Luke 4:16-30 the gravity hangs over one word, "Today": Jesus is announcing that a new chapter in God's Story was about to come into existence; because this theme of Israel's story coming to fulfillment in the Story of Jesus is the substructure of the whole New Testament. Without it the New Testament makes no sense; with it the riddles are resolved. The sad thing is that many Christians today don't need an Old Testament!

STR: You make much of the identity of Jesus as "King" central to the gospel (hence the title of the book!). Why is it necessary to recognize and embrace this identity of Jesus as central to the gospel message? Is it not enough to say, "Jesus is Savior?" Surely it is right to recognize that Jesus is the one who saves broken humanity from their sins!

McKnight: I do this because the New Testament focuses on Jesus as Messiah because the New Testament authors/figures saw Jesus in terms of Israel's Story, and without that Story there is no meaning-making of Jesus. Let's look at the texts: 1 Corinthians 15 never once calls Jesus "Savior." It calls him "Christ" (which means "King" – and I think every time the NT uses the word "Christ" we could translate it "the Messiah" and not

suggest it is his second name); it calls him "Son." The sermons in Acts? The clear focus comes into view at Acts 2:36: "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah/King." Now other terms do come up, but these two titles are the focus of the apostolic gospeling sermons in Acts.

Now for some balance, and I believe I had this balance in *King Jesus Gospel* though I'm not convinced all heard it aright. This King/Messiah and Lord enters into human history to rule *and to save* humans trapped in sins so they can enter into the King's kingdom. So salvation is the impact or benefit or the result of the gospel's news that the long-awaited King has arrived. Thus, 1 Corinthians 15 says he died "for our sins," and that is a saving expression. So salvation is part of it too, but it is not the whole. That is all I'm arguing: first Christology then soteriology. I'm not arguing and never have argued that it is either Christology or soteriology. To be sure, when I say first Christology some hear a disorienting of their doctrine of salvation, and I aim to do that in *King Jesus Gospel*, but the disorientation is for the sake of a reorientation. John Piper wrote a book on the gospel called *God is the Gospel*,[6] and all who read Piper know he is going to extol the glories of God. I am saying instead not that "Salvation is the gospel," which is what I think many think, but that "Christ, or God-in-Christ is the Gospel."

STR: How would you define "the gospel," if we take, say, 1 Corinthians 15 as a departure point (as you do in your book)?

McKnight: The gospel is the announcement that the Story of Israel and its anticipation for God to resume ruling in Israel has now come to fulfillment in the Story of Jesus, the Messiah and Lord who saves Israel from its sins.

STR: You distinguish the "plan of salvation" from the gospel. What do you mean by this?

McKnight: The plan of salvation, by which I mean not the plan of God in history but the plan for personal salvation, works out in evangelicalism like this: God created us, God loves us and God is holy; we are made in the image of God (interpreters explore this at length) but we sinned against God and are fallen and in need of redemption; God established a covenant redemption for his chosen people through Abraham but that message is fullest and clearest in the saving death of Jesus who died in our place; if we receive Christ by faith (few today demand repentance or baptism, in spite of what the New Testament clearly teaches), we can be

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[6] John Piper, *God is the Gospel: Meditations on God's Love as the Gift of Himself* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005).

saved now, assured of our eternal salvation now and can know that when we die we will spend eternity with God in heaven.

The gospel, as I said in the previous question, is the good news that Jesus has come to fulfill the promises of Israel's Story, one of which promises that he will save us from our sins. So that plan for personal salvation, while it needs to be nuanced in a number of areas, is an explication of the last element of the gospel I just articulated, and the notable thing is that it ignores and omits so much else. I'm for expanding the gospel to biblical proportions and opposed to reducing it to a game of sin management.

STR: So in your view, "Jesus in my place" is not a sufficient definition for the gospel?

McKnight: Well, Yes and No. Those three words can be explained in a number of ways. But "Jesus in *my* place" focuses (should I say "reduces"?) the gospel to its saving benefits for me personally. Something I believe. This is a sentence that expresses the mechanism of salvation as substitutionary sacrifice, and probably for most (including me) "penal substitution." But where 1 Corinthians 15 tells us about four and more events in the life of Jesus, this formula tells me only about his death. I want it all: I want our gospel to tell the whole Story of Jesus so we can hear the fullness of the gospel, including his substitutionary death.

STR: You make much of Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God as it relates to the gospel. What is the relationship between the "gospel" and the "kingdom of God?"

McKnight: I hope I make "much" because Jesus did. Our expression "kingdom of God" is so up-for-grabs today and I hear so many feeble and superficial definitions. The first word that should come to mind when "kingdom" falls from the lips of Jesus is "David." That's the focal point of kingdom in the Old Testament. Then other ideas grab onto kingdom as it descends from Jesus to us: a King (God rules in and through Jesus); citizens in the kingdom (the church); law/Torah (the teachings of Jesus and life in the Spirit as eschatological fulfillments, and not abolitions, of the Old Testament ethical teachings); land (tough one but I think land promises are fulfilled in church as a universal location but I don't dismiss the importance of Israel to an apostle like Paul or that God's kingdom is a New Jerusalem); and redemptive power at work (Jesus' teachings show that kingdom is a power unleashed).

So to define: the kingdom of God is the newly arrived society in which Jesus rules as king over kingdom citizens who, by the power of God's redemptive grace, live out the king's law for his kingdom society.

That was Jesus' gospel, and if you stare at it you will see that it focuses on Israel's Story coming to fulfillment in Jesus' Story, so that it is

Christological through and through, and that Christology includes a King/Messiah who saves people from their sins.

STR: A question emerges as a result of reading your book: What is the difference between the Bible, the gospel, and the plan of salvation? Is the whole Bible the gospel? Where does the plan of salvation fit in?

McKnight: The Bible is the Book that contains the Story of God's ways with his people, Israel-kingdom-church. The gospel is the good news that the promises of Israel's Story have come to fulfillment in Jesus. The plan of salvation, and by that I mean, the plan for personal salvation, is one way Christians have sought to arrange the doctrine of salvation so that it is easily understood and compelling. The whole Bible is not the gospel since the gospel is the Story of Jesus fulfilling the Story of Israel, but once one grasps the gospel one sees how the Bible is to be read.

STR: You provide a broad historical overview of what you see to be the move from a "gospel culture" to a "salvation culture." Do you suggest that the Reformation is to blame for this shift?

McKnight: I've done more work on this element of the book and knew when I wrote it there was much more to be said, but my editor thought I was already dabbling in wandering from the articulation of the apostolic gospel. So, I point at the Reformation as the time when the gospel as "Story of Israel coming to completion in the Story of Jesus" was rearranged into a more robust "theory of salvation." In Luther's Augsburg Confession and Calvin's and Farel's Geneva Confession we see Christian theology/truth articulated through the categories of salvation. But the Reformers – and I do my best to emphasize this in the book – did not create the problem. They laid out a theology that revivalism later reduced into a more superficial and snappy form that created our shallow perception of the gospel. So when the Neo-Puritans of our generation go back to the Reformers they will not be going back to some superficial theory of the gospel; they will go back to a robust perception of the doctrine of salvation.

STR: Your last major chapter was quite practical. It included your thoughts on evangelizing a lost world and creating a gospel culture. What challenges do you see on the horizon for implementing evangelism as you define it and creating a gospel culture?

McKnight: I see a wide cry for a more robust approach to evangelism. Above I said the Neo-Puritan movement is responding to superficiality among American evangelicals, and I join another chorus of theologians who is responding to the same. But it will take some serious wrestling with the wider evangelical movement before this gospel reshaping can

take hold – and by "this gospel" I don't mean just the proposal I have given but also the more robust gospel of the Neo-Puritans – because this new era of a robust gospel will challenge the salvation of many who have been sitting comfortably in pews for years, giving money for years, but whose life mocks the rule of King Jesus.

We need to get away from the idea that we have to find a simple formula that can be used with everyone and anyone, everywhere and anywhere. There is no warrant for formulaic gospeling in the pages of the Gospels about Jesus or in the sermons in Acts. We've a story to tell, and the place to begin – contrary to what some think – is with Jesus. We need to tell people about Jesus and Jesus will only make sense in the context of Israel's Story and his being Messiah/King and Lord and Savior and Son and Healer and coming King.

The urgent need is for us to find ways to get people to think about who Jesus is. The central question of evangelism is "Who do you think Jesus is?" and that follow-up is "What does answer mean for you?"

STR: STR appreciates that you have a pastor's heart. What fruit have you seen develop in local churches out of your call to the gospel as you define it?

McKnight: One church after another has invited me to speak and teach about the gospel. Because I speak in many places and to different audiences I have developed a common outline that I can use a variety of settings, and that common outline is rooted in Peter's sermon in Acts 10.

Perhaps the most amazing element of this ministry has been the number who approach me after the sermon and say, "You put into words what I have believed and been thinking for a long time." Pastor after pastor has written to me and called me and spoken to me about their yearning for a better and more theologically shaped understanding of the gospel. Let me again say that the same is happening with the Neo-Puritan movement; many are responding to the yearning for a deeper theology at work when we articulate the gospel.

I'm grateful to God for these days.

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

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The Gospel Crisis and American Evangelicals

Harry Lee Poe
Union University

Introduction

For almost two thousand years, Christians everywhere agreed about the content of the gospel message. The great rift between the Eastern Church and the Western Church occurred when the West dared to alter the Apostles' Creed without consulting the churches of the East. Catholics and Protestants disagreed over many things, but not the content of the gospel. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, American pragmatism began to take hold of Evangelicals who identified only five fundamentals of the faith. By the end of the twentieth century, Evangelicals had reduced the gospel to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This essay will explore how the gospel has been understood in the Christian tradition and then how it has been truncated in the twentieth century. I suggest that a "full" gospel, in accordance with Scripture and in continuity with orthodox Christian doctrine, needs to be recovered in the twenty-first century and beyond.

Scripture and Christian Tradition on the Gospel: A Brief Survey

The gospel is the good news of Jesus, the good news of who God is, what God has done to save us, and what difference it makes (Rom 1:1-4, 16; 1 Cor. 1:21b). The gospel reveals the righteousness of God (Rom. 1:17). By faith in Jesus as revealed in the message of the gospel, people are saved by God (Gal.3:2). The gospel is the message we believe about Jesus by which we are saved (1 Cor. 15:1-2). Though the New Testament does not present a systematic exposition of the message of the gospel, the same basic faith affirmations appear in paragraph after paragraph of the apostolic teaching:

> There is only one God, the Creator.
>
> God spoke to past generations and we know his word is true because his promises have been fulfilled.
>
> Jesus is both Lord and Christ, God and man.
>
> Jesus died for our sins.
>
> Jesus rose from the dead.
>
> Jesus is exalted as God.
>
> The Holy Spirit of God takes possession of each believer.
>
> Jesus will come again to judge the world.

While it will be explored further below, at this point it is worth noting that during the twentieth century it was not unusual to see a confusion of the gospel message with some other aspect of the Christian religion.

In addition to the message of the gospel, the Christian religion is concerned with the mission of the church, the method of evangelism, the medium of ministry, and the messengers. By confusing these critical elements of the *whole* of what it means to follow Christ, such statements as "my life is my witness" became a common phrase to account for the neglect of a verbal witness to Christ. In the "social gospel" controversy, the medium of ministry seen in caring for the needy was confused with the message of the gospel. While "liberals" came out of the controversy inclined to neglect the message, "conservatives" came out of the controversy inclined to neglect the medium of ministry. While the messenger, the medium, the method, and the mission are all essential, they tend to focus on the active working out of faith in the one revealed by the message. In the New Testament, the gospel reveals Jesus. At the end of his gospel account, John suggested that a great deal more could be said about Jesus, but the gospel tells us the essentials of who he is from before creation until his second coming so that we may believe and be saved (John 20:30-31). Some people confuse the mission of extending the kingdom of God with the message of Jesus. But the good news of the kingdom is not about the kingdom; it is about the King.

When we choose to focus on only one affirmation about Jesus, we do damage to the revelation of who Jesus is. Evangelical pastors and theologians regularly speak of 1 Cor. 15:3-4 as "the gospel in a nutshell" because it explains that the gospel is just focused on the death and resurrection of Jesus. This common late twentieth century tradition illustrates the crisis in biblical hermeneutics among conservative believers who have exchanged the historic gospel for a succinct sound bite that can be affirmed by Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. Carl F. H. Henry reminded us that our modern attention to the death and resurrection of Jesus in 1 Cor. 15:3-4 ignores the stress Paul gives in that passage to the fulfillment of the scriptures as part of the gospel.[1] By adopting a hermeneutic that bases our understanding of the gospel on one passage of scripture, we lay a foundation for heresy in coming generations by ignoring what else the New Testament says about the content of the gospel.

Whenever Paul gave a teaching on doctrine, ethics, worship, or any other matter that concerned Christ's church, he began by anchoring his teaching in the gospel. Paul's letters are not evangelistic in nature. They are teachings for people who already know and believe the gospel. Thus, he declares that the last judgment at the Second Coming is part of the gospel (Rom. 1:16). He explains that the humanity of Jesus as the descendent of King David is part of the gospel (2 Tim. 2:8). When the Colossians flirted with a "low Christolo-

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[1] Carl. F. H. Henry, "Who Are the Evangelicals?" in *Evangelical Affirmations* (ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Carl F. H. Henry; Grand Rapids, MI: Acadamie, 1990), p. 77.

gy," Paul explained to them that the gospel includes the deity of Christ, his activity as Creator, and his current position as exalted Lord (Col. 1:3-23). In all of these passages, Paul specifically states that these affirmations about Jesus Christ are part of the gospel. Sometimes he mentions the death of Christ, but sometimes he does not. The point is that nowhere in his letters does Paul lay out the gospel in a systematic fashion. Instead he addresses issues based on the gospel.

While the "gospel in a nutshell" form of reductionism has appealed to mainline evangelicals and the revivalist tradition, the Calvinist reductionist approach to a gospel slogan is seen in the popular simplification of Abraham Kuyper's "Creation, Fall, Redemption" approach. As Kuyper used the outline, it formed a theological framework for explaining the salvation story in a culture thoroughly saturated with a knowledge about Jesus. A century later, however, the absence of specific reference to Jesus Christ makes the outline less helpful in a world in which we can no longer assume a knowledge of Jesus. Whereas the more experiential revivalist "gospel in a nutshell" brings Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses into the fold of Christianity, Kuyper's approach allows Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists in addition to the cults that broke away from Christian orthodoxy, because "Creation [in some form], Fall [in some form], Redemption [in some form]" is the basic outline of all religions. Few committed Christians set out to start a new heresy or encourage apostasy. Those evangelicals who have adopted these formulas of the gospel would normally be orthodox in their faith, but these approaches assume that others share the unspoken foundational matters of the faith. The death of Jesus has no saving significance if he is not fully God and fully man.

In the development of the New Testament, the gospel of Jesus provided the "canon" or measuring stick for determining if a writing represented the apostolic teaching. All of the New Testament documents explore the meaning of the gospel and its implications in some way. In later centuries, the gospel provided the outline for normative Christian theology. Though the gospel forms the foundation for all New Testament books, the apostles never codified the gospel into a formula. By the second century, however, the leading Christian theologians had begun to present the gospel in a systematic fashion based on the teaching of the New Testament. Eventually, these systematic statements of the gospel faith would be formalized as the creeds. In *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus (c. 142 – c. 200) elaborated the gospel as the standard for the faith of Christians everywhere:

> The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: [She believes] in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh

> of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His [future] manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father "to gather all things in one," and to raise anew all flesh of the whole human race, in order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, "every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess" to Him, and that He should execute just judgment towards all. . .[2]

Ireneaus goes on to add that it does not matter what language people speak or what their geographical location may be, whether in Germany, Spain, Gaul, Egypt, or Libya, Christians everywhere hold the same faith.

Tertullian (c. 150 – c. 225) championed the same faith in *Prescription Against Heretics* when he argued:

> Now, with regard to this rule of faith—that we may from this point acknowledge what it is we defend—it is, you must know, that which prescribes the belief that there is only one God, and that He is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced all things out of nothing through His own Word, first of all sent forth; that this Word is called His Son, *and*, under the name of God, was seen "in divers manners" by the patriarchs, heard at all times by the prophets, at last brought down by the Spirit and Power of the Father into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, and, being born of her, went forth as Jesus Christ; thenceforth He preached the new law and the promise of the kingdom of heaven, worked miracles; having been crucified, He rose again the third day; (then) having ascended into the heavens, He sat at the right hand of the Father; sent instead of Himself the Power of the Holy Ghost to lead such as believe; will come with glory to take the saints to the enjoyment of everlasting life and of the heavenly promises, and to condemn the wicked to everlasting fire, after the resurrection of both these classes shall have happened, together with the restoration of their flesh. This rule, as it will be proved, was taught by Christ, and raises amongst ourselves no other questions than those which heresies introduce, and which make men heretics.[3]

Tertullian gave a more succinct version of "the rule of faith" in his treatise, *On the Veiling of Virgins*:

> The rule of faith, indeed, is altogether one, alone immoveable and irreformable; the rule, to wit, of believing in one only God omnipotent, the Creator of the universe, and His Son Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised again the third day from the dead, received in the heavens, sitting now at the right (hand) of the Father,

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[2] Ireneaus, *Against Heresies*, I. x. 1. Ante-Nicean Fathers, 1: p. 330.

[3] Tertullian, *On Prescription Against Heretics*, XIII. Ante-Nicean Fathers, 3: p. 249.

> destined to come to judge quick and dead through the resurrection of the flesh as well (as of the spirit).[4]

Origen (c. 182 - c. 251), a teacher in Alexandria, differed from Tertullian on matters of interpretation of scripture and the value of philosophy, but they agreed on the gospel. Origen presented his summary of the gospel in *De Principiis*:

> 4. The particular points clearly delivered in the teaching of the apostles are as follows:
>
> *First*, That there is one God, who created and arranged all things, and who, when nothing existed, called all things into being . . . and that this God in the last days, as He had announced beforehand by His prophets, sent our Lord Jesus Christ to call in the first place Israel to Himself, and in the second place the Gentiles, after the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel. This just and good God, the Father our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself gave the law, and the prophets, and the Gospels, being also the God of the apostles and of the Old and New Testaments.
>
> *Secondly*, That Jesus Christ Himself, who came (into the world), was born of the Father before all creatures; that, after He had been servant of the Father in the creation of all things—"For by Him were all things made"—He in the last times, divesting Himself (of His glory), became a man, and was incarnate although God, and while made a man remained God which He was; that He assumed a body like to our own, differing in this respect only, that it was born of a virgin and of the Holy Spirit: that this Jesus Christ was truly born, and did truly suffer, and did not endure this death common (to man) in appearance only, but did truly die; that he did truly rise from the dead; and that after His resurrection He conversed with His disciples, and was taken up (into heaven).
>
> Then, *Thirdly*, the apostles related that the Holy Spirit was associated in honour and dignity with the Father and the Son […] And that this Spirit inspired each one of the saints, whether prophets or apostles; and that there was not one Spirit in the men of the old dispensation, and another in those who were inspired at the advent of Christ, is most clearly taught throughout the Churches.
>
> 5. After these points, also, the apostolic teaching is that the soul, having a substance and life of its own, shall, after its departure from the world, be rewarded according to its deserts, being destined to obtain either an inheritance of eternal life and blessedness, if its actions shall have procured this for it, or to be delivered up to eternal fire and punishments, if the guilt of its crimes shall have brought it down to this: and also that there is to be a time of resurrection from the dead, when this body, which now "is sown

[4] Tertullian, *On the Veiling of Virgins*.

> in corruption, shall rise in incorruption," and that which "is sown in dishonour will rise in glory."[5]

Hippolytus (c. 170 – 235) described the profession of faith proclaimed by new Christians at their baptism which declared their faith:

> And when he who is being baptized goes down into the water, let him who baptizes lay his hand on him saying thus, "Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty?" And he who is being baptized shall say, "I believe." Then, holding his hand placed upon his head, he shall baptize him once. And then he shall say, "Dost thou believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was born by the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and died, and rose again on the third day living from the dead, and ascended into the heavens, and sat down on the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead?" And when he says "I believe," he is baptized again. And again he shall say, "Dost thou believe in the Holy Spirit, in the holy Church, and the resurrection of the flesh?" And he who is being baptized shall say, "I believe." And so he is baptized the third time.[6]

When the persecution of the church by the Roman Empire ended under the rule of Constantine (d. 337), the churches entered a new period of organization and development under the patronage of the emperor. As a legal religion and then the state religion of the empire, the church adopted a series of official statements of faith or what all Christians believe when they believe the gospel. The briefest of these is the Apostles' Creed. Though it was adopted later than the Nicene Creed, it reflects the language of the New Testament articulation of the gospel as well as the earlier definitions of the gospel by the Church Fathers:

> I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:
>
> and in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
>
> was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell;
>
> the third day He rose again from the dead;
>
> He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
>
> from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
>
> I believe in the Holy Ghost,
>
> the holy catholic church; the communion of saints;
>
> the forgiveness of sins;

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[5] Origen, "Preface," in *De Principiis*, The Writings of Origen, Volume 1 (trans. F. Crombie; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1869), pp. 3-4.

[6] J. G. Davies, *The Early Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1965), p. 147, citing *Apostolic Tradition*, p. xxi; pp. 12-18.

the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Nicean Creed and the Chalcedonian Creed clarify and expound upon the simple affirmations of the gospel as reflected in the Apostles' Creed. Now expressed as a formula, the gospel remained normative for all Christians throughout the period from the close of the classical era to the emergence of the modern era.

The Protestant Reformation and the birth of modern science arose simultaneously and inter-relatedly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Most Protestant groups retained the creeds and their common understanding of the gospel. Catholics and Protestants agreed about the articles of faith, but they disagreed over the basis upon which salvation was bestowed. The radical reformation, on the other hand, wanted nothing of "human invention" in worship. Written prayers, ceremonies, and human statements of faith were equally obnoxious to groups like the Baptists. While objecting to the recitation of the Creeds as a part of worship, the Baptists still affirmed the content of the Creeds in their theology and evangelism. In his first book, John Bunyan addressed the heretical teachings common at that time to the Quakers. The long title of the book reflects the Baptist agreement with all other Christians about the faith of the gospel:

> Some Gospel Truths Opened, According to the Scriptures; Or, The Divine and Human Nature of Christ Jesus; His Coming into the World; His Righteousness, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, Intercession, And Second Coming to Judgment, Plainly Demonstrated and Proved. And also, Answers to several Questions, with profitable Directions to stand fast in the Doctrine of Jesus the Son of MARY, against those blustering Storms of the Devil's Temptations, which do at this Day, like so many Scorpions, break loose from the bottomless Pit, to bite and torment those that have not tasted the Vertue of Jesus, by the Revelation of the Spirit of God (1656).[7]

The Gospel in the Twentieth Century

The twentieth century began with great expectations for the evangelization of the world. The Student Mission Movement swept up a generation of young Christians in a passionate desire to spread the gospel. In 1905, a broad spiritual awakening broke out in Wales that had a profound impact on Protestant Christianity far beyond the boundaries of the principality. The next year the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles sparked the beginning of the Pentecostal Movement with its emphasis on speaking in tongues and other ecstatic experiences. Wilbur Chapman, the gifted Presbyterian pastor, continued the mass urban evangelistic meetings made popular by Dwight Moody.

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[7] John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan*, Volume 2 (ed. George Offer; Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1850), p. 129.

Dispensational theology gained wide acceptance across the mainline denominations through the influence of the summer Bible conferences that Protestant Christians attended in huge numbers. Evangelical concern over social ills such as slavery and alcohol consumption in the nineteenth century broadened to include a general concern for the social ills that plagued the teaming urban centers of America. Walter Rauschenbusch's "social gospel" embodied this emphasis upon the physical conditions of people as a reflection of the earthly ministry of Jesus. All the while, the Christian colleges and universities continued to educate far more people than the small state universities across the country. With the large waves of Catholic immigration to the United States at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, Protestants took note of a renewed assertiveness from the papacy that included pronouncements about the Immaculate Conception of Mary and marriage between Catholics and Protestants.

In the face of the growing threat of the German critical assumptions about the Bible, a group of leading Protestant theologians produced a series of tracts known as "The Fundamentals." This twelve-volume work included essays by sixty-four British and American Protestant theologians. It spoke to a broad spectrum of theological issues and doctrines. Perhaps a more important document that shaped the twentieth century consciousness of the gospel, however, came from the Northern Presbyterians. In 1910, the General Assembly of the Northern Presbyterian Church endorsed five points of doctrine as the fundamentals of the faith:

> The inerrancy of the Bible
>
> The virgin birth of Jesus
>
> The penal substitutionary death of Jesus
>
> The bodily resurrection of Jesus
>
> The authenticity of the miracles of the Bible

Other groups began to use this list with revisions of their own that sometimes dropped the miracles for a separate statement about the deity of Christ or about his imminent return. Conspicuously absent from the list is any reference to God as Creator, to the Holy Spirit as God with the Father and Son, or the present exalted position of the Son.

Wilbur Chapman reflected this condensing of the gospel in his gospel song, "One Day." The song refers to the virgin birth, the penal substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection, and the imminent return. To these he adds the exaltation of Jesus as Lord, but he omits any reference to the Bible or other miracles. In harmony with the General Assembly's enumeration of the five fundamentals of the faith, Chapman omits any reference to God as Creator or to the Holy Spirit. Whether through intentional omission, neglect, or the assumption that everyone knows about the Creator and the Holy Spirit, Chapman represents a trend in the public communication of the gospel in the twentieth century that gave heightened emphasis to a few essentials of the faith at the expense of other aspects of the faith. What began as an attempt to

combat disbelief in the miraculous would eventually result in a popular evangelical gospel that comprised only the reference to the death and resurrection of Christ.

A variety of factors may have contributed to this trend. To a great extent, conservative Christians demonstrated that they were as much a part of the secular culture as the most ardent atheism. Reductionism had become a common feature of the Western worldview by the early twentieth century, and evangelical Christians embraced reductionism as fervently as adherents to materialism and naturalism. As the century progressed, evangelicals tended to reduce salvation to the penal substitutionary theory of the atonement, and evangelism tended to take the form of a lecture on how it worked. This reductionism marked a major shift from the theology of the reformers who understand the penal dimension of substitution as only one aspect of the vast accomplishment of Christ on the cross. Reducing salvation to one aspect of the atonement, however, completely eliminated the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation. While this reduction attends to issues of forgiveness and justification, it ignores issues of regeneration and eternal life and so many more.

While the influence of reductionism played its role, pragmatism became a guiding principle of church and denominational life as the century progressed. Southern Baptists organized their Sunday School program along the lines of a business model known as "Flake's Formula." The denomination streamlined its structure in the form of a great franchising pyramid scheme that proved highly successful, and as all pragmatists know, "You can't argue with success."

Redefining the Gospel

C. H. Dodd recognized the general confusion over the message of the gospel when he published *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* in 1936. He set off a firestorm of debate over the content of the gospel message as he explored whether the apostles had a common formula for the gospel message. In light of his Anglican, Enlightenment assumptions about what he would find, Dodd declared in his opening salvo that the apostles drew a sharp distinction between "preaching" or what we might call evangelism, and "teaching" or what we might call discipleship. He also declares that a sharp distinction should be drawn between Paul's gospel and any gospel that might be common to other early preachers. Preferring the term *kerygma* to the common English term *gospel*, Dodd uses his discussion as a tool to advance his own ideas about realized eschatology.

It is not within the scope of this essay to critique the problems with Dodd's methodology and the extent of his assumptions which forced his conclusions. Rather, the case of Dodd demonstrates the extent to which a common understanding of the gospel as preserved by the church had col-

lapsed by the middle of the third decade of the twentieth century.[8] The Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy in the Presbyterian Church that spilled over across denominational boundaries in the United States managed to create dichotomies in the understanding of Christians about the gospel and its implications. The rift between the social gospel and the spiritual gospel illustrates the reductionist triumph over the historic faith as each side in the controversy rejected the legitimacy of their opponents' concerns. Liberals discounted the need for salvation while conservatives dismissed the need to care for the physical needs of people.

The Age of the Gospel Formula

During the spiritual awakening of 1948-1963, a Hollywood candy salesman named Bill Bright incorporated a sales model when he produced a method of evangelism known as "The Four Spiritual Laws." "The Four Spiritual Laws" is a witnessing booklet that moves the presenter toward "closing the sale." A theological Calvinist, Bright designed his tract with the pragmatic objective to minimize questions and interruptions from the person to whom the booklet is presented as the presenter reads the booklet aloud. The training program for using the booklet includes tips on how to put off questions and comments that might disrupt the flow of the presentation.

James Kennedy, pastor of the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, wed Bright's sales model to the catechetical method of the Reformed tradition when he created Evangelism Explosion in the 1960s. Evangelism Explosion uses a memorized model presentation and a training program that demonstrates how to use the model presentation in actual visits. Evangelism Explosion represents an explanation of how the penal substitution works. It includes two aspects of the gospel: (1) that Jesus Christ is fully human and fully God and (2) that Jesus died for our sins. In the extended version of the presentation, provision is made to state that Jesus is the Creator and "that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that the Trinity is one God."[9] The extended version also makes reference to the resurrection and to Christ as Lord, Master, and King. It refers to him as coming into a life and sitting on the throne in the throne room of a life, but this explanation leaves out the work of the Holy Spirit who actually occupies and transforms a person.[10] The presentation explains that the death of Jesus on the cross was "the great transaction" whereby Jesus paid God for our sin and "purchased Heaven for us."[11] The issue of forgiveness of sin does not arise in the presentation. The presentation discusses going to heaven, but it does not mention regeneration.

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[8] I have dealt with the debate that Dodd initiated in the first chapter of Harry Lee Poe, *The Gospel and Its Meaning* (Grand Rapids, IL: Zondervan, 1996).

[9] D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977), p. 34.

[10] Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, p. 42.

[11] Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*, p. 34.

The Evangelism Section of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention negotiated for the rights to adapt Evangelism Explosion to their context, but when negotiations broke down, the Southern Baptists produced a modified version of Evangelism Explosion that they called Continuing Witness Training (CWT). The model presentation outline is essentially the same as that of Evangelism Explosion, but some different examples are employed. Nonetheless, Howard Ramsey, the director of the Personal Evangelism Department and the man responsible for the development of Continuous Witness Training, always insisted that CWT was not in any way dependent on Evangelism Explosion. This model presentation makes use of three elements of the gospel: (1) that Christ is fully human and fully God, (2) that he died for our sins, and (3) that he rose from the dead. The presentation follows "The Four Spiritual Laws" and Evangelism Explosion in its insistence that faith involves "Surrendering to Jesus as Lord." Like the other presentations, however, it fails to mention the exaltation of Christ and the meaning of the statement "Jesus is Lord." When challenged about why the presentation makes no mention of the Holy Spirit and regeneration, Howard Ramsey replied, "We didn't want to confuse people with the Holy Spirit."[12]

The response of Ramsey may represent a general trend in evangelical attitude toward the Christian faith. The trends toward reductionism and pragmatism compliment a desire to make things as simple as possible. The communication style popularized by seventy years of radio and television commercials has trained Americans to process information in small, digestible bites. The process of simplification discards what may require extra time to explain and even more time to understand.

All three of these highly influential plans for evangelism share a common basic outline that concerns (1) God's plan and purpose, (2) human spiritual need, (3) the work of Christ to achieve salvation, and (4) human response to Christ. Greg Gilbert continues this tradition in his recent book *What is the Gospel?* (2010). This basic outline had formed the outline for John Stott's influential book *Basic Christianity* published in 1958 and running through sixteen re-printings before the revised edition came out in 1971. Stott describes sin in terms of the failure to meet a moral code, to fall short of the good, to transgress the law or violate justice. He speaks of sin in legal terms as a violation of God's law rather than as a violation of the relationship with God. He cites the Ten Commandments as the standard.[13] In terms of its breadth, however, Stott makes clear that sin involves alienation from God, bondage to self, and conflict with others. Rather than simply a legal problem, Stott argues that "sin is an inward corruption of human nature."[14] Having

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[12] Personal conversation between Howard Ramsey and Harry Lee Poe in July 1986 at Glorietta Baptist Assembly, New Mexico.

[13] John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971), pp. 64-5.

[14] Stott, *Basic Christianity*, p. 76.

recognized that sin is multi-dimensional, Stott explained that salvation is also multi-dimensional.

Following the imagery of C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*, Stott describes Christianity as a "rescue mission." In describing the rescue, Stott piles up the dimensions of salvation. The work of Christ involves liberation from sin as well as reconciliation. Stott stresses that reconciliation and atonement are the same concept. In his discussion of the cross, however, Stott divides the unity of the Trinity. Stott insists that Jesus was separated from God when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He says:

> He was bearing our sins. And God who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil" and cannot "look on wrong" turned away his face. The Lord Jesus Christ who was eternally with the Father, who enjoyed unbroken communion with him throughout his life on earth, was thus momentarily abandoned.[15]

Stott justifies his teaching that God turned his face from Jesus on the basis of his reading of Hab. 1:13. The problem with this interpretation of Habakkuk, of course, is that God can and does look on evil all the time. If God did not look on evil, then he has not seen anything on earth since Adam and Eve. Habakkuk is questioning God in the verse that Stott quotes. Nothing escapes God's notice. Rather than God not being able to look on sin, it is sinful man that cannot look upon God, as God explained to Moses (Exod. 33:18-20). On the contrary, when the Son took on human sin, for the first time in eternity he could not behold the Father. Sin formed a barrier, but not because the Father had abandoned the Son. It is a very weak view of the Trinity that would allow us even to consider that one person of the Trinity could abandon another person of the Trinity. They are one. For a *true* abandonment to occur, they would have to be many.

Evangelism in the twentieth century insisted upon the deity of Christ, but not upon the unity and oneness of the Trinity. Stott continually insisted that Jesus was not "a third party wresting salvation for us from a God unwilling to save," but he also admitted that he could not explain "*how* he can have been in Christ while he made Christ to be sin for us."[16] The trouble occurs because at root, Stott presents the death of Christ as a great transaction between the Father and the Son, the way Kennedy and Evangelism Explosion do.

By stressing the penal aspect of substitutionary atonement to the neglect of other aspects of the substitutionary atonement, and by describing the atonement in terms of a transaction, evangelism in the United States over the last fifty years has eroded the gospel faith and reduced it to a kernel that Jehovah's Witnesses might comfortably affirm. The transactional interpretation that separates the Father and the Son and leaves no place for the Holy Spirit

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[15] Stott, *Basic Christianity*, p. 93. Stott quotes from Hab. 1:13.

[16] Stott, *Basic Christianity*, p. 94.

results in an American church that has abandoned the Trinitarian faith of the New Testament as it conceives of salvation as strictly a matter of legal standing with God and a contractual right to accommodations in Heaven.

A Theological Trend

This problem relates to the general abandonment of the gospel as the heart of the Christian faith in America over the last fifty years. Millard Erickson, whose theological method reflects a long- standing evangelical tradition, addressed the question of the gospel message in his *Christian Theology*:

> "The essential points of the gospel are Jesus Christ's status as the Son of God, his genuine humanity, his death for our sins, his burial, resurrection subsequent appearances, and future coming in judgment."[17]

In contrast to Erickson's exposition of the New Testament to understand the gospel message, Wayne Grudem represents a new evangelical tradition spawned in the second half of the twentieth century. The preaching of the gospel involves three elements: an explanation of the facts concerning salvation, an invitation to respond to Christ personally in repentance and faith, and a promise of forgiveness and eternal life. As for the facts concerning salvation, Grudem reduces them to three:

1. All people have sinned (Rom. 3:23).
2. The penalty for our sin is death (Rom. 6:23).
3. Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins (Rom. 5:8).[18]

In keeping with the late twentieth-century evangelism tradition, Grudem reduces salvation to the legal issues related to sin. The problem of sin is seen as a legal issue rather than an ontological issue that strikes at the heart of human nature in contrast to the divine nature.

This modern trend can be seen in Grudem's view of justification. Grudem speaks of justification, not in terms of a right relationship with God, but in terms of a right relationship to God's laws. Thus he regards justification as a *legal declaration* rather than as a matter of actually making someone just or rightly related to God.[19] Grudem defines justification as "*an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sin as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight.*"[20]

Grudem's reductionist hermeneutic represents the trend in neo-Calvinism to depart from the earlier Calvinist tradition. The idea of not including the Holy Spirit and regeneration in an understanding of the gospel would have been abhorrent to those in the mainstream of the Calvinist tradition until the twentieth-century. Perhaps the greatest expositor of Calvinist

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[17] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991), p. 1063.
[18] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), p. 694.
[19] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 722.
[20] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 723.

doctrine in the twentieth-century was Martin Lloyd-Jones. Instead of speaking of the gospel, Lloyd-Jones had a preference for speaking of "the great doctrines" as the object of faith. Nonetheless, he identified what he regarded as the essential doctrines one must believe to be identified as regenerate. These essentials included belief in (1) a "holy, righteous God who is Judge of the universe," (2) that people are sinful and must be saved from "the guilt of sin in the presence of this holy God," (3) the person and work of Christ: "the priestly work, the mediatorial work, the atonement," (4) and some aspects of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.[21] One should note that until the twentieth century, the three-fold office of Christ as prophet, priest, and king was understood by Calvinists as an essential aspect of the gospel. These offices refer to the incarnation of God in Christ as prophet, the death of Christ and his exaltation as priest, and his glorious exalted reign culminating in the Second Coming as king. Salvation depends upon the totality of Christ, but more so, the totality of the Trinitarian God who saves. Thus, the gospel of historic Calvinism emphasized God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, as the Christian faith has historically affirmed for centuries through the creeds.

In contrast to Grudem, who reflects the more recent trends of American theology, J. I. Packer represents the historic stream that insists that the gospel message present Christ in his fullness. In *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, Packer insisted that the message of salvation cannot be reduced simply to a brief slogan. His lengthy exposition of the gospel arises from his concern about a general confusion in the evangelical world in 1961 related to evangelism. Packer declared, "The root of the confusion can be stated in a sentence. It is our widespread and persistent habit of defining evangelism in terms, not of a message delivered, but of an effect produced in our hearers."[22]

The Pressure toward Simplification

Other pressures add to the desirability of simplification. Evangelicals faced a variety of controversies during the twentieth century, and each controversy provided an opportunity to omit something that might confuse people. When the Pentecostal Movement exploded on the scene following the Azusa Street Revival of 1906 and when the Charismatic Movement burst forth in the 1960s, the Holy Spirit became a controversial topic in many evangelical churches. It was simply easier not to confuse people with the Holy Spirit. Debates over the millennial reign of Christ, the rapture of the church, and the date of Christ's return make it simpler not to talk about the Second Coming. The confusion of the Lordship of Christ with "works salvation" makes it simpler not to talk about the Exaltation of Christ. The combi-

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[21] Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Great Doctrines of the Bible,* Vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), pp. 150-51.

[22] J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1978.), p. 37.

nation of Process Theology and a Catholic resurgence of Thomist theology that placed emphasis on creation, plus the added weight of Karl Barth's denunciation of natural theology and theological reference to creation, made reference to God as Creator suspect. With the emphasis on the environment and the re-emergence of the veneration of the earth as deity at the end of the century, God as Creator lost a place in the evangelical vocabulary. It was simpler not to talk about it with all the debate about science and religion. Even the place of Scripture had no place in the evangelical understanding of the gospel by the end of the twentieth-century. As a result, a good evangelical could present a sound theology of inspiration but could not explain why the Bible is different and unique among all the holy books of the world and why it has authority in guiding a person to salvation. It was simpler not to explain such things.

The twentieth-century witnessed the amazing disconnect among evangelicals between faith and doctrine, the gospel, and systematic theology. Christian doctrine is nothing more than the explanation of what the gospel means. Systematic theology is nothing more than the exposition of the gospel. Modern evangelism collapsed in the United States when Christians no longer recognized the good news of the faith. They no longer had anything to talk about. Witness training plans and evangelistic methods provided a crutch to help Christians limp through something to say. All evangelism programs are a sign of failure by the entire church, but especially its teachers for whom the gospel no longer has an immediate connection to life. From the powerful advance of the gospel in other parts of the world, we know that the message of Jesus has not lost its power. The steady decline of the evangelical church in America, following in the footsteps of the mainline Protestant churches, is a testimony to the neglect of the gospel by pastors, professors, and denominational leaders. It is a terrifying situation in light of the introduction to the first book written in the New Testament, Paul's letter to the Galatians:

> But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! (Gal. 1:8-9).

Conclusion

At the end of the twentieth-century, George Barna confidently predicted that evangelical Christians would dominate American culture for the foreseeable future. After little more than a decade, evangelical Christianity lies in a shambles. Churches, denominations, institutions, and para-church ministries struggle. Ayn Rand seems to have replaced Jesus as the face of religious political conservatism. Many evangelical leaders have condemned the "Emerging

Church" for abandoning cardinal Christian doctrines, but they fail to recognize that young evangelicals have been taught that doctrine is optional and non-binding. If the gospel is that Jesus died for our sins, without much awareness of what difference the resurrection makes, then anything else is simply what people have added.

In the face of the collapse of Christianity in the United States while it flourishes in other parts of the world, often in the face of persecution, a number of people have begun to question if we have lost the core of the gospel. Darrell Bock made an effort at regaining the gospel in *Recovering the Real Lost Gospel: Reclaiming the Gospel as Good News* (B&H Academic, 2010). He recognizes that we have a problem, and he realizes that the gospel addresses more than the issue of forgiveness, but he fails to see the pervasive repetition of the gospel story throughout all the New Testament books as he struggles to find the narrative structure that the person of Jesus Christ from eternity (Creation) to eternity (Second Coming) provides so clearly in the apostolic writings. Richard Stearns made an effort at addressing the problem of the lost gospel in *The Hole in Our Gospel* (Thomas Nelson, 2009). For Stearns, the gospel is best understood in terms of the ministry of Christ during his earthly incarnation. He correctly insists that the incarnation has been discarded from the gospel by most evangelicals, even though they would affirm its truth. In the end, however, Stearns suffers from the same reductionism as those he criticizes as he expresses the gospel in terms of one of its components.

Since I first raised these issues in *The Gospel and Its Meaning* (1996), I have had cause for despair and cause for hope. N. T. Wright in *Simply Jesus* (HarperOne, 2011) and Scot McKnight in *The King Jesus Gospel* (Zondervan, 2011) both share the common modern assumption that 1 Cor.15:3-4 represents the New Testament's succinct statement of the gospel, yet Wright breaks away from this tradition to add that the gospel also includes the exaltation of Christ, and McKnight includes the incarnation of Christ. In *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission* (Zondervan, 2010), John Dickson recognizes that the Second Coming has a place in the gospel. By bits and pieces, significant theologians and pastors have begun to work their way back to the gospel from the twentieth century's "sloganization" of the gospel.

If a person grew up in church and already knows what kind of God exists (the Creator), that the Bible is God's word, that Jesus is both fully God and fully human, that Jesus is exalted to the dignity of God where he presides over the universe and his church, that he has possessed every believer by his Holy Spirit and transformed them from children of dust to children of God, and that one day he will judge the world in righteousness and institute the new creation, then a truncated gospel message that he died for our sins and rose for the dead is sufficient. It was for me. Most people, however, do not have such a background, and most churches neglect the teaching of sound doctrine, except that Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead.

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Victory, Atonement, Restoration, and Response: The Shape of the New Testament Canon and the Holistic Gospel Message

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Introduction

When Christians and Bible scholars discuss the gospel, defining the word "gospel" is just as important as the many discussions about its implications in politics, church life, or the environment. We often hear distinctions between *Christus Victor* and penal substitutionary atonement, between a soterian gospel and a Kingdom gospel, and between a gospel that has implications for all of creation and one that applies to only individual souls.[1] In the midst of this conversation, though, and especially in the midst of these important distinctions, we must ask if we are actually distinguishing between what is contained in the definition of "gospel" and what is not. Is it entirely correct to divide between a *Christus Victor* gospel, a soterian gospel, and a restorative gospel? Can we separate Christ's victory over evil from his restoration of creation and from penal substitutionary atonement?[2] The argument here is that the biblical account does not divide between these three different aspects of the gospel – victory, atonement, and restoration – but that each are a part of Jesus' work in his life, death, resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, and return.[3] This threefold work of victory, atonement, and restoration,[4] coupled

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[1] For an introduction to some of these distinctions and for a slightly different perspective than the one taken in this essay, see Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), esp. pp. 28–33. For an example of those that would distinguish between a gospel of the Kingdom of God, a gospel of transactional (or substitutionary) atonement, and a gospel that is rooted in salvation history, see Frank Stagg, "Reassessing the Gospels," in *Review and Expositor* 78/2 (1981), pp. 190–99. Stagg argues that the Gospel writers only portray Jesus as teaching that salvation is rooted in union with him, the representative and means of union with God, and not in salvation history or substitutionary atonement.

[2] I am using the phrase "victory over evil" as both an indication that Jesus has conquered all principalities and powers (cf. Eph. 1:21; Col. 2:15) and in a more positive sense that Jesus is the incarnate Lord reigning over his people and his world. It is, in other words, a phrase that is indicative of the coming of the Kingdom of God, and one I use to speak of the "reign of the Lord God in the messianic age." Meredith G. Kline, "The Old Testament Origins of the Gospel Genre," in *WTJ* 38/1 (1975), pp. 24–25.

[3] For an explanation of how each aspect of Christ's work – incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, sending of the Spirit, return – is part of the gospel, and particularly of the "victory" aspect of it, see Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 120–92.

with the church's proclamation of it both as an announcement of Christ has done and as a call to repent and believe to the nations,[5] are all included in a holistic view of the term "gospel." More particularly, the thesis of this essay is that this holistic view of the gospel is supported by the shape[6] of the biblical canon and for the purposes of this paper the shape of the New Testament.

The canonical shape of the New Testament aids the reader in understanding the biblical gospel as a threefold work of victory over evil, restoration of creation, and redemption from sin through Christ's life, death, and resurrection, as well as the proclamation of the church of that work both in announcing it and calling the nations to respond to it. This will be demonstrated through attention to the shape of the fourfold gospel corpus and Acts, the placement of Revelation at the end of the canon, and the shape of the epistles. In searching the biblical material, primary emphasis will be placed on demonstrating that Christ's work, and therefore the gospel, includes victory, atonement, and restoration. Some brief concluding thoughts on the need for a personal response to Christ's message, and that response's part in the gospel, will also be offered.

The Holistic Gospel in the Gospels and Acts

This essay follows a canonical approach to the New Testament, and therefore traces the shape of the NT[7] by starting with the beginning and the

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[4] For the different ways in which all of the Christ events, from incarnation to return, touch on these three aspects of the gospel, see Robert Peterson, *Salvation Accomplished by the Son: The Work of Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011).

[5] François Bovon refers to this as the two faces of the gospel: "gospel as Christological event and the gospel as apostolic proclamation." François Bovon, "The Canonical Structure of Gopsel and Apostle," in *The Canon Debate* (eds., Lee MacDonald and James Sanders; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), p. 518. Bovon argues not only that these are the two faces of the NT gospel but that they are the two faces seen explicitly through the shape of the New Testament as first historical witness to the Christ event in the gospels and then in the apostolic proclamation of that event in Acts and the epistles. I will argue for a similar definition of "gospel" in this paper but from a slightly different approach to the shape of the NT canon.

[6] Shape refers to the ordering of material within a book or, for our purposes, within an arrangement of books. For the ordering of material within books, see Brevard Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 10. For the ordering of books within the canon, see Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (NSBT; ed., D. A. Carson; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), p. 34; Idem, "Torah, Torah, Torah: The Emergence of the Tripartite Canon", in *Exploring the Origins of the Bible: Canon Formation in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (eds., Craig Evans and Emanuel Tov; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), p. 104; Rolf Rendtorff, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament* (trans., David E. Orton; Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2005), p. 718; Idem, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 290; John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), p. 97, p. 223.

[7] It should be noted here that there are at least two primary orders of the New Testament canon. The first, found in antiquity, is the order in which the books circulated through their collections within codices. The fourfold Gospel corpus, the Pauline epistles, Acts and the

end, which in this case includes the Gospels and Revelation, to determine the focus of the corpus.[8] For the four Gospels, as Scot McKnight has shown, the word *gospel* primarily refers to a narrative, and specifically the story of Christ.[9] The Gospels continue the story of the Old Testament,[10] and that story is one in which the threefold gospel of redemption from sin, victory over evil, and restoration of creation[11] is prominent and well attested throughout.

General epistles, and Revelation each circulated in their own codex. At some point (possibly with Jerome's translation of the Bible into Latin) the General epistles were shifted to come after Paul's letters and Hebrews was moved from the middle (usually between 2 Thessalonians and 1 Timothy) to the end, to reflect the order we see today in our English Bibles. It is important to understand that this article is *not* arguing for the primacy of either order, but instead is embarking on a literary exercise that notes the importance of order in understanding the content of any body of literature. This hermeneutical strategy could just as easily be employed using the ancient Greek order. For the Greek order seen in antiquity and its organization into codices, see David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), e.g., p. 6, p. 10, p. 37, p. 60, p. 64. For early and later canonical lists of the New Testament, see Arthur G. Patzia, *The Making of the New Testament: Origin, Collection, Text, and Canon* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), pp. 155–56. According to Patzia's lists, the Council of Carthage appears to be one of the first instances where Paul's letters are placed before the General epistles.

This decision to read from the later and not earlier order will come into play at two crucial points in the essay. First, through the later order's placement of Paul's letters next to Acts and of Acts next to John, the tie between John, Acts, and Romans, is made much stronger. John is still read with the fourfold Gospel corpus, but the fourth Gospel's role as a theological bridge to Acts is now highlighted as well. Second, the Pauline and General epistles are connected not by Jude and Romans but by Hebrews and James. Again, I am not arguing for the primacy of this order in hermeneutics, but am only recognizing that order matters in interpretation and then arguing for what we see theologically from this particular order. The order referenced here is one that has influenced the Church's liturgy and doctrine since at least the Reformation, but has not been determinative in either use.

[8] For instance, Brevard Childs, speaking of the structure of the Pauline epistles, says, "The structure of these books [Romans and the Pastorals] at the beginning and end of the corpus *sets the canonical context for interpretation*" (emphasis mine). Brevard S. Childs, *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), p. 76.

[9] Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel,* pp. 36–41, pp. 53–56, pp. 78–112.

[10] G. K. Beale, A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), pp. 1–28, pp. 117–86.

[11] For an overview of the biblical narrative and the contention that the primary purpose for God's redemption in Christ is the restoration, or new creation, of the entire cosmos, see, for instance, T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008); G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology,* pp. 29–186 and esp. pp. 129–160; Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 13–86; Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), e.g., pp. 62–65; N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009; repr., London: SPCK, 2005), p. 114, pp. 119–22, pp. 130–53.

The Old Testament Background

The shape of the New Testament is canonically, and therefore textually and theologically, attached to the Old Testament and therefore to its gospel message. Beginning with creation, God creates his world as "good." This ontological status of God's handiwork is significant in its later redemption from the curse of Adam through Christ. Additionally, God creates Adam as a ruler in the Garden, telling him to "rule and subdue" it (Gen. 1:28) and to "cultivate and keep" it (Gen. 2:4). God has, in other words, given Adam authority that reflects the ultimate authority of the Trinity. In Genesis 3 both the created order and Adam's authority are affected by sin, and the redemption that follows clearly includes atonement, victory, and restoration. The *protoeuangelion* in Gen. 3:15 is victorious in its articulation of salvation, and this is made especially clear as the rest of Scripture unfolds. Further, the curse that will be reversed when the seed of woman crushes the serpent's head includes not only separation from God (Gen. 3:19b–24) but also the cursing of the creation itself (Gen. 3:17–19a). Redemption must encompass the scope of the curse, and the curse includes both separation from God and the cursing of the ground.[12] Thus, when Gen. 3:15 promises the serpent's defeat, that defeat must bring both atonement and restoration to reverse the entire curse. We see this promised reversal throughout the rest of the Old Testament as well.

This promised reversal is seen especially in the covenants of the Old Testament. Both of the post-Garden covenants in Genesis (Noah's and Abraham's) have atonement and victory overtones because they are both directly connected through the genealogies of Genesis to the promised seed of Gen. 3:15.[13] They and their lineage, and specifically the nation of Israel, are the line through which redemption from sin and the victory over evil will come. Noah's redemption from the flood, his placement back on the earth, and the covenant God makes with him have clear restorative and atonement overtones. Noah is redeemed from the judgment of sin by God's gracious act of salvation through the ark; the flood waters are textually connected to the "formless and void" waters in Gen. 1:2; and after Noah is placed back on dry land he is issued commands similar to those of Adam and Eve in Gen. 1:28 and 2:7.[14] Abraham's covenant likewise declares the restoration of creation along with redemption and victory. The promises of land, descendants, bless-

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[12] For the scope of the curse, see for instance Ken Mathews, *Genesis 1:1–11:26* (ed., E. Ray Clendenen; NAC 1A; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), p. 36; Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (eds., David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker; WBC 1; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), pp. 78–84.

[13] James M. Hamilton, "The Seed of Woman and the Blessing of Abraham," *TynBul* 58 (2007), pp. 253–73; idem, "The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10/2 (2006), pp. 30–54; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50* (WBC 2; eds., David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker; Waco: Word Books, 1994), p. 7; N. T. Wright, *Paul,* p. 23.

[14] Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–15,* pp. 192–96, pp. 204–208.

ing, and kings from his line and in Israel function to bring back the goals of Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:28; 2:7).[15]

The Mosaic covenant also brings all three of these aspects into focus. The tabernacle and priesthood serve both as the avenue for atonement for Israel and as pictures of the restored Garden.[16] Additionally, the *telos* of the Mosaic covenant is the entering into and conquering of the land; its goal is the defeat of God's enemies and Israel dwelling in peace with God after this victory.[17] This is seen especially in the Levitical laws, where atonement is tied to land. The covenantal boundaries and the atonement necessary when one breaks them are directly tied to victory, the conquering of the land.[18]

The promise of conquering and ruling the land is most prominent in the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17), but restoration and atonement are still present here as well. Atonement is seen again through the fact that David (and his descendants) is of the line of Judah, and thus of the redeeming Seed of Adam, but also in the work of Solomon on the Temple. Solomon's completion of the Temple is both for the purposes of atonement, since the Temple is where sacrifice is held, but also for the purpose of restoring the land. The imagery used in the Temple has the Garden and its restoration in mind.[19] David and Solomon are also focused on conquering the land in their respective kingships, bringing to mind again the victorious aspect of the gospel.[20]

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[15] James Hamilton, "The Seed of Woman and the Blessing of Abraham," pp. 253–73.

[16] See especially G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004) and Andrea Spatafora, *From the "Temple of God" to God as the Temple: A Biblical Theological Study of the Temple in the Book of Revelation* (Tesi Gregoriana Serie Teologia 27; Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1997). For the textual evidence that Israel's Temple, as well as John's New Jerusalem and New Temple, allude to the Garden of Eden, see G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, pp. 66–80, p. 190, p. 360. See also T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, pp. 13–73. Finally, see Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (New Testament Theology; ed., James Dunn; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 133–35, for the idea that John's Temple in Revelation 21–22 reflects the Garden.

[17] This is especially true of the blessings and cursings in Deuteronomy 28. See J. Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy* (eds., David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham; AOTC 5; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), pp. 397–410. Although I disagree with their conclusions about a later, post-Mosaic date for the composition of Exodus and Deuteronomy, both Martin Noth and Gerhard von Rad tie the giving of the Mosaic law to concerns about ruling the land. See Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* (eds., Peter Ackroyd et al.; The OT Library; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 174; Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (eds., Peter Ackroyd, et al.; The OT Library; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), pp. 23–30.

[18] This is most notably seen in the cursings section of Lev. 26:14–29. See R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus* (TOTC; ed., D. J. Wiseman; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980), pp. 29–35, pp. 232–34.

[19] G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, pp. 66–80, p. 190, p. 360.

[20] To take one example, the writer of Chronicles sees David's purchase of Ornan's land in 1 Chron. 21:18 as parallel to Abraham's purchase of Machpelah, the first act in conquering the land. See Jacob M. Meyers, *I Chronicles: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (eds., William

Finally, the new covenant (Deuteronomy 30; Jeremiah 31; Ezekiel 36) and the prophecies concerning its inauguration (e.g., Isaiah 9) have these three elements as well. Atonement from sin is the avenue through which one enters the covenant and its inauguration results in the restoration of creation (e.g., Isa. 40:1–11, and esp. vv. 3–5) and victory over evil (e.g., Day of the Lord imagery in the Prophets). The renewal of the land is clearly an element of the restoration of creation as well (e.g., Num. 24:3–9; Isa. 35:1–2; 40:3–4; 51:1–4; Hos. 14:6–7). Thus, the Old Testament and specifically the history, nature, and function of Israel looks forward to a day when God will appear and bring with him atonement for sin, victory over evil, and the restoration of all creation.[21]

The Holistic Gospel in the Synoptics

In the shape of the New Testament, the Synoptics begin with the story of the Messiah.[22] Jesus comes as the fulfillment of the Old Testament narrative and covenants, as the culmination and consummation of Israel's history. He is the Messiah, the long awaited Prophet-Priest-King who will finally and decisively lead Israel out of exile and back into their inheritance.[23] This is seen primarily in the portrayal of Jesus as the fulfillment of major Old Testament narratives. Matthew portrays Jesus as the New Moses leading Israel out of captivity;[24] Mark portrays Jesus as leading the New Exodus of Isaiah 40–66;[25] and Luke uses both the Samuel-David and the Elijah-Elisha narratives

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Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman; The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1965), pp. 148–50.

[21] For a broader discussion of the New Testament's interpretation of the Old and specifically of the covenants as pointing primarily to the reversal of the curse of Genesis 3 and therefore to victory over evil, atonement for sin, and restoration of creation, see N. T. Wright, *Paul,* pp. 22–39.

[22] Because the placement of John at the end of the fourfold Gospel corpus and before Acts is such a significant canonical issue (see below), I will unfortunately spend less time on the shape of the Synoptics in order to focus on John and Acts. Much more could be said about their order than is said here.

[23] N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 2; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), particularly pp. 147–97.

[24] While Matthew uses other OT imagery besides comparing Jesus to Moses, the New Moses imagery is more prominent in Matthew than in the other Gospels. This is not to say that New Moses imagery is absent from the other Gospels, but simply that it is more prominent in Matthew. For an in depth study of this imagery, see Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

[25] See Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (London: T & T Clark, 1992), p. 12; Thorsten Moritz, "Mark," in *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament: A Book–by–Book Survey* (ed. , Kevin J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), pp. 42–44; Rikki Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); and Idem, "Mark", in *Commentary on the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament* (eds., G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 114–20.

of Samuel-Kings to show that Jesus is the Prophet-King of Israel.[26] Each of these Old Testament narratives are tied to the covenants spoken of in the last section and thus have the same implications. Further, the teaching, miracles, and work of Jesus all point to these three aspects of the gospel. Many of Jesus' teachings focus on demonstrating who is and what it means to be a part of the restored people of God; his healings and exorcisms restore not only the spiritual realm but also the physical creation; and his life, death, and resurrection bring atonement for sin. His teachings, healings, and life, death, and resurrection also point to the consummation of his work in the future, where there will be no more crying, sickness, or pain (Rev. 21:4). Jesus did not simply perform miraculous works that had no connection to the created order, but instead performed those that were precisely to show the breaking in of God's restored Kingdom into the space-time continuum. The substitutionary death of Jesus is of course central to this, as it is through that penal substitutionary death that sin is atoned for[27] and that evil is conquered,[28] and it is through his resurrection that creation is restored. Thus, the Synoptics, both in their use of Old Testament narratives and in their record of Jesus' teaching, miracles, and work, point to the gospel being a threefold work of atonement, victory, and restoration.

The Holistic Gospel in John-Acts

The Gospels climax with John, the canonical finale to the fourfold Gospel corpus. One of the main emphases[29] in the fourth Gospel is new creation, and it makes explicit what Matthew, Mark, and Luke's use of Moses, Exodus, Elijah, and David imagery said more implicitly: Jesus is bringing restoration to Israel and to the entire creation. This new creation emphasis can be seen beginning with John's reference to Genesis 1 (and Isaiah 40, the beginning of Isaiah's New Exodus/New Creation section) in John 1 and ending with the New Man, the resurrected Christ in John 20. The Genesis 1 references in John 1 (e.g., the explicit allusion to Gen. 1:1 in John 1:1 and the contrast between light and darkness in John 1:5, 9) place John's entire Gospel and thus Jesus' life, death, and resurrection thoroughly within the framework of the restoration of creation. The Passion and Resurrection scenes of John 18–19

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[26] Thomas L. Brodie, *The Birthing of the New Testament: The Intertextual Development of the New Testament Writings* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2004), pp. 284–382.

[27] See, for instance, Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced For Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), esp. pp. 67–72 for penal substitution in Mark. Although this work has received criticism for deriding other models of the atonement, it does here present a legitimate exegetical defense of penal substitution. See also ibid., pp. 73–76, for penal substitution in the Gospel of John.

[28] John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006; repr., 1986), pp. 223–48.

[29] Faith is obviously another large emphasis of John (cf. John 20:30–31). The faith that John pushes his readers to have is faith in Jesus, though, and in John Jesus is primarily presented as the bringer of the new creation.

are also filled with allusions to the creation story and thus imply new creation. Jesus prays before his arrest in a garden (John 18:1), he is called "the man" by Pilate (John 19:5), he alludes to both the creation of the world and of Israel with his last utterance of "it is finished" on the cross (John 19:30; cf. Gen. 2:1; Exod. 40:33), and when he is resurrected we first see him in a garden with a woman being mistaken for a gardener (John 20:1–18). He, then "breathes life" into his disciples in John 20:22, a clear allusion back to God breathing life into Adam in Gen. 2:7.[30] All of these are clear narrative allusions to, and sometimes are explicit quotations of, aspects of the creation narrative in Genesis 1–2. Following these allusions to new creation, the disciples, and especially Thomas, are called to faith (John 20:24–31) and then sent out to "be fruitful and multiply" through feeding Christ's sheep (John 21). The narrative of the new creation is culminated with the faith that brings new life and the commission to spread that faith through the earth. Thus John begins and climaxes his Gospel with a focus on Jesus' work of restoration, or new creation, in his life, death, and resurrection.

John also focuses on new creation not merely in the introduction and conclusion, but also in the body of the Gospel. For instance, the seven signs of Jesus in the first eleven chapters evoke ideas of new creation, from water being turned into wine to a dead man, Lazarus, being raised from the dead.[31] The contrast between light and darkness throughout the Gospel (perhaps most explicitly seen in the story of Nicodemus in John 3) and the "I am" statements of Jesus are other examples of restoration imagery and language used in John.

Thus, John, from beginning to end, focuses on Christ as the restorer of humanity and of his creation through his life, death, and resurrection and by the faith of those who hear of his work. Furthermore, the broad narrative of John begins with an allusion to the initial act of creation, and towards the end of his Gospel (John 20:19–23) there is an allusion to the creation of man. This suggests a broad parallel the narrative pattern of Genesis 1-2. In the original creation of Adam, we see God make Adam and then breathe life into him. In John, we see Christ as the second Adam, recreating his fallen creation, and then he, both as the divine Word and as the new Adam, breathes the life-giving Spirit into his disciples, both his new people and corporately with him his new Adams. Expected of Adam in Genesis 2 is that he will "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28) and "rule over and subdue" the Garden (Gen.

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[30] For the references to the garden imagery in John 20:1–18 and for the "breath of life" in John 20:22, see Andreas Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God* (Biblical Theology of the New Testament Series; ed., Andreas Köstenberger; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), pp. 351–54.

[31] N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God III* (Christians Origins and the Question of God; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), p. 440. Again, this is not to say that these are the signs' only function; as stated in note 28 above, faith is also a prominent purpose for the signs. These two things are not separate, but go hand in hand. The signs should produce faith in Jesus, who is Messiah bringing new creation.

2:15). Because of the narrative parallels between John and Genesis 1–2, the expectation for rest of the story is that the disciples, who have just received the breath of life, should "be fruitful and multiply" and "rule over and subdue" the rest of creation. We see this proleptically in John 21 with the command of Peter to feed Christ's sheep, as well as with the sending motif in John's Gospel, but we see it fully in Acts where the church goes into all the earth with the gospel of Jesus.

The fact that Acts follows John and not Luke is, as Childs notes, *the* "major canonical issue" in the New Testament.[32] If there ever were a place where the shape of the canon ought to surely tell us something about its message, it is here. John splitting Luke and Acts virtually cries out for theological explanation. It is my contention that part of the purpose[33] for this lies in Acts' narrative continuity with the new creation theme seen so prominently in John, and especially at the end of the fourth Gospel. As noted, we should expect the disciples to begin to "be fruitful and multiply" after receiving the breath of the Spirit in John 20:22, and this is exactly what happens in Acts. The church is to spread the gospel "in all the earth" (Acts 1:8), and the narrative structure is a concentric pattern moving outward from Jerusalem to the entire globe. This parallels Adam and Eve's commission to "be fruitful and multiply and fill all the earth," which started in the Garden and presumably would have moved outward from there. The reversal of Babel (Gen. 11:1–9) at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–13), the references to the blessings of Abraham (Acts 2:39; 3:25), and the descriptions of the church as the embodiment of the "message of new life" (Acts 5:20; cf. Acts 4:32–35) all point to the church and its evangelistic mission as the agent of God's new creation in Christ.[34]

Most importantly, Luke writes of the church's expansion in Acts using clear allusions to Gen. 1:28. In Acts 6:7, 12:24, and 19:20,[35] the church grows because the Word of God *increases* and *multiplies*. In other words, the purpose of the book of Acts is to show how the church is fulfilling the cultural man-

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[32] Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994), p. 53.

[33] Other possible purposes include keeping the Synoptics together and John's late date of writing. Again, though, the fact that John splits Luke and Acts is a major canonical issue that cannot be explained away simply by chronology or the similarity between the Synoptics. If the latter was a predominant factor, John could have been circulated at the beginning of the Gospel corpus, thus keeping Luke at the end and thereby together with Acts. The former does not appear to be a predominant factor elsewhere in the canon (e.g. the Pauline epistles are not ordered according to chronology), so one wonders why it would be a factor here.

[34] G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, pp. 644–48, pp. 769–72.

[35] Acts 19:20 contains the same word for "increased" or "grew" (*euxanen*) as Acts 6:7 and 12:24, but whereas the former two verses follow with "multiplied" (*eplethuneto*) Acts 19:20 follows with "strengthened" (*ischuen*). The wording otherwise is the same in all three verses, though, with the one other exception that Acts 6:7 says "the word of God" and Acts 12:24 and 19:20 say "the word of the Lord." In other words, "strengthened" in 19:20 appears to be parallel to "multiplied" in 6:7 and 12:24.

date given to Adam and Eve in Gen. 1:28.[36] They are Christ's agents of new creation, spreading redemption and restoration throughout the earth through their testimony to Christ's death and resurrection. Further, the church's mission is directly tied to Christ's ascension; it is as the ascended Lord who reigns over all things that Christ directs his church to be fruitful and multiply. Thus they are not only fulfilling the Adamic commission to be fruitful and multiply but also to rule and subdue. The church is restorative and victorious in its mission in Acts.

What we seen, then, through the unusual shaping of the NT canon with the transplant of John between Luke and Acts, is that at the end of the fourfold Gospel corpus and in the transition to the narrative of the church in Acts, the theme of new creation is heavily emphasized. To say then that the gospel is *not* the story of God's creation, man's fall, redemption through Christ, and the restoration of all things in him is to ignore this canonically shaped focus of the NT canon. To put it positively, the shape of the fourfold Gospel corpus and Acts demands that we see the gospel both as the penal substitutionary atonement for sin in Christ's life, death and resurrection *and* as the restoration of all creation and victory over evil through that same work of Christ. The gospel therefore does not end with atonement, but instead atonement is the central work in which the robust gospel of restoration, victory, and forgiveness is achieved.

The Holistic Gospel in Revelation

Revelation is perhaps even more explicit in bringing these three aspects of the gospel together. Our attention will be given especially to Revelation 21–22, since, as G. K. Beale notes, Genesis 1-3 and Revelation 21–22 are canonical bookends that " . . . interpret everything between them."[37] Thus Revelation 21–22 sum up Christ's work and why it was accomplished. In short, Revelation 21–22 contains a holistic gospel message, with restorative, victorious, and substitutionary atonement elements.

First, these last two chapters of the Christian Bible have a clear focus on atonement. The absence of the sea (21:1) and the absence of the effects of sin (21:3) are both indications that sin has been eradicated. Atonement is also the background of other imagery in these two chapters. The river from the throne is for the "healing of the nations" (22:2) and it is also how the King on the throne, Christ, has "secured payment" (21:6) for the new heavens and new earth. The New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven is the bride of Christ, washed spotless and without blemish (21:1-2). He also gives his saints washed garments when they overcome (22:14), another indication that they will be forgiven and cleansed of sin. Finally, the fact that some are thrown

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[36] G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission,* p. 266.

[37] Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology,* p. 59.

into the lake of fire (21:8) indicates that there are those to whom atonement has not been applied.

Second, there are also clear restorative elements in these two chapters. Most explicit are the references to the new Garden, Temple,[38] and City. Further, the fact that there is a city here indicates that the social and cultural aspects of human life are redeemed and restored, along with humanity and the created order. Also indicative of creational restoration is the reference to the healing of the nations; healing not only results in forgiveness but in restoration of people.

Finally, Christ is pictured as the victorious king in these two chapters. The narrative immediately preceding the new heavens and new earth in Revelation 19 and 20 is explicit concerning this matter. There, the harlot, the beast, the false prophet, and the dragon (Satan) are all defeated and evil is eradicated from the earth. Thus the narrative predication for the final salvation of Christ's followers, the restoration of the earth, and the absence of evil is *Christus Victor*. The absence of the sea (21:1) and of sin's effects (21:3) is not only an image of atonement but also victory. The absence of sin and evil indicates that its effects *and* its source have been fully and completely defeated. The sea in Revelation is the dwelling place for the dragon, beast, and false prophet, so the fact that it is gone indicates that those who dwell there are eradicated as well. The lake of fire is also an image of atonement and victory; those in it are there not only because atonement is not applied to them but also as a sign that Christ has ruled and subdued his enemies in his creation. Further images of this victory are seen in the fact that the nations come to him (21:24–27) and that the people can now enter the city freely (21:25). There is a peace that pervades the new creation, and it is a peace that is achieved through Christ's victory over evil.

What we see in Revelation, then, is that the entire cosmos has been recreated and restored to its original intent but also in its teleological format. Adam and Eve were never intended to stay in the Garden but were told to "be fruitful and multiply and *fill all the earth*" (Gen. 1:28; emphasis mine). Here in Revelation 21–22 God does not merely return the saved to the Garden but the New Garden-City-Temple fills the whole earth with worshipers from every tribe, tongue, and nation. The more important point here, though, is that God *restores creation*[39] through Christ's *victory over evil,* which is fundamentally accomplished through his *atonement for sin*. Again, these three aspects of the gospel cannot be separated; they are integral to one another.

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[38] See especially Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission and Andrea Spatafora, From the "Temple of God" to God as the Temple.* See also T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, pp. 13–73; and Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, pp. 133–35.

[39] The use of "restore," especially in this discussion on Revelation, does not mean that God's renewal of creation stops at a point where it simply reverts to Genesis 1–2, but that in God's final restoration of creation in Revelation 21–22 it has finally achieved the teleological goal given to it in the initial creation and thus surpasses that initial creation.

The Holistic Gospel in the Epistles

What, then, does the "middle" of the New Testament, the epistles, tell us about the gospel? Do they confirm, add to, or contradict what we have seen in the Gospels and Revelation? We will examine four epistles as a test case: Romans, Colossians, Hebrews, and James.[40]

The Epistles and Atonement

Atonement is a clear focus of Romans, and especially Romans 1–8. The pervasiveness of sin (Romans 1–3), the necessity of Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 3:21–26), the inability of heritage to save (Romans 4), the place of Christ as the reversal of Adam's curse (Rom. 5:12–21), and the ability of Christ's death and resurrection to both justify (Rom. 5:1–11) and sanctify (Rom. 6:1–8:17) are the dominant features of Romans 1–8. Especially prominent in Romans, as well as in Galatians and Ephesians, is the fact that atonement cuts through racial and ethnic (Jew–Gentile) boundaries. Colossians also has a focus on atonement; the description of Christ's work in Col. 1:13–23 begins and ends with the forgiveness of sins. The description of the believer as alive with Christ in Col. 2:6–15 is also grounded in atonement (Col. 2:13–14), as is new life in Christ (Col. 3:1, 3). Finally, although Hebrews is focused on perseverance of the saints, the nature of the atonement and its effects are still clearly in view in motivating those saints to perseverance (e.g. Heb. 2:5–13; 4:14–5:10; 7:11–10:18).

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[40] The choice of Romans, Colossians, Hebrews, and James comes as a result of their placement in the order of the NT canon used in this article. Again, though, I am arguing from *an* order of the NT canon, not *the* order. In the order of the NT canon referenced in this article, these four letters are among the most significant epistles when discussing the shape of the NT letters because they stand at canonically important places within the NT epistolary corpus. Romans' importance is rather obvious; its placement first among the epistles should not only be explained by its prominence in terms of length but also by the fact that it most thoroughly explains Paul's understanding of the gospel (see Brevard Childs, *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul*, p. 69, p. 235, p. 254). Colossians stands at the end of the section of the NT epistles focusing on theological explanation of the gospel and its impact on Christian living begun by Romans, and thus serves as the end of the narrative for that group. Hebrews and James, although in the "middle" of the section of 1 Thessalonians–Jude, are canonically significant because of Hebrews' placement at the end of the Pauline corpus and James' placement at the beginning of the General Epistles corpus. Although there is a seamless transition in our Bibles between Hebrews and James, and although Hebrews is generally discussed with James-Jude, this was not the case in the initial circulation of the NT books (see David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament,* pp. 26–34, p. 60, p. 80. See also Idem, *Paul's Letter Collection: Tracing the Origins* (Bolivar: Quiet Waters Publications, 2001)). Thus these four books stand at canonically important places and that particular shaping guides the reader in their understanding of the gospel. See Matthew Emerson, "Christ and the New Creation: A Canonical Approach to the Theology of the New Testament" (unpublished Ph.D. diss.; Wake Forest, NC: Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), pp. 95–189, esp. p. 129, pp. 151–55, pp. 186–89.

The Epistles and New Creation

Like atonement, restoration is also a focus of Romans and Colossians. In Romans, the gospel that includes justification and sanctification through atonement finds its goal in the glorification of the believer at Christ's return and the restoration of all creation (Rom. 8:18–39). Thus the entire point of the atonement described in Rom. 1:18–8:17 is the restoration of the believer and of the entire cosmos. The explanation of the atonement in Romans 1–8 also includes implicit references to the new creation or restoration.[41] The inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God in Romans 9–11 is a new creation of the people of God, and the ethical commands to the believing community in Romans 12–16 are tied directly to the explanation of the restorative atonement in Romans 1–11 (Rom. 12:1; "therefore . . . by the mercies of God," i.e., because of Romans 1–11).

Colossians also sees the result of atonement as not only the forgiveness of sin but the renewal of believers and the entire cosmos. The description of the redemption Christ has in mind not only includes his death and resurrection but also that work of salvation in the context of all creation. He is the creator and sustainer of "all things" (Col. 1:14–15) and "all things" are reconciled (Col. 1:20) to himself through the cross.[42]

In Hebrews the new creation is what the reader is exhorted to pursue and persevere for; he is told to strive to seek "his rest (4:1)," the "'city which has foundations whose architect and builder is God' (Heb 11:10), 'the city of the living God' (Heb 12:22), 'the city which is to come' (Heb 13:14), . . . a city which God has prepared (Heb 11:16) . . . 'a better [fatherland], that is a heavenly one' (Heb 11:14, 16), 'the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22),'"[43] and "the city that is to come (13:14)." For the audience of Hebrews, the restoration of all things by Christ at his return, and specifically a restoration that is earthly in its content, is the hope for which they persevere in faith. This hope is found especially throughout the latter part of the Pauline epistles (1 Thessalonians–Philemon) and the General epistles as well. Each of these letters exhorts their readers to live ethically (e.g., the Thessalonian epistles, the Petrine epistles) and to model their lives on the gospel (e.g., the Pastorals and Philemon) because of the reality and imminence of Christ's return. Hebrews stands as a

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[41] For instance, the allusions to the creation and fall in Rom. 1:18–32 and the use of the Adam comparison in Rom. 5:12–21. See, for instance, Edward Adams, "Paul's Story of God and Creation: The Story of How God Fulfills His Purpose in Creation," in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (ed., Bruce Longenecker; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), pp. 26–28, pp. 33–35, p. 37.

[42] Clearly "all things" here refers to everything in creation. The phrase is repeated four times in vv. 16–17 and each time refers to the entire cosmos. It would be logically inconsistent to think the phrase means anything else in v. 20.

[43] Dale Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations of Hebrews: A Study in the Validity of the Epistle's Interpretation of Some Core Citations from the Psalms* (NABR Dissertation Series 10; Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1994), pp. 136–37.

lynchpin in the middle of that section, making explicit the fact that what they are waiting for at that return is not just avoiding judgment but living in the new creation with Christ.

Finally, in James the coming judgment is used as exhortation (e.g., James 5:7–12), but so is the goal of redemption: restoration, specifically of the believer (James 1:2–4; also 1:17–18).[44] Notice also that the restored person in James is a person who acts. Faith and works are tied together prominently in this epistle, and this is because James wants to demonstrate the practical outworking of being made new in Christ (James 2:14–26). Further, this outworking of faith is related often to social justice, ministry, and equality in James (esp. 1:27; also 2:1–9, 15–16; 5:4, 13–15). Once again this expectation that God will apply Christ's work not only sinners reconciled to himself but also the effects of sin is found clearly elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., Isaiah 61; Rev. 21:4). Thus the gospel for James has restorative effects in the believer's life[45] and specifically in his relationship with society and culture.

The Epistles and the Defeat of Evil

Lastly, the gospel includes victory over evil in the epistles. The book of Romans ends with a promise that God "will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Rom. 16:20), a clear allusion to Gen. 3:15 and the promise that the seed of woman will crush the serpent's head.[46] Here in Romans, not only has Christ crushed the serpent but also now the church participates in that victory.[47] Specifically, they crush Satan's head through watching out "for those who cause division" (Rom. 16:17) and by being obedient and being wise "as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil" (Rom. 16:19; another phrase that has clear overtones of Gen. 3). Thus the very end of the restoration begun by the atonement of Christ in Romans comes with the victorious crushing of God's enemies by the church through the power of Christ.

Colossians also has an explicit focus on Christ's victory over his enemies. Christ's work of atonement is again directly related to another aspect of the gospel, his victory over evil. He rescues his people from darkness in 1:13; both creates and has authority over all things in 1:14–15; is the "head of all rule and authority" in 2:10; and disarms the rules and authorities and puts them "to open shame, by triumphing over them" in 2:15. Further, each of these references to Christ's authority over all things is directly related to his

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[44] Although the entire cosmos is not in view here, we should remember Rom. 8:23; the restoration of human beings is the firstfruits, or promise, that all of creation, too, will be restored.

[45] Interestingly, James ends in 5:19–20 with the physical restoration of the believer, something that in the Gospels points to God's restoration of creation. See Christopher Morgan, *A Theology of James: Wisdom for God's People* (Explorations in Biblical Theology; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), pp. 165–68, and esp. p. 167.

[46] G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology,* p. 99.

[47] See also Rev. 12:17; the phrase " … her offspring, keep the commandments …" is a direct allusion to Gen. 3:15 in the LXX.

death and resurrection in each case. Thus his work of atonement, and specifically his forgiveness of "all our trespasses" and canceling "the record of debt" through "nailing it to the cross" (2:13–14), is the means by which he defeats the enemies of God and his people. The beginning of Hebrews is especially full of references to Jesus' victory over evil and place as the ruler of all creation through the citations of and allusions to Num. 24:14–20; Ps. 2:8–9; and Psalm 8.[48] James is less explicit about Christ's defeat of evil,[49] although the eschatological trajectory of 1 Thessalonians–Jude includes Christ's return as the final defeat of the church's and God's enemies (see esp. 2 Peter 2; Jude).

In the epistles, then, and especially in key places in the shape of the NT letters, the three major aspects of the gospel are found. Interestingly, Romans and Colossians, so pivotal for the Pauline corpus, contain all three. Hebrews focuses on atonement as the motivation for ethical living, and Hebrews and James note how the work of Christ is the means by which all things will be restored. The picture presented by this exploration is that the epistles, and especially those in prominent canonical positions, agree with the Gospels and Revelation: the gospel is a threefold work of atonement, victory, and restoration, with restoration as the goal, victory as the consequence, and atonement as the means of redemption.

Conclusion

The Need for a Response

To this point, not much has been said about the individual aspect of the gospel. The fact that this has not been mentioned does not mean that it is not prominent, though. To the contrary, the need for a personal response by each individual who hears the announcement of Christ's work is clear throughout the NT and in each of the canonical points that have been discussed thus far. The gospel is not only the threefold work of Christ; it is also the means by which one responds to what the Lord has done, the invitation and means to become a part of the people of God.[50] We see the authors of the Gospels (e.g., John 20:30–31) and Jesus in those Gospels calling for a response to his

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[48] G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Theology*, p. 142.

[49] Though see 1:9–11, 15; 2:8–13; 4:11–12; 5:1–6, 7–12 for implicit language about Christ's victory and its implications for believers. Thanks to Chris Morgan for his help in working through James' view of the gospel.

[50] "[The Gospel] is the Good News about the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14–15). It is the Good News concerning God's Son, Jesus the Messiah, who is Saviour and Lord (Rom. 1:3–4; II Cor. 4:3–6). It is the Good News about the historical Jesus – his death for our sins and his resurrection on the third day (I Cor. 15:1–5). And it is the Good News about a radically new kind of community, the people of God, who are already empowered to live according to the standards of the New Age (Eph. 3:17)." Ronald J. Sider, "Evangelism, Salvation, and Social Justice: Definitions and Interrelationships," in *International Review of Mission* 64/255 (1975), pp. 251–67.

message in the Gospels (e.g., Mark 1:14–15) and exhorting his hearers to hear and respond carefully (e.g., Luke 8:7–19). The church in Acts, from its inception to Paul's imprisonment, calls for responses from those who hear the announcement of Christ's work (e.g., Acts 2:17–41, esp. vv. 38–40; 28:23). The epistles again recognize the necessity of an individual response to the gospel work of Jesus (e.g., Rom. 10: 5–17), as does Revelation (e.g., Rev. 13:9–10 and its exhortation to turn away from the beast and to turn to Christ). Thus, from beginning to end the NT affirms the gospel as not only the announcement of what Jesus has done but also the call for a response to that announcement.

The Narrative Gospel

The Gospel and the New Testament Narrative

In the exploration of the shape of the New Testament, we have seen that at every point the gospel is defined as the restoration of all things brought about by God's victory over evil through his Son's payment for sin on the cross and vindication of new life in his death and resurrection. It is, in other words, the narrative of God's redemptive act through his Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. The beginning of the NT, the Gospels and Acts, points to this threefold work through the use of Old Testament narratives, the nature of Jesus' life and work, and especially through the canonical placement of John prior to Acts because of the narratively continuous focus on new creation. Likewise, Revelation at the end of the NT shows that Christ's work of atonement both defeats Satan and his servants and also restores the entire cosmos in Revelation 21–22. Finally, the epistles, and especially those placed at canonically significant points, clearly teach that Christ's death and resurrection accomplishes victory over evil, allows the church to participate in that victory, and restores individual believers, the collective people of God, and the entire cosmos including society and culture. Furthermore, the narrative includes not only the announcement of Christ's work but also the call to hear it and respond (e.g., Rom. 10:5–17). This is the entire point of the epistles: Christ has done his work and will complete it when he returns, and you who have responded ought to live accordingly. The fact that the church responds to and calls others to respond to the announcement of Jesus' work cannot be separated from that work itself. Jesus did not come to claim victory, forgive sin, and redeem creation simply to do it, but so that he might, through that work, claim a people for himself. Thus not only Christ's work but also the need for and actual response to it is included in the biblical gospel.[51]

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[51] John Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission: Promoting the Gospel with More Than Our Lips* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), pp. 139–40.

The Gospel and the Old Testament Narrative

Furthermore, defining the gospel as including atonement, restoration, and victory fits with the Old Testament covenants and the narrative of the Bible as a whole. As Roy Ciampa has argued, the Scriptures move from creation to sin and exile to redemption to new creation.[52] Thus, the narrative of the Bible along with the canonical shape of the New Testament points to the gospel including not only forgiveness of sin but also restoration of all things and victory over evil through that payment for sin.

The Goal of the Narrative

A final, and perhaps the most important, aspect of the shape of the New Testament canon and the implications of the gospel message is the stated goal of Christ's work. At every stage of the biblical story, the purpose of redemption is so that God's people can dwell with him for eternity. God says again and again, "I will be their God and they will be my people" (e.g., Exod. 6:7; Lev. 26:12; Ruth 1:16; Isa. 52:6; Jer. 31:33; Matt. 1:23; John 1:14; Rev. 21:3). In terms of the shape of the New Testament canon, notice that "God with us" occurs at the beginning of the first Gospel (Matt. 1:23) and the repetition of the Old Testament refrain quoted above occurs in the final chapters of the last book of the New Testament. The purpose of the coming of Christ, both the first time (Matthew 1) and the second (Revelation 21), is so that God's people can finally and complete dwell with him without the hindrance of sin and evil. As one popular writer has put it, "God is the Gospel."[53]

Thus when defining "gospel" through the lens of the canonical shape of the NT, we see that Christ's life and work, its proclamation by the church, and the call for an individual response are all part of that definition. The term "gospel" therefore " . . . embraces both the objective content that forms the substance of the Christian faith (Jesus' person and work as saving event), the present effectiveness of that substance as a living determinant of the human situation, and the proclamation of the content and its effect."[54] It is the an-

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[52] Roy Ciampa, "The History of Redemption," in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (eds., Scott Hafemann and Paul House; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 254–308. See also T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*; G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology,* pp. 29–186 and esp. pp. 129–160; Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained,* pp. 13–86; Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God,* e.g. pp. 62–65; N. T. Wright, *Paul,* p. 114, pp. 119–22, pp. 130–53.

[53] John Piper, *God is the Gospel: Meditation on God's Love as the Gift of Himself* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005); see also Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel*, pp. 92–93.

[54] John Webster, "Gospel," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (ed., Kevin J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), pp. 263–64. See also Graeme Goldsworthy's definition: "The word *gospel*, then, is used in several ways. First, the NT uses it to describe the heart of the OT promises of salvation. Secondly, it is used of the saving event of Jesus of Nazareth as the grounds of salvation for all who believe. Thirdly, it designates the proclamation of that saving event as the means by which people are confronted with the truth about Christ." Graeme Goldsworthy, "Gospel," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring*

nouncement that Christ has conquered evil, atoned for sin, and restored creation through his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and future return. And it is the call of all those who hear that announcement to turn in repentance and faith in acknowledgment of King Jesus so that in doing so they may be forgiven of sin and therefore become part of his church, kingdom, and restored creation.

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the Unity and Diversity of Scripture (eds., T. Desmond Alexander et al.; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000), p. 524.

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Preaching Old Testament Law to New Testament Christians[1]

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Introduction

I am keenly aware that in proposing to address this subject I have guaranteed for myself a limited hearing. There are many reasons why there is little interest in preaching Old Testament law in our churches, whether they are mainline protestant, or charismatic, or fundamentalist, or generic evangelical. This aversion toward Old Testament law arises from a series of "mythconceptions" concerning the law. First, we are deluded by the ritualistic myth, that is, that Old Testament law is pre-occupied with boring ritualistic trivia, declared to be obsolete with Christ's final sacrifice on the cross. Second, we are driven away by the historical myth, that is, that Old Testament law concerns the times and cultural context of nations so far removed from our own that, unless one has purely academic or antiquarian interests, what it has to say about the human condition is hopelessly out of date. Third, we are repelled by the ethical myth. The OT law reflects a standard of ethics that is rejected as grossly inferior to the law of love announced by Jesus and the high stock placed on tolerance in our enlightened age. Fourth, we are confused by the literary myth, that is, that the Old Testament laws are written in literary forms that are so different from modern literature that we cannot understand them. Fifth, we are indoctrinated by the theological myth, that is, that Old Testament law presents a view of God that is utterly objectionable to modern sensitivities. So long as these "mythconceptions" determine the disposition of preachers and pastors toward Old Testament law there is little hope that they will pay much attention to those parts of the Old Testament that we refer to as Israel's constitutional literature.

Contributing to these "mythconceptions" are fundamental ideological and theological prejudices against Old Testament law. The essentially antinomian stance of contemporary western culture may represent the most important factor, especially in our post-Christian and increasingly secular culture. But these will hardly explain why *within the church* the law has had such a bad rap for such a long time. The roots of the aversion to Old Testament law

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[1] This essay was previously published in *Hiphil* (*Scandinavian Evangelical E-Journal*) 3 (2006), pp. 1–24; subsequently published in three parts in *Ministry* 78/5 (2006), pp. 5-11; 78/7, pp. 12-16; 78/9, 15-18; and *The Gospel according to Moses: Theological and Ethical Reflections on the Book of Deuteronomy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), pp. 104-36.

within the church may be traced back almost 2000 years to the second century heretic Marcion. Marcion proclaimed a radical discontinuity between Old and New Testaments, Israel and the church, the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New. In his canon he rejected all of the Old Testament and accepted only those New Testament books that highlighted the discontinuity of the church from Israel, which left him with radically edited versions only of the Gospel of Luke and ten Pauline epistles (minus the pastorals and Hebrews). This is not so different from American evangelical Christianity, which bears a distinctly Pauline stamp (cf. the Eastern Church), and hears only Paul's criticism of Old Testament law.

In western Protestantism we observe two traditional specific streams of antipathy toward Old Testament law. The first is associated with Lutheranism, with its fundamental law-gospel contrast. In his epochal discovery of the Gospel of Grace in the course of his study of Romans, Luther came to identify the ritualism and works-oriented approach to salvation of Roman Catholicism with the Old Testament law. But in Christ believers are declared to be free from the law! The grace of the gospel in Christ has replaced the bondage of the law under Moses. The second is associated with extreme forms of dispensationalism. In its division of human history into seven dispensations, a radical change in the divine economy is seen to have occurred in the transition from the Old to the New Testament. We are now in the church age, which is fundamentally the dispensation of grace, in contrast to the age of Israel, ruled by the dispensation of law. To these two traditional sources of the problem of Old Testament law within American evangelical Christianity we must now add a third, more recent development, namely the influence of New Covenant Theology. This movement, which has its roots in Reformed theology but exhibits a radically different view toward the Old Testament than Calvin himself did, insists that since the "Mosaic Covenant" [*sic*][2] has come to an end in Christ, it has no claim on Christians. We are subject only to the law of Christ.[3] This dichotomy is remarkable, especially in the face of the New Testament's repeated and emphatic identification of Jesus Christ with YHWH.

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[2] "Mosaic covenant" is a misnomer. Unlike the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, which are rightly named after the person whom God graciously chose to be his covenant partner, the covenant made at Sinai was not made with Moses. He served as the mediator between the two covenant partners, YHWH and Israel. Since no other biblical covenants are named after the place where they were established, "Sinai covenant" is no better. Following the paradigm of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, it is best referred to as the "Israelite covenant," or "neo-Abrahamic covenant," inasmuch as through this ceremony Israel as a nation was formally recognized as the heir of Abraham (cf. Gen. 17:7–8).

[3] See Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2002).

Consequently, if one hears preaching from Old Testament law at all (which is rare!), the preaching tends to take one of three approaches.[4] First, since through his atoning work Jesus Christ has abolished the law as a way of life, Old Testament law has no bearing on the Christian at all. In fact, the blessed gospel of grace liberates us from the curse of the law.[5] Second, interpreting the word τέλος in Rom. 10:4 as the "fulfillment" rather than the "end" of the law, Jesus Christ is seen as the culminative fruit of Old Testament law, and since his righteousness is imputed to us, we are not under obligation to any external code. Third, since the Ten Commandments and some of the ethical injunctions of the Torah are thought to have some binding force on Christians, the operative question with respect to Old Testament law is "Do I have to keep this law?" Careful attention is paid to distinguishing among the ceremonial, civil and moral laws. A fourth theonomist option, which views the Old Testament law fundamentally to be in force even for the church, receives scant attention these days.

So long as the first three perspectives determine the relationship of Old Testament law to New Testament Christians we can hardly expect to hear much preaching from the law. But how Christians can tolerate this antinomian stance remains a mystery to me, especially in the light of Jesus' own statements that he came not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it, and his own declarations of its permanent validity (Matt. 5:17–20); in the light of his declaration that love for him is demonstrated first and foremost by keeping his commands (John 14:15; cf. 15:10); and Paul's assertion that "It is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified" (Rom. 2:13).

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the person of God may be competent, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Does this statement really mean that "While believers were not obliged to carry out all the demands of the Mosaic law, they *could* nevertheless draw from the O[ld] T[estament], read paradigmatically, lessons for Christian living."[6] They "*could*" draw lessons? Does it have no more moral force than an invitation to read it as an optional sourcebook for optional lessons? Should C. G. Kruse not have said at least, "they *should* nevertheless draw from the O[ld] T[estament], read paradigmatically, lessons for Christian living"? In order to move beyond this typical trivializing of the Old Testament we probably need

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[4] Cf. Robert Bergen's summary of the three basic positions represented in New Testament scholarship on the disposition of the early church to the law in "Preaching Old Testament Law," in *Reclaiming the Prophetic Mantle: Preaching the Old Testament Faithfully* (ed. G. L. Klein; Nashville: Broadman, 1992), pp. 51–69 (55–56).

[5] Rom. 3:21; 6:14; 7:4; 10:4; Gal. 2:19–21; 3:23–26; 4:21–31; Heb. 7:12.

[6] Thus Colin G. Kruse, "Law," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture* (ed. T. D. Alexander, et al.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), pp. 629–36 (636).

to take a closer look at Old Testament law, particularly as the Old Testament law presents itself. I propose to do so under four headings:

A. The Designations for "Law" in the Old Testament

B. The Literary Contexts of Laws in the Old Testament

C. The Significance of the Laws of the Old Testament for Old Testament Saints

D. The Significance of the Laws of the Old Testament for New Testament Saints

I will conclude with some reflections on the implications of these observations for our preaching today.

A. The Designations for "Law" in the Old Testament

The Old Testament uses a series of expressions to refer to the laws of God. Perhaps the most explicit is the term מִצְוָה, "command," from the verb צִוָּה, "to command." But the term "command" should not be construed as synonymous with "law." In day to day life we often give orders that need to be carried out immediately or in a given circumstance, but this is not the same as an ordinance by which our church or company must operate until further ordinances are handed down.

The laws in the Pentateuch are often referred to by the standardized word pair חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים, often translated "ordinances/ordinances and judgments." On etymological grounds one may surmise that the former expression, singular חֹק, "ordinance," derives from a root חָקַק, "to inscribe, incise," and refers to "inscribed" laws, that is laws that have been prescribed by a superior and recorded by incising a clay tablet with a reed stylus, or a wax-covered writing board with a metal stylus, or even a stone with a chisel. The form of the second expression, מִשְׁפָּטִים, "laws" (literally, "judgments") apparently originates in case law. Judgments previously made in judicial contexts become laws in a prescriptive sense. When originating with YHWH they represents his "judgments" concerning Israel's conduct in the pursuit of righteousness (צְדָקָה). While some have argued that חֻקִּים relate primarily to religious regulations and מִשְׁפָּטִים to civil law,[7] within the book of Deuteronomy at least these distinctions cannot be maintained.

To this list we should also add פִּקּוּד (pl. פִּקּוּדִים), "obligation, regulation, procedure," from פָּקַד, "to muster, commission," which occurs twenty-four times in the Psalms.[8] A fifth expression is הָעֵדֹת, "the stipulations." Based on the assumption of a derivation from the same root as עֵד, "testimony," the New International Version follows the traditional rendering of the word with

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[7] See G. Liedke, G. "חקק *ḥqq* einritzen, festsetzen." In *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, edited by E. Jenni and C. Westerman, 1: pp. 626–34. Munich: Kaiser, 1971), 1: p. 631.

[8] *HALOT*, p. 959.

"testimonies."[9] However, since we usually think of "testimony" as the utterance of a witness in a court of law or some less formal context in which a particular event is being debated or discussed, this interpretation is misleading.[10] It is true that in the case of a person who had sworn an oath to keep an agreement but was being brought to court for violating it, the written document could certainly be produced as a standard against which to measure his behavior, hence to serve as a witness. However the possibility of an etymological link with the Akkadian word for "covenant/treaty" and "loyalty oath,"[11] strengthens the case for interpreting עֵדֹת (plural of עֵדוּת) as a general designation for the stipulations of the covenant. This interpretation is confirmed in Deut. 4:45, which clarifies the sense of הָעֵדֹת, "the stipulations," by adding הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים, "ordinances and laws."[12] The fact that all these expressions have the article suggests a specific and identifiable body of laws is in mind. In accordance with our conclusions regarding the significance of הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים, "ordinances and laws," stated earlier, the covenant stipulations refers to the specific body/bodies of prescriptions revealed by YHWH through Moses at Sinai, and periodically prior to the present addresses (cf. Num. 36:13), an interpretation supported by the addition of "when they came out of Egypt."

These five words do indeed often refer to the specific laws and regulations prescribed by YHWH at Sinai and elsewhere. While the expressions above tend to be associated with specific kinds of laws, the expression most often associated with "law" itself is תּוֹרָה. The noun תּוֹרָה derives from the verb הוֹרָה, "to teach."[13] On occasion תּוֹרָה may be legitimately translated as "law." However, its every day meaning is illustrated by the book of Proverbs, which applies the term to the instruction that the wise provide for the community (13:14), parents provide for children (1:8 [mother]; 4:1–11), and the woman of the household to those under her influence (31:26). Its theological meaning is illustrated most clearly by the book of Deuteronomy, which, con-

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[9] Thus LXX (μαρτύ ρια), Vulgate, the Targums.

[10] S. T. Hague, "אָרוֹן," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (ed., Willem VanGemeren, [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997], 1: p. 502) notes that "the translation of עֵדוּת as 'testimony' is reasonable, as long as we understand the testimony as *the law* that is the seal of the Lord's covenant with Israel."

[11] On the meaning and significance of *adê*, see S. Parpola and K. Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (State Archives of Assyria 9. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988), pp. XV–XXV.

[12] This interpretation is strengthened by the observation that what Moses will call the "ark of the covenant of YHWH" (אֲרוֹן בְּרִית־יְהוָה, Deut.10:8; 31:9, 25–26) is referred to elsewhere as the "the ark of the stipulation" (אֲרֹן הָעֵדֻת, Exod. 25:22; 26:33–34; 30:6, 26; 31:7; 39:35; 40:3, 5, 21; Num. 4:5; 7:89; 4:16). The present triad of terms recurs in Deut. 6:20 (with הָעֵדֹת preceding the present pair). הָעֵדֹת appears between מִצְוֹת and חֻקִּים in 6:17. On the meaning and significance of עֵדֹת/עֵדֻת, see H. Simian-Yofre, "עוד," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, (ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, and trans. D. W. Scott; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 10: pp. 514–15.

[13] *HALOT*, 436–37.

trary to the Greek (and English) name of the book (δευτερονόμιον, "second law"), does not present itself as "law," but as a series of pastoral addresses (Deut. 1:1–5; 4:40). Admittedly Moses repeats and adapts many of the ordinances previously prescribed by YHWH, but the first eleven and the last nine chapters contain little that we would classify as "law" in a legal sense, and even the so-called "Deuteronomic Code" (chaps. 16–26) has a predominantly pastoral and didactic (rather than legal) flavor. In fact, in the book of Deuteronomy the semantic range of תּוֹרָה, *tôrâ*, is much better captured in Greek by *didaskalia* or *didachē*, rather than *nomos* as the Septuagint renders the term in 202 of 220 occurrences.[14]

This conclusion regarding the meaning of תּוֹרָה, *tôrâ*, is confirmed when we observe how easily its scope was extended to the rest of the Pentateuch, despite the fact that at least two-thirds of Genesis–Numbers is narrative, that is, the story of the YHWH's grace in election, salvation, and providential care for Israel, and his establishment of his covenant first with Abraham and then with the patriarch's descendants at Sinai. When the psalmist declares that the godly delight in the תּוֹרָה of YHWH (Ps. 1:2), surely he did not have in mind only the laws of Sinai, for apart from the surrounding narrative the laws provide no occasion for joy.

B. The Literary Contexts of Laws in the Old Testament

Before we preach from Old Testament law we need to remind ourselves that there is law in the Old Testament and there is law. Since the groundbreaking work of Albrecht Alt,[15] many scholars have recognized two major types of laws:[16] laws in the conditional form dealing with specific cases, and laws in the unconditional form. The former typically involve a protasis introduced with "When/If" (Hebrew כִּי, or אִם in subordinate cases) describing a specific circumstance, followed by an apodosis outlining the required response. These may be cast in third person ("If a person . . .") or second person ("If you . . ."). The latter are typically cast as direct commands in the second person, though third person jussives are not uncommon. Apodictic laws subdivide further into positive prescriptions ("Honor your father and

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[14] Both expressions are common in the New Testament. For *didaskalia*, see Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7; Rom. 12:7; 15:4; Eph. 4:14; Col. 2:22; 2:10; 1 Tim. 1:10; 4:1, 6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3; 2 Tim. 3:10, 16; 4:3; Tit. 1:9; 2:1, 7. For *didachē*, see Matt 7:28; 16:12; 22:33; Mark 1:22, 27; 4:2; 11:18; 12:38; Luke 4:32; John 7:16–17; 18:19; Acts 2:42; 13:12; 17:19; Rom. 6:17; 16:17; 1 Cor. 14:6,26; Eph. 4:14; 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 4:2; Tit. 1:9; Heb. 6:2; Heb. 13:9; 2 John 9–10; Rev. 2:14, 15, 24.

[15] Albrecht Alt, "The Origins of Israelite Law," in *Essays in Old Testament History and Religion* (trans. R. A. Wilson (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 101–71.

[16] Albrecht's classification of these laws as "casuistic" and "apodictic" has recently been criticized as too simplistic, not allowing enough room for mixed forms, and even misnamed. See Rifat Sonsino, "Forms of Biblical Law," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. D. N. Freedman; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 4: pp. 252–53.

mother"), or negative prohibitions ("You shall not murder"). The differences between the two types are obvious when specific examples are juxtaposed as in the following synopsis:

Table 1: A Comparison of Conditional and Unconditional Law

Conditional Law	**Unconditional Law**
Exodus 21:28 If an ox gores a man or woman to death, the ox shall surely be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall go unpunished.	Exodus 20:3 You shall have no other gods before me.
Exodus 22:26–27 If you ever take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in?	Exodus 20:16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
Features	**Features**
Conditional	Unconditional
Declarative mood	Imperative mood
In third (or second) person	In second person
Specific: based on actual cases, often with motive or exception clauses	General: without qualification or exception
Usually positive in form	Often negative in form
Begin with "If" or "When"	Begin with the verb (in the imperative)

The Pentateuch contains a great deal of prescriptive material through which YHWH sought to govern every aspect of the Israelites' lives. Maimonides, a twelfth century Jewish rabbi and philosopher, established that the number of commandments scattered throughout the Pentateuch numbered 613.[17]

Beyond recognizing the basic formal differences between individual laws, preachers do well also to recognize the differences among the series of specific documents within the Pentateuch that might qualify as law. These may be grouped in two classifications. On the one hand we note the focused instructions, usually involving cultic and liturgical matters: "Instructions Concerning the Passover" (Exodus 12–13), "Instructions Concerning the Taber-

[17] See Alvin J. Reines, "Commandments, The 613," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. (ed. F. Skolnik (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2007), 5: pp. 760–83.

nacle" (Exodus 25–31), "Instructions Concerning Sacrifice" (Leviticus 1–7). On the other hand, we note the collections of ordinances and regulations governing a wide range of human activity: the Decalogue (Exod. 20:2–17; Deut. 5:6–21), the "Book of the Covenant" (סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית, Exod. 20:22—23:19, cf. 24:7), the "Instructions on Holiness" (Leviticus 17–26),[18] and the so–called "Deuteronomic Torah" (Deuteronomy 12–26, 28). Although these documents all represent collections of prescriptions whose scope covers all of life, each has its own distinctive flavor.

1. The Decalogue

In both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 the Decalogue is presented as the only speech of YHWH addressed directly to the Israelites. Contrary to modern practice, the Scriptures never refer to the Decalogue as the "Ten Commandments." The genre of the document is identified in both contexts as "all these words" (כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, Exod. 20:1; Deut. 5:22) that YHWH "spoke" (דִּבֶּר), rather than "these commandments" that YHWH "commanded." In fact, whenever this document is identified by title it is always referred to as "the Ten Words" (עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים, Exod 34:28; Deut 4:13; 10:4), and never "the Ten Commandments." At this point we would do well to follow the Septuagint in referring to this document as the Decalogue (δέκα λόγοις, literally "Ten Words"), or, since the Hebrew word דָּבָר is capable of a broad range of meaning, "the Ten Principles" of covenant relationship. That this document is perceived as the foundational written record of YHWH's covenant with Israel is demonstrated not only in the fact that two copies (one for each party) of this document alone were stored in the "ark of the covenant of YHWH" (אֲרוֹן בְּרִית־יְהוָה, Deut. 10:1–5), but also Moses' explicit reference to this document as "his covenant" (בְּרִיתוֹ, Deut. 4:13). The structure of the narratives introducing the Decalogue reinforces the covenantal nature of the Decalogue. Indeed in both Exodus and Deuteronomy it is cast in the pattern of an ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaty:

(a) The Preamble (Exod. 20:1; Deut. 5:1–5) sets the stage for the document.

(b) The Historical Prologue (Exod. 20:2; Deut. 5:6) introduces the divine Suzerain and summarizes the history of the relationship of the parties to the covenant to this point: "I am YHWH your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

(c) The Covenant Principles (Exod. 20:3–17; Deut. 5:7–21) specify the fundamental obligations placed upon the human vassal. The Principles of Covenant Relationship were reduced to ten presumably to facilitate commitment to memory and to match the number of fingers on our hands. Their unconditional form invests them with an absolutist flavor. Inasmuch as the terms of the Decalogue are addressed to potential perpetrators of offences it

[18] Referred to by scholars as the "Holiness Code."

may be interpreted as ancient Israel's version of the "Bill of Rights." However, unlike modern Bills of Rights, the Decalogue is not concerned to protect *my* rights but the rights of the next person. According to the arrangement of the stipulations of the Decalogue the *next person* involves two parties: YHWH, the divine Suzerain, and fellow members of the vassal community.[19] In fact, as Jesus and Paul recognized in their reduction of all the commandments to the command to love YHWH and one's neighbor (Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:9), the objective of the Decalogue is encourage love for God and for one's neighbor,[20] the kind of behavior that puts the interests of the next person ahead of one's own.

(d) The Declaration of the People's Response (Exod. 20:18–21; Deut. 5:22–33) reports the people's acceptance of the document and a recognition of its revelatory significance. The latter text ends with a summary blessing as a reward for obedience (vv. 31–33), also common to ancient treaty forms.

2. The "Book of the Covenant" (Exod. 20:22—23:19)

Although the Decalogue obviously functioned as the official covenant document, this does not mean that it exhausted the terms of YHWH's covenant. Indeed the other collections of laws may be interpreted as elaborations and practical explications of the Decalogue. The "Book of the Covenant," encompassing Exod. 20:21—23:33 derives its name from Exod. 24:7, according to which, as part of the covenant ratification ceremony Moses took the סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית (literally, "written document of the covenant") and read it in the hearing of all the people, precipitating their third declaration of "All that YHWH has spoken we will do." Unlike the Decalogue, which is referred to as דְּבָרִים ("words") declared directly by YHWH to the people, this document is formally introduced as מִשְׁפָּטִים ("judgments, regulations") that Moses is to set before the people (Exod. 21:1). Furthermore, whereas the Decalogue consists entirely of unconditional statements in the second person, the Book of the Covenant consists largely of conditional statements in the third person. Taken as a whole the Book of the Covenant may be divided into six parts arranged in an artful chiastic order:

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[19] The vertical dimensions of covenant (Exod. 20:1–11) respectively call for a recognition of YHWH's right to: (a) exclusive allegiance; (b) the definition of his image; (c) honor and true representation; (d) govern human time. The horizontal dimensions of covenant (20:8–17) respectively call for a recognition of (a) the members of the household's right to humane treatment (cf. Deut. 5:12–15); (b) parents' right to respect from children; (c) the right of all to life; (4) the right of all to a pure and secure marriage; (5) the right to personal property; (6) the right to an honest reputation; (7) the right to security. The terms add up to eleven because the fourth is transitional. The Exodus version highlights the Sabbath as a creation ordinance; the Deuteronomic versions highlight its humanitarian character.

[20] Cf. Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical Theological Commentary* (Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), p. 439.

A Introduction (20:22, placing Israel's response to covenant in the present context of divine revelation)
  B Principles of Worship (20:23–26, highlighting Israel's cultic expression of devotion to Yahweh)
    C Casuistic Laws (21:1–22:20, highlighting Israel's ethical expression of devotion to Yahweh)
    C' Apodictic Laws (22:21—23:9, highlighting Israel's ethical expression of devotion to Yahweh)
  B' Principles of Worship (23:10–19, highlighting Israel's cultic expression of devotion to Yahweh)
A' Conclusion (23:20–33, placing Israel's response to covenant in the future context of divine action)

Notice that prescriptions for Israel's worship frame the prescriptions governing daily life. The purpose of worship is to inspire devotion to YHWH and to create an ethical community of faith. Worship and ethics are tightly linked.

3. The "Instructions on Holiness" (Leviticus 17–26)

What distinguishes this "Code" from other similar texts, such as the Book of the Covenant (Exod. 20:22—23:33), is its emphasis on holiness. First, YHWH identifies himself as the Holy one (קָדוֹשׁ, 19:2; 20:26; 21:8). Second, YHWH identifies himself as the one who makes Israel holy (קִדַּשׁ, "sanctifies them", 20:8; 21:8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32; cf. הִבְדִּיל, 20:24, 26). Third, Israel is challenged to "Sanctify yourselves" (הִתְקַדִּשׁ, 20:7) and "Be holy" (קְדֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ, 19:2; 20:7, 26 [to YHWH]; 21:6a, 6b [cf. 7, 8]). Fourth, many of the articles and persons discussed in this section are described as holy (קֹדֶשׁ): YHWH's name, 20:3; 22:3, 32; sacrificial food, 19:8; ordinary food 19:24; sacred bread, 21:22; 24:9; food dedicated to YHWH, 22:2–4, 6, 10, 14–16; convocations, 23:2–4, 7–8, 21, 24, 27, 35–37; a place (tabernacle), 24:9; a time (year of jubilee) 25:12). As for the content of this long section, it provides a summary catch-all of moral exhortations, cultic regulations, and legal prescriptions. What use was made of this "Holiness Code" in ancient Israel we may only speculate: D. N. Freedman suggests it may have served "as a catechism for some sanctuary school, or as a guide for priests and Levites in their work as teachers of the people."[21] We may view this document as an exposition of the expressions "a kingdom of priests" and "holy nation" in Exod. 19:5.

That this is viewed as an exposition of the nature of Israel's covenant relationship with YHWH is demonstrated by the eighteen-fold occurrence of YHWH's self introduction as "I am YHWH your God,"[22] which represents

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[21] D. N. Freedman, "Pentateuch," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (ed. G. A. Buttrick; Nashville: Abingdon, 1964), p. 722.

[22] Lev. 18:2, 4, 30; 19:3–4, 10, 25, 31, 34, 36; 20:7, 24; 23:22, 43; 24:22; 25:17, 38, 55.

an adaptation of the covenant formula, "I am your God and you are my people" (cf. 20:26; 26:12). Looking far ahead to the time when the Israelites will be settled in the land that YHWH has promised them, this document seeks to govern the life of the Israelites as YHWH's vassals (עֲבָדִים, Lev. 25:42, 55) living in YHWH's land (25:23). The covenantal nature of this document is affirmed by the addition of chapter 26. This chapter not only refers to the covenant six times,[23] but its presence here accords with the pattern of ancient Near Eastern Hittite treaties, which typically followed up the stipulations with declarations of blessings as a reward for obedience.[24]

4. The "Deuteronomic Torah" (Deuteronomy 12–26, 28)

It has become customary for scholars to refer to the long section of text encompassing Deuteronomy 12–26, 28 as the Deuteronomic Law Code. This seems justified on several grounds. First, it is formally framed by references to the laws of God:

> Introduction: "These (אֵלֶּה) are the ordinances (הַחֻקִּים) and laws (הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים) that you shall keep (תִּשְׁמְרוּן) by doing (לַעֲשׂוֹת) [them] in the land that YHWH, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth" (12:1).
>
> Conclusion: "YHWH your God commands you this day to follow these (הָאֵלֶּה) ordinances (הַחֻקִּים) and the laws (הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים), and you shall keep (וְשָׁמַרְתָּ) and do (וְעָשִׂיתָ) them" (26:16).

Second, Moses repeatedly refers explicitly to "ordinances" (חֻקִּים),[25] "laws" (מִשְׁפָּטִים),[26] "command"/"commands" (מִצְוֹת/הַמִּצְוָה),[27] "instruction" (תּוֹרָה, usually rendered "law"),[28] and "covenant stipulations" (הָעֵדֹת, usually rendered "testimonies"), if one may refer back to 4:45, which functions as a heading for the second half of Moses' second speech. Third, within this large block of material we do indeed find several series of regulations that have the appearance of legal lists, especially in chapters 22–25. Fourth, the types of issues dealt with in these chapters often correspond to those found in codes of law outside the Old Testament.[29]

Recently it has become fashionable to argue that Moses' presentation of the covenant obligations in Deuteronomy 12–26 is structured after the Decalogue. Stephen Kaufman, for example, has argued that the Deuteronomic

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[23] Vv. 9, 15, 25, 42, 44–45.

[24] See Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 283–89.

[25] Deut. 16:12; 17:19; 26:16–17.

[26] Deut. 26:16–17.

[27] Deut. 13:5, 19 [Eng. 4, 18]; 15:5; 17:20; 19:9; 26:13, 17–18; cf. 27:1; 30:11; 31:5.

[28] Deut. 17:18–19; cf. 4:44; 28:61; 29:21, 29; 30:10; 31:9, 11–12, 24, 26.

[29] The links have been noted frequently. For a helpful collection of ancient Near Eastern law codes, see Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* (2nd ed; Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World 6; Atlanta: Scholars, 1997).

Code derives from a single redactor, who has organized the entire Code after the model provided by the Decalogue as a whole.[30] It is apparent throughout that Moses has the Principles of Covenant Relationship as outlined in the Decalogue in mind, but this system seems quite forced, and can be achieved only by resorting to extraordinary exegetical and redactional gymnastics.[31] Moses seems here to have been inspired by other aspects of the Sinai revelation as well. Although there are also strong links with Exod. 34:11–28,[32] Bernard Levinson argues more plausibly that the Deuteronomic Code represents a revision of the Covenant Code (Exodus 21–23).[33] The links are recognized not only in the details, but also in the broad structure of the text, as the synopsis in Table 2 illustrates:

Table 2: A Synopsis of the Structures of Exodus 20:22-23:19 and Deuteronomy 12:2-26:15

Exodus 20:22—23:19	Deuteronomy 12:2—26:15
A Principles of Worship (20:23–26) Highlighting Israel's cultic expression of devotion to Yahweh	A Principles of Worship (12:2–16:17) Highlighting Israel's cultic expression of devotion to Yahweh
B Casuistic and Apodictic Laws (21:1—23:9) Highlighting Israel's ethical and civil expression of devotion to Yahweh	B Casuistic and Apodictic Laws (16:18—25:15) Highlighting Israel's ethical and civil expression of devotion to Yahweh
A' Principles of Worship (23:10–19) Highlighting Israel's cultic expression of devotion to Yahweh	A' Principles of Worship (26:1–15) Highlighting Israel's cultic expression of devotion to Yahweh

Moses' flow of thought is best grasped, not by forcing it into some sort of Decalogic pattern, but by outlining chapters 12:2–26:15 on the basis of content and without reference to any external document. This lengthy docu-

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[30] Stephen, Kaufman, "The Structure of the Deuteronomic Law," *Maarav* 1 (1979), pp. 105–58. For a variation of this approach, see G. Braulik, *Die deuteronomischen Gesetze und der Dekalog* (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 145. Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991); ***idem,*** "Die Abfolge der Gesetze in Deuteronomium 12–26 und der Dekalog." In *Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Botschaft* (*Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses* 68; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1985), pp. 252–72). Eugene H. Merrill follows this approach in his commentary, *Deuteronomy* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), p. 31.

[31] It is an unlikely stretch, for example, to interpret Moses' instructions regarding administrative institutions in 16:18—18:22 as an exposition of the commandment to honor father and mother in 5:16. This approach is also rejected by Jeffrey Tigay, *Deuteronomy* (Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), p. 226. n. 19, and Eckart Otto, *Das Deuteronomium* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 284; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), p. 226.

[32] So also Norbert Lohfink, "Zur deuteronomischen Zentralizationsformel," *Biblica* 65 (1984), pp. 324–26.

[33] Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 144–50.

ment also displays strong links with the Holiness Code. Most striking is the addition of the lists of covenant blessings and curses in chapter 28, which echoes the addition of Leviticus 26 to the Instructions on Holiness.[34]

Despite these links with the Book of the Covenant, in tone and style much of Deuteronomy 12–26 bears a closer resemblance to chapters 6–11 than it does to the Sinai documents[35] on which they are based. In fact, there is no appreciable shift in style and tone as one moves from chapter 11 to chapter 12 and beyond. While scholars are quick to recognize in the speeches of the book of Deuteronomy the voices of a prophet or a scribe, or even a priest,[36] the concerns and style of the speaker are better understood as the addresses of a pastor, who knows that his own tenure as shepherd of YHWH's sheep is about to come to an end.[37] As pastor, Moses is concerned not only about civil and liturgical matters, but especially with the spiritual and physical well–being of the people. He expresses particular passion about the people's relationship with God, a relationship that, on the one hand, is to be treasured as an incredible gift, and on the other hand to be demonstrated in a life of grateful obedience to their divine Redeemer and Lord.

C. The Significance of the Laws of the Old Testament for Old Testament Saints

Even though we have clarified the forms and genres of the major constitutional documents in the Pentateuch, the chances are rather good that we have still not overcome the prejudices that inhibit preaching from these texts. In order to do so we probably need to wrestle a little more with the significance of these laws, particularly as Moses and the genuinely pious in ancient Israel understood them. As we try to resolve this issue we must keep in mind two important principles of interpretation. First, whenever we interpret a biblical text, the most important clues to its meaning must be derived from the immediate literary context, not later comments on the text. Second, biblical texts must always be interpreted in the light of the broader cultural context

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[34] Chapter 28 seems originally to have been attached directly to chapter 26, before chapter 27 was inserted.

[35] The Book of the Covenant (Exod. 20:22—23:33), the so–called Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–26).

[36] For a helpful discussion of the prophetic and scribal voices, see James W. Watts, *Reading Law: The Rhetorical Shaping of the Pentateuch* (Biblical Seminar 59; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 112–21; on the priestly voice, see Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), pp. 23–27.

[37] Moses gives most eloquent expression to this understanding of his role in Num. 27:15–17: "Moses spoke to Yahweh, saying, 'Let Yahweh, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of Yahweh may not be as sheep that have no shepherd'."

from which they derive, not the culture of a later time, let alone pervasive modern understandings of these texts.

I begin by drawing your attention to a very important question raised by Moses in his second farewell pastoral address to his people, the Israelites, as quoted in Deut. 6:20:

כִּֽי־יִשְׁאָלְךָ֥ בִנְךָ֖ מָחָ֣ר לֵאמֹ֑ר מָ֣ה הָעֵדֹ֡ת וְהַחֻקִּים֩ וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִ֨ים אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּ֜ה יְהוָ֧ה אֱלֹהֵ֛ינוּ אֶתְכֶֽם׃

> When your son asks you in time to come, "What is the meaning of the covenant stipulations and the ordinances and the laws that YHWH our God has commanded you?"

The form in which Moses casts the question arises out of the everyday experience of parents trying to raise their children. I shall never forget the evening when we as a family were gathered around the table enjoying our supper. As is often the case with teenage children, we were engaged in a rather warm discussion. Suddenly our son burst out, "Why do we have to live in such a prehistoric family?" While his motives left something to be desired, I took this as a compliment: at least he recognized that our household was run by counter-cultural norms.

The point Moses raises is that succeeding generations will not have memory of the experiences that the people in his audience have shared, either of YHWH's revelation at Sinai or his present discourses on that revelation on the plains of Moab. Therefore, it will be necessary for this and all subsequent generations to be very intentional in transmitting their faith to the next generation. As in every social context and every age, the children will watch the way their parents live, and, especially when faced with the challenge of competing cultures, they will be curious about the nature and rationale behind their own traditions. Moses assumes that the children will ask their parents for an explanation of their way of life.

The specific question Moses anticipates here concerns the covenant stipulations (הָעֵדֹת), ordinances (הַחֻקִּים), and regulations (הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים) that YHWH has commanded Israel to observe. These three expressions function as shorthand for the totality of the will of God as it had been revealed primarily at Horeb and to a lesser degree en route to the Promised Land. The question assumes a package, all the moral, ceremonial and civil regulations that God has prescribed as the appropriate response to His salvation and the privilege of covenant relationship. As illustrated so impressively in Leviticus 19, this revelation refused to divide life into the sacred and the ordinary. When the children observe how their parents conduct their private and family lives, how they carry on their social and economic relations, how they worship, how they conduct themselves within the family, then they will inquire concerning the meaning of it all. Of course, what the children's question calls for is not a detailed exposition of each of the 613 laws in the Pentateuch identified by Maimonides, but an explanation of the significance of the entire package. In short, "Why is it that our lives are governed by this set of principles?" and "What is the significance of this set of laws?"

If we were asked today, "What is the significance of the stipulations, the ordinances and laws that God commanded the Israelites to observe?" we would probably respond with several different answers. If we were actually to read the laws some of us would probably shake our heads in bewilderment, and wonder seriously whether there is any point to these laws at all. Look at Lev. 19:19:

> You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your cattle breed with a different kind. You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor shall you wear a garment of cloth made of two kinds of material.

Or Lev. 11:3–6:

> Whatever parts the hoof and is cloven-footed and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat. Nevertheless, among those that chew the cud or part the hoof, you shall not eat these: The camel, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. And the rock badger, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. And the hare, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you.

If we are not truly bewildered by these kinds of laws, we may actually feel sorry for the Israelites. What a burden they were called upon to bear! Surely many must have looked on the other nations with envy that they weren't saddled with this load.

Some with cultural and antiquarian interests, especially those interested in the history of law and culture might say these laws offer the modern reader an interesting window into the society of ancient Israel. Readers familiar with the Near Eastern legal world of the second millennium, BCE might even conclude that these laws represent a significant advance on those found in the Law Code of Hammurabi, king of Babylon in the 19th century BCE.

My suspicion, however, is that many of us would not have answered the question in either of these ways. In our day, especially in contemporary western evangelicalism, when asked about the significance of the law for Israel, many would answer that for Israel the law was the way of salvation. Whereas in the New Testament people are saved by grace, under the Old Covenant people were saved by keeping the law.

The problem with this explanation is that it flies in the face of Paul's explicit statements that even in the Old Testament people (like Abraham) were justified by faith rather than through obedience to the law (Romans 4; Gal. 3:1–12). In fact, many view the law, not as a way of salvation, but as the way of death. And they quote Paul to buttress their position, for does he not say in Rom. 4:15, "The law brings about wrath"; and in Rom. 7:6, "But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we are bound"; and according to Gal. 3:10–13, "as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse," and "the Law is not of faith," and "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law"; and Gal. 3:23–24, "Before faith came we were kept in custody under the Law, being shut out from the faith that

was later revealed, therefore the Law has become our tutor"; and in Gal. 4:21–31, speaking of the Law, Paul writes that Mount Sinai (who is Hagar) bears children who are slaves, in contrast to Jerusalem, our mother, who has borne free children.

These verses seem to offer a rather clear answer to the question that Moses raised: The significance of the law lay in its power to bind those who are under the law, to subject them to the curse and the wrath of God, and to demonstrate their desperate need of a Savior. While on the surface this seems to be the way the New Testament perceives the law, it raises serious questions concerning both the justice and mercy of God. How and why would God rescue the Israelites from the burdensome and death-dealing slavery of Egypt (cf. Exod. 20:2) only to impose upon them an even heavier burden of the law, which they in any case were unable to keep, and which would sentence them to an even more horrible fate—damnation under His own wrath? When you look at the Exodus this way, it turns out not to be such a good deal after all.

One of the most important principles for the interpretation of Scripture is to interpret Scripture with Scripture. And this is indeed what we are doing when we appeal to Paul for the answer to Moses' question. But sometimes we move too quickly to later texts, especially the New Testament, and we forget the primacy of the immediate context in determining the meaning of any word or statement in Scripture. When we seek to understand the significance of the regulations and ordinances that God prescribed for his people, from the outset we need not only to explore seriously their function In the original settings, but also to distinguish between the ideal and the real; between the role of the laws in the lives of the Israelites as intended by God and Moses, and the way the Israelites actually used the laws.

First, God and Moses perceived obedience to the laws, not as a way of or precondition to salvation, but as the grateful response of those who had already been saved. In the New Testament Paul demonstrates this point by appealing to Abraham (Romans 4), but he might just as well have cited the experience of the nation of Israel, whose deliverance from Egypt becomes paradigmatic of a person's experience of salvation. God did not reveal the law to the Israelites in Egypt and then tell them that as soon as they had measured up to this standard he would rescue them. On the contrary, by grace alone, through faith they crossed the Red Sea to freedom. All that was required was belief in the promise of God that he would hold up the walls of water on either side and see them safely through to the other shore. The chronological priority of Israel's salvation vis-à-vis the revelation of the law is illustrated clearly by Exod. 19:4–6 and Deut. 6:20–25:

> When your son asks you in time to come, "What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that YHWH our God has commanded you?" then you shall say to your son, "We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And YHWH brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And YHWH showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against

> Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. And YHWH commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear YHWH our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before YHWH our God, as he has commanded us."

Second, God and Moses perceived obedience to the law not primarily as a duty imposed by one party on another, but as an expression of covenant relationship. Before God revealed his will to his people "he brought them to himself." Israel's primary commitment was not to be to a code of laws but to the God who graciously called Israel to covenant relationship with himself; they were to obey "his voice." In fact, he does not reveal his will to the people until he hears their declaration of complete and unconditional servitude to him as covenant lord (Exod. 19:8). Every one of the so-called "law codes" listed above must be interpreted within the context of redemption and covenant.

Third, God and Moses perceived obedience to the law not as the precondition for salvation, but as the precondition to Israel's fulfillment of the mission to which she had been called and the precondition to her own blessing. The first point is highlighted in Exod. 19:5–6: if Israel will keep YHWH's covenant and obey his voice she will be God's special treasure, his kingdom of priests, his holy nation (cf. Deut. 26:16–19). The second is spelled out in detail in Lev. 26:1–13 and Deut. 28:1–4.

Fourth, God and Moses perceived God's revelation of the law to Israel as a supreme and unique privilege (Deut. 4:6–8), in contrast to the nations who worshiped gods of wood and stone but who never spoke (4:28; Ps. 115:4–8). Contrary to prevailing contemporary evangelical opinion, for the genuinely faithful in Israel obedience to the law was a delight, in part because of their deep gratitude for God's grace experienced in salvation and covenant relationship, but also because they knew that God would respond to their obedience with favor (Deut. 6:20–25; Ps. 24:3–6). Moses alludes to this extraordinary fact in Deut. 4:1–8:

> And now, O Israel, listen to the ordinances and the laws that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that YHWH, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of YHWH your God that I command you. Your eyes have seen what YHWH did at Baal-peor, for YHWH your God destroyed from among you all the men who followed the Baal of Peor. But you who held fast to YHWH your God are all alive today. See, I have taught you ordinances and laws, as YHWH my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these ordi-

> nances, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as YHWH our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has ordinances and laws as righteous as this whole Torah that I set before you today?

To help us understand the significance of the Torah I draw your attention to a prayer, written in Sumerian, and probably dating back to the second millennium, but preserved in the library of Ashurbanipal, one of the 7th century BC emperors of Assyria.[38] The text is repetitious, but to get the point we need to read the entire piece.

Prayer to Every God[39]

May the fury of my lord's heart be quieted toward me.[40]

May the god who is not known be quieted toward me;

May the goddess who is not known be quieted toward me.

May the god whom I know or do not know be quieted toward me;

May the goddess whom I know or do not know be quieted toward me.

May the heart of my god be quieted toward me;

May the heart of my goddess be quieted toward me.

May my god and goddess be quieted toward me.

May the god [who has become angry with me][41] be quieted toward me;

May the goddess [who has become angry with me] be quieted toward me.

(10) (lines 11–18 cannot be restored with certainty)

In ignorance I have eaten that forbidden of my god;

In ignorance I have set foot on that prohibited by my goddess. (20)

O Lord, my transgressions are many;

great are my sins.

O my god, (my) transgressions are many;

great are (my) sins.

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[38] According to Stephens (*ANET,* 391–92), This prayer is addressed to no particular god, but to all gods in general, even those who may be unknown. The purpose of the prayer is to claim relief from suffering, which the writer understands is the result of some infraction of divine law. He bases his claim on the fact that his transgressions have been committed unwittingly, and that he does not even know what god he may have offended. Moreover, he claims, the whole human race is by nature ignorant of the divine will, and consequently is constantly committing sin. He therefore ought not to be singled out for punishment.

[39] Adapted from *ANET*, pp. 391–92.

[40] According to Stephens (ibid.), the Sumerian is rendered literally, "of my lord, may his angry heart return to its place for me." The phrase "return to its place," a figurative expression for "to settle down," suggests the imagery of a raging storm or of water boiling in a kettle.

[41] The restoration is based on line 32, after Stephen Langdon, *Babylonian Penitential Psalms* (Paris: Geuthner, 1927), pp. 39–44.

O my goddess, (my) transgressions are many;
great are (my) sins.
O god, whom I know or do not know, (my) transgressions are many;
great are (my) sins;
O goddess, whom I know or do not know, (my) transgressions are many;
great are (my) sins.
The transgression that I have committed, indeed I do not know;
The sin that I have done, indeed I do not know.
The forbidden thing that I have eaten, indeed I do not know;
The prohibited (place) on which I have set foot, indeed I do not know.
The lord in the anger of his heart looked at me; (30)
The god in the rage of his heart confronted me;
When the goddess was angry with me, she made me become ill.
The god whom I know or do not know has oppressed me;
The goddess whom I know or do not know has placed suffering upon me.
Although I am constantly looking for help, no one takes me by the hand;
When I weep they do not come to my side.
I utter laments, but no one hears me;
I am troubled;
I am overwhelmed;
I can not see.
O my god, merciful one, I address to you the prayer,
"Ever incline to me";
I kiss the feet of my goddess;
I crawl before you. (40)
(lines 41–49 are mostly broken and cannot be restored with certainty)
How long, O my goddess, whom I know or do not know,
before your hostile heart will be quieted? (50)
Man is dumb; he knows nothing;
Mankind, everyone that exists—what does he know?
Whether he is committing sin or doing good, he does not even know.
O my lord, do not cast your servant down;
He is plunged into the waters of a swamp; take him by the hand.
The sin that I have done, turn into goodness;
The transgression that I have committed let the wind carry away;
My many misdeeds strip off like a garment.

O my god, (my) transgressions are seven times seven;
remove my transgressions;
O my goddess, (my) transgressions are seven times seven;
remove my transgressions; (60)
O god whom I know or do not know,
(my) transgressions are seven times seven;
remove my transgressions;
O goddess whom I know or do not know,
(my) transgressions are seven times seven;
remove my transgressions.
Remove my transgressions (and) I will sing your praise.
May your heart, like the heart of a real mother, be quieted toward me;
Like a real mother (and) a real father may it be quieted toward me.

Is this not a pathetic piece? And what an indictment this prayer is on the religious systems of the world around ancient Israel! To be sure, with his keen sense of sin and his awareness of ultimate accountability before deity, this person expresses greater enlightenment than many in our own day. However, he cannot escape the fact that he is faced with three insurmountable problems. First, he does not know which god he has offended. Second, he does not know what the offense is. Third, he does not know what it will take to satisfy the god/gods. It is against this backdrop that we must interpret Moses' statements in Deuteronomy 4:1–8. With their clear knowledge of the will of YHWH, the faithful in Israel perceived themselves as an incredibly privileged people and the envy of the nations. Unlike other peoples, whose gods of wood and stone crafted by human hands neither saw nor heard nor smelled (Deut. 4:28; cf. Ps. 135:15–17), YHWH hears His people when they call upon him (Deut. 4:7). And unlike the nations, whose idols have mouths but they do not speak (Ps. 135:16), Israel's God has spoken. By His grace He has given His people statutes and judgments that are perfect in righteousness (Deut. 4:8), because: (1) they reveal with perfect clarity who He is; (2) they reveal with perfect clarity what sin is; and (3) they reveal with perfect clarity how that sin may be removed and a relationship of peace and confidence with him established/maintained. This explains why, when David experiences forgiveness for his sins he can exclaim, "Oh the joy/privilege of the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!"

Fifth, God and Moses perceived true obedience to the law to be the external expression of an inward disposition of fear and faith in God and covenant love toward him. True biblical religion has always been a matter of the heart. This internal transformation is referred to metaphorically as a circumcised heart (Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; 30:6–10; Jer. 4:4), a heart transplant (Jer. 24:7; 32:39; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26), the placement of God's Spirit within a person (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26), and the writing of God's תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) in the heart (Jer.

31:32). While these are occasionally viewed as future eschatological events to be experienced by all Israel, it is clear that they have always been true of the remnant of true believers in ancient Israel (e.g., Caleb, Num. 14:24; also Ps. 19:7–13; 37:31; 51:16–17; 40:8, 119:11; Isa. 51:7).

Sixth, both God and Moses perceived the laws holistically, viewing all of life as under the authority of the divine suzerain. Whereas modern interpreters tend to discuss the ethical relevance of the laws by classifying them according to moral, civil and ceremonial categories, these categories are not very helpful and in any case do not reflect the nature and organization of the laws themselves. Christopher Wright has moved the discussion forward by recognizing five categories of Israelite law: criminal law, civil law, family law, cultic law, and compassionate law.[42] Even so we must realize that the documents themselves do not make these distinctions. This is illustrated most impressively in Leviticus 19, which, with its more than four-dozen commandments, refuses to classify, let alone arrange in order of importance, civil, ceremonial and moral laws.

Seventh, both God and Moses perceived the laws as comprehensible and achievable (30:11–20). God did not impose upon his people an impossibly high standard, but revealed to them in great detail a system of behavior that was uniquely righteous and gracious at the same time (Deut. 4:6–8). The genuinely pious in Israel, transformed in heart by the Spirit of God, lived by faith and by the promise, assured that if they would conduct their lives according to the covenant they would live (Deut. 4:20–25). However, God also had a realistic view of his people. Recognizing their propensity to sin, he provided a means of forgiveness and communion through the sacrificial and ceremonial ritual. There was no time in Israel's history when every Israelite was truly devoted to YHWH in this sense. For this reason, within the new Israelite covenant Jeremiah anticipates a time when the boundaries between physical Israel and spiritual Israel will be coterminous and all will love God and demonstrate with their lives that his תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) has been written on their hearts (Jer. 31:31–34).

Of course, these facts did not prevent later Israelites from perverting obedience to the law as a condition for blessing into a condition for salvation. The prophets constantly railed against their people for substituting true piety, which is demonstrated first in moral obedience, with the external rituals prescribed by the law (Isa. 1:10–17; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21–24; Mic. 6:6–8), thinking that if they performed these rituals God was obligated to receive them favorably. Nor did these facts prevent the Israelites from perverting their possession of the law as a privilege into a divine right and an unconditional guarantee of God's protection (Jer. 7:1–10, 21–26; 8:8–12), as if the covenant only obligated God to them and not them to God. Nor did YHWH's desire

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[42] Christopher J. H. Wright, *An Eye for an Eye: The Place of Old Testament Ethics Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1983), pp. 148–59; idem, *Walking in the Ways of the Lord: The Ethical Authority of the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), p. 114.

that his people have his word written on their hearts prevent Israelites from being satisfied with, nay taking pride in the external law that they possessed, but forgetting to write the law on their hearts. Nor did the fact that God and Moses considered all of life as holy prevent the Israelites from perverting the law by placing great stock in divinely prescribed rituals while disregarding God's ethical and communal demands. Instead of heeding the examples of Cain and Abel, and acknowledging that God looks upon our religious expressions through the lenses of our hearts and everyday lives, they imagined that God looked upon their hearts through the lenses of their sacrifices ("To obey is better than sacrifice," 1 Sam. 15:22). So they violated the moral laws with impunity even while they continued to observe the ceremonial regulations (Isaiah 1; Jeremiah 7).

D. The Significance of Old Testament Law for New Testament Christians

By now we should have grasped the Old Testament understanding of the relationship between law and grace within the divine plan of salvation and sanctification. The Scriptures are consistent in asserting that no one may perform works of righteousness sufficient to merit the saving favor of God. In the words of Isaiah:

> All of us have become like one who is unclean,
> and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;
> we all shrivel up like a leaf,
> and like the wind our sins sweep us away (Isa. 64:6).[43]

In the words of David,

> Against You, You only, have I sinned
> and done what is evil in Your sight,
> so that you are proved right when You speak
> and justified when You judge.
> Surely I was sinful at birth,
> sinful from the time my mother conceived me
> (Ps. 51:4–5 [Hebrew 6–7]).

And in the New Testament words of Paul, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

However, within the gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone, YHWH graciously reveals the standard of righteousness by which His redeemed people may live and be confident of His approval. There is no conflict here between law and grace. The Torah is a gracious gift. It provided His

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[43] Compare the repeated assertions of the psalmists that (apart from relationship with Yahweh) there is none who does good: 14:1, 4; 53:1, 3.

people with an ever-present reminder of YHWH's deliverance, His power, His covenant faithfulness, and the way of life and prosperity.

1. The Problem: Paul versus Moses

But how is this perspective to be reconciled with Paul's outspoken statements regarding the death-dealing effect of the law in contrast to the life that comes by the Spirit (Rom. 2:12–13; 4:13–15; 7:8–9; 8:2–4; 10:4–5; 1 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 3:12–13, 21–24; 5:18)? In answering the question we need to keep in mind several important considerations.

First, Moses' statement concerning the life-giving/sustaining effects of the law is consistent with Moses' teaching in 30:15–20, and is of a piece with the teaching of the Old Testament elsewhere. In Lev. 18:5, YHWH declares, "Keep my ordinances and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am YHWH." Similar statements are found in Ezek. 20:11, 13 and Neh. 9:29. The Psalter begins with an ode to the life-giving nature of the law (1:1–6), and Psalm 119, by far the longest piece in this collection, is devoted entirely to the positive nature of the law. References to the relationship between keeping the law are common: vv. 17, 40, 77, 93, 97, 116, 144, 156, 159, 175. The basic Old Testament stance is summarized by Hab. in 2:4, which in context is best interpreted, "As for the proud one, his person (נֶפֶשׁ) is not right on the inside; but the righteous in his faithfulness shall live." Ezekiel offers an extended exposition of this notion in 18:1–23. After describing the ethical behavior of a man, on behalf of YHWH, he declares "He is righteous; he shall surely live" (v. 9). After describing the unethical behavior of his son he declares, "He has committed all these abominations; he shall surely be put to death" (v. 13). Later he declares that if a wicked man turns from his wickedness and observes all of YHWH's ordinances, and practices righteousness and justice, "he shall surely live" (vv. 21–23).[44] The assumption in each case is that the outward actions reflect the inner spirit of the person,[45] on the basis of which a judgment concerning the spiritual status of the person may be made and the sentence of life or death rendered.

Second, from a hermeneutical and theological perspective, later revelation cannot correct earlier revelation, as if there were some defect in it. Later revelation may be more precise and more nuanced, but it cannot be more true. Accordingly, Paul cannot be interpreted as correcting Moses, as if Moses was wrong or there was some kind of error in his teaching. If Paul appears to declare something different from Moses, who celebrates the life-giving/sustaining function of the law (cf. Lev. 18:5), then we need to ask whether or not he is addressing the same issues as Moses was. His statements must be interpreted both in the light of Moses and in the context of particu-

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[44] For detailed discussion of this chapter, see Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1–24* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 554–90.

[45] This principle is operative also in Jesus' teaching: Matt. 7:15–23.

lar arguments. In both Romans and Galatians Paul was responding to those who insist that salvation comes by the works of the law, as represented by circumcision. To those who represent this view he replies that if one looks to the law as a way of salvation, it will lead to death. On the other hand, if one looks to the law as a guide for those already saved, it yields life (cf. Gal. 5:13–25). On this matter Moses and Paul are in perfect agreement. In fact, Paul himself says, "It is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified" (Rom. 2:13). The notion of "the obedience of faith," that is, a faith that is demonstrated through acts of obedience, is common to Old and New Testaments. Both testaments attest to the same paradigm:

- YHWH's gracious (i.e., unmerited) saving actions yields the fruit of a redeemed people.
- A redeemed people yields the fruit of righteous deeds.
- Righteous deeds yield the fruit of divine blessing.

It is evident from the New Testament that in the light of Christ Christians do indeed have a new disposition toward the law. Not only do they see him as its fulfillment and through their union with him delight in its fulfillment themselves, but the law of God is written on Christian's hearts even as it was written on the hearts of true believers in the Old Testament. But we should not imagine that the law written on our hearts is different from the law revealed under the old covenant. Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15), and "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him" (14:21). In lifting these statements right out of Deuteronomy Jesus identifies himself with YHWH in the Old Testament. Furthermore, his use of the plural τὰς ἐντολάς μου, "my commandments," presupposes a specific body of laws with which the disciples are familiar. Here Jesus does not say generically and vaguely, "If you love me you will do as I say," as if this refers to marching orders for the future.

Accordingly, when we reflect on whether or not Christians need to keep any or all of the Old Testament laws, perhaps we have been asking the wrong question all along. When we are confronted with a specific commandment from the Pentateuch, instead of asking, "Do I as a Christian have to keep this commandment?" perhaps we should be asking, "How can I as a Christian keep this commandment?" Of course, when we read the commands concerning the sacrifices, we recognize that the blood of bulls and goats could never by itself take away sin (Heb. 10:4), but we keep these laws by celebrating the fact that when the Old Testament rituals were performed in faith by those who walked with God, the sacrifice of Christ, slain before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:18–20),[46] was applied to them, and that this sacrifice has

[46] Cf. Matt. 25:34; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3; 9:26; Rev. 13:8; 17:8.

been offered for us, once and for all. When we approach the laws concerning the civil administration of Israel we analyze the functions and objectives of those laws and translate them into equivalent goals for the people of God in our context. When we encounter criminal laws, we interpret the drastic responses required as reflective of the heinousness of the crimes in the eyes of God. When we read the family laws we hear the voice of God affirming the sanctity of this institution and the responsibilities of all members for the maintenance of the household. And when we hear the pleas for compassion to the poor and the marginalized members of society, we remember not only the words of the Old Testament sage:

> Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker,
> but he who is generous to the needy honors him. (Prov. 14:31)

> Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker;
> he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished. (Prov 17:5)

2. The Solution

How then are New Testament Christians to apply the Old Testament law to their own lives? It is evident from the deliberations and the decisions of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:1–21 that in the light of the cross and the redemptive work of Christ Gentile Christians are not subject to the laws of the old covenant in the same way that Jewish Christ-believers are; particularly that conformity to the ritual laws (specifically circumcision) was not to be viewed as a precondition to salvation (v. 1). On the other hand, the Council did not absolve Gentile Christians of any and all accountability to God as outlined in previous revelation. On the contrary, the demand that Gentile believers "abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood" (v. 20; cf. 29) assumes not only familiarity with the Old Testament laws, but also a continued relevance of some of those laws for New Testament believers.[47] These prohibitions may be viewed as shorthand for Deuteronomic calls for exclusive allegiance to YHWH/Christ, scrupulous ethical purity, and the respect for the sanctity of all life, including that of animals whose flesh we may legitimately consume as food.

> How then should Christians approach the Old Testament laws? Let me offer a few suggestions.

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[47] For further discussion of this issue, see Richard M. Davidson, "Which Torah Laws Should Gentile Christians Obey? The Relationship Between Leviticus 17-18 and Acts 15," paper presented to the Evangelical Theological Society in San Diego, November 15, 2007; Richard Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church," in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, vol. 4 of The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 459-67; idem, "James and the Gentiles (Acts 15.13–21)," in *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts*, ed. Ben Witherington, III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 172-78. I am grateful to Robin Parry for drawing these Bauckham texts to my attention.

First, Christians must take 2 Tim. 3:15–17 as the starting point, recognizing that this statement not only affirms the reliability of the Old Testament as divinely breathed Scripture, but especially that it is ethically relevant and through its application God creates a transformed people. This means also that before we impose the Old Testament laws on others, we must adopt the commitments of Ezra as our own, setting our hearts to study, to apply and to teach it to God's people (Ezra 7:10).

Second, while we recognize that with the sacrifice of Christ all the Old Testament sacrifices have been terminated, we also recognize the essential theological and ethical unity of the two Testaments, a unity that is summarized in Jesus' call for covenantal commitment (love) to God and to one's fellow human beings. This means that the redeemed scrupulously seek to please God in all of life (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17, 23; cf. Leviticus 19), and they compassionately always put the welfare of others ahead of their own (Phil. 2:3–4). At the same time we look to the New Testament for guidance on which Old Testament laws have been rendered obsolete in Christ. Most American evangelical Christians assume that unless the New Testament expressly affirms the continued relevance of an Old Testament ordinance we may assume it has been abrogated in Christ. One should probably rather adopt the opposite stance: unless the New Testament expressly declares the end of an Old Testament ordinance (e.g., the sacrifices), we assume its authority for believers today continues.

Third, we recognize that without the background of Old Testament law Paul's call for obedience to the "law of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2), and Jesus' call for adherence to the "commandments" remain vague and empty, subject to anybody's personal and subjective interpretation. Familiarity with the Old Testament laws is indispensable for an understanding of Jesus' and Paul's ethical exhortations.

Fourth, even as we accept the fundamental theological and ethical unity of the Testaments, we must respect the distinctions among different categories of Old Testament law.[48] By "categories" here I do not mean the classical distinctions of moral, ceremonial, and civil laws, which in any case are not biblical categories, but the laws governing criminal, civic, family, cultic, and social affairs. In some of these the relevance for New Testament believers is on the surface (Deut. 6:4–5), but in others it may be couched in culturally specific terms. This is the case for example in the law concerning houses with parapets (Deut. 22:8). In arguing for the ongoing relevance of this commandment we obviously do not mean that Christians must build houses with parapets. Rather, we recognize and live by the theological principle illustrated by this law: heads of households must ensure the well-being of all who enter their homes. In the context of a modern city like Chicago, this translates into

[48] In the following comments I am heavily indebted to Christopher Wright. See especially his four methodological principles outlined in *Walking in the Ways of the Lord*, pp. 114–16.

an appeal to keep the sidewalk leading up to the house clear of ice and snow in the winter.

This leads to the fifth suggestion, namely to investigate carefully not only the features of Old Testament laws, but especially their social function and theological underpinnings. Many of the specific regulations (e.g. haircuts, tattoos and gashing the body, Lev. 19:27–28) represent responses to specific pagan customs, whose nature can only be determined by careful consideration of the cultural context out of which these ordinances arose and which they seek to address. In Deuteronomy in particular we observe a fundamental concern to protect the weak and vulnerable from abuse and exploitation at the hands of those with economic and political power. The principles obviously have permanent relevance.

Sixth, seize the underlying principles of those that are culturally and contextually specific and apply those principles to the contexts in which we live. It is impossible to establish the particular kind of haircut Lev. 19:27 seeks to ban, but it is not difficult to identify parallel contemporary practices that need to be reined in. While hairstyles change from generation to generation, and even from year to year, surely the principle applies to all forms of dress that represent ungodly values.

The problem of applying Old Testament laws to contemporary contexts is much more complex that these few summary statements would imply. However, the time has come for us to re-examine the fundamental assumptions that we bring to the matter. Hear me carefully. I am not hereby advocating any kind of works salvation, that is, a view that if we keep the laws the right way we will have merited salvation. No one has ever been saved by works. Salvation is made possible only through the unmerited grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ. Salvation is a gift to be received by faith, not earned by human effort. But we are concerned about a salvation that works, that is, that results in a life that conforms to the will of God. At issue is the believer's sanctification. While obedience is not a prerequisite to salvation, it is the key to the blessing of the redeemed. The relationship between obedience to the law and the believer's well-being is declared by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the Sage *par excellence* of the New Testament:

> Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me."
>
> Then the righteous will answer him, saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?"
>
> And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." (Matt. 25:34–40, ESV).

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One More Look at Martha's "Perfect" Statement in John 11:27

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In the paradigmatic story of the raising of Lazarus, Martha declares that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world." This response concludes the exchange between Jesus and Martha in the context of the death of Lazarus. Earlier on in the proceedings, having heard that Jesus has arrived after some delay, Martha expresses, with some bitterness, her conviction that had Jesus been around when her brother Lazarus was ill, he would not have died. But she slowly enters into the realm of faith by acknowledging that Jesus can do whatever he asks of God. Indeed, Jesus assures her that Lazarus will rise again. Martha however seems to have understood Jesus' words as referring to the general resurrection on the last day. Jesus clarifies and corrects Martha. He tells her that the life he offers is both a here-and-now and a hereafter reality realized in his own person since he is the resurrection and the life and that anyone who believes in him even if he dies will live and never die.[1] Jesus directly asks Martha if she *believes* this. Martha responds by saying, "Yes Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world" (11:27).

Some scholars have characterized Martha's response negatively, claiming that Martha's confession of belief is inadequate or less than perfect.[2] Others

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[1] Commentators widely discuss this statement of Jesus. For the proposal that the two seemingly contradictory statements are in fact elucidations of the earlier claim of Jesus that he is the resurrection and the life, see C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953. repr. 1965), p. 365. According to Harold S. Songer, "John 5–12: Opposition to the Giving of True Life," *Review and Expositor* 85 (1988), p. 467: "The response of Jesus is an *egō eimi* statement and defines who Jesus is in relation to persons: the dead who believe in Jesus will rise, and the living who believe will never die spiritually." See also C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text Second Edition* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), pp. 395-96; George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* WBC 36 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), pp. 190-91; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), pp. 335-36; Philip F. Esler and Ronald A. Piper, *Lazarus, Mary & Martha A Social-Scientific and Theological Reading of John* (London: SCM, 2006), pp. 123-25; Marianne Meye Thompson, "The Raising of Lazarus in John 11: A Theological Reading," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), pp. 239-41.

[2] See for instance, R.H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel A Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 222; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* AB 29 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 1: p. 434; Brendan Byrne, *Lazarus: A Contemporary Reading of John 11:1-46* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), pp. 53-54; Ben Witherington III, *John's Wisdom A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: WJK, 1995),

have claimed that Martha has movingly made a full-blown and complete Johannine Christological confession without necessarily knowing the full implications of her confession.[3] Using the perfect tense of the verb πιστεύειν ("to believe"), she demonstrates ideal faith and shows her settled and enduring conviction, thereby giving voice to the theological emphasis of John 11.[4] Martha's words therefore reflect early creedal statements concerning Jesus. Put differently, one interpretation is that her declaration is composed of an ideal language of an in-group, or an "expression of unique information reserved for elites in the group."[5] In any case, belief is pivotal in this encounter between Jesus and Martha.

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p. 203. Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 190-91, seemed to have changed his opinion regarding Martha's confession. Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), p. 330, claims that "Mary is the character in the story reflecting true faith."

[3] Juan Manuel Martín-Moreno, *Personajes del Cuarto Evangelio* (Bilbao: Desclée De Brouwer, 2002), p. 183, notes that despite not fully understanding Jesus' revelatory statement, Martha makes a true Johannine confession of faith. See also Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (New York: Hendrickson, 2005), p. 325.

[4] See for instance Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John A Commentary* (trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray, R.W.N. Hoare, J.K. Riches; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), p. 404; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (London: Oliphants, 1972), p. 396; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John Volume 2 Commentary on Chapters 5–12* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), p. 332; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), p. 142; Ernst Haenchen, *John 2 A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 7-21* (trans. Robert W. Funk; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), p. 144; Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 192; Raymond F. Collins, *These Things Have Been Written: Studies on the Fourth Gospel* (Louvain: Peeters, 1990), p. 27; Sandra M. Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), p. 158; Wendy E. Sproston North, *The Lazarus Story within the Johannine Tradition* (JSNTSup 212; Sheffield: Academic Press, 2001), p. 143-44; Cornelis Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009),p. 149. John Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah The History, Literature and Theology of the Johannine Community Second Edition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), p. 372, calls Martha's declaration "the climactic confession of faith in this chapter" while John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel Second Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 332, notes its creedal character.

Urban C. von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John Volume 2 Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), p. 494, p. 501, considers Martha's response an ideal and fully adequate confession, noting that internal inconsistencies in the story are due to the various editions of the gospel. It is noted however that future and present eschatology (cf. also 5:21-30) found in this statement of Jesus is neither a contradiction nor a sign of redaction but a way to show that all eschatological hopes are realized in Jesus. See for instance George W. MacRae, "The Fourth Gospel and *Religionsgeschichte*," *CBQ* 32 (1970), pp. 18-19. Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John A Commentary Volume 2* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), pp. 844-45, suggests that by placing the confession on Martha's lips as well as on Peter's in 6:69, John is "intentionally balancing gender," suggesting a high regard for women's faith in the community. Brown, *Community of Beloved Disciple*, pp. 190-92, made similar comments earlier.

[5] Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 196. See also Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), p. 199.

More than any other commentator, Francis Moloney has explored the force and value of the perfect tense in Martha's statement. With the narrative context in mind, he considers it to be a genuine perfect tense that indicates Martha's arrogance as she tells Jesus in effect that she has held the belief that Jesus fulfills her messianic hopes for a long time before Jesus even declares that he is the resurrection and the life. Her faith precedes the invitation of Jesus to believe his word. In other words, Martha seems to have missed the self-disclosure of Jesus as she "boasts of having already arrived at faith" and thus fails to comprehend Jesus.[6] Such a judgment is perhaps a bit harsh, if not downright unfair.

Does Martha's statement indicate her firm conviction and perfect faith or does it betray a lack of true faith and thus arrogance on her part? The answer lies in her use of the verb πιστεύειν ("to believe"). When Jesus questions Martha, he uses the present tense of the verb πιστεύεις. But Martha responds by using πεπίστευκα, the perfect, active indicative. The writer seems to have made a deliberate choice to employ the perfect tense of the verb since *prima facie* the present tense might seem more logical for her reply. Many English translations (NRSV, RSV, NIV, NJB) and commentators sweep this grammatical jolt aside. Typically, they render Martha's response in the present. Although such a translation move allows for the story to flow more smoothly, it nonetheless conceals the significance of Martha's use of the perfect tense. In light of how the gospel reveals who Jesus is and how various characters perceive him, expressing Martha's statement in the perfect is an effective way to come to a narrative convergence of and eventual resolution to Johannine Christological claims.

It is the thesis of this essay that Martha's "perfect" statement is better appreciated if it is put in the context of John's story of how Jesus fulfills his role to reveal the Father.[7] On the eve of the passion as the public ministry of Jesus nears its end, Martha uses the titles "Messiah," "Son of God" and the "One coming into the world" in their traditional senses as other characters have done before her. At this point in the story, various characters have encountered the words and accompanying works of Jesus but the titles they have used for him have yet to be expanded and ultimately transformed. The raising of Lazarus is the seventh and last sign for belief in the Book of Signs. By asserting the traditional titles at this narrative juncture, the dramatic exchange makes it possible for these titles while Martha is in the state of believing to absorb the self-disclosure of Jesus as the conqueror of death and the

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[6] Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, p. 328, p. 339. See also his "Can Everyone be Wrong? A Reading of John 11.1–12.8," *NTS* 49 (2003), pp. 513-15; *Signs and Shadows Reading John 5–12* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), pp. 162-63; and his "The Faith of Martha and Mary A Narrative Approach to John 11, 17-40," *Bib* 75 (1994), pp. 473-79.

[7] Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 86-99, notes that the plot of the gospel revolves around the task of Jesus to reveal the Father. The recognition or non-recognition of Jesus' identity with the consequent belief or non-belief is pivotal to the plot.

agent of life, later to be hinted at by the raising of Lazarus and ultimately to be fully revealed at the hour of his lifting up. It is at this point when the narrator, with the aid of Martha, redefines these traditional titles in terms of John's main Christological claim, allowing them to converge just before the fullest revelation of Jesus as resurrection and life at his hour. At the end of the gospel, as the evangelist states his purpose (cf. 20:30-31), it is precisely this revelation that invites a personal response.

The Perfect

The perfect indicative active tense in Greek traditionally connotes past or completed action that has consequences in the present. In *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics*, Daniel B. Wallace claims that in the case of intensive or resultative perfect, the stress falls on the resultant state generated by a past action. With its emphasis on the present result or existing state, an intensive perfect is best rendered in English as a present tense. In the case of the extensive or consummative perfect, the emphasis is on the completed action in the past instead of the present state produced by the action. An extensive perfect is best translated into English as a present perfect.

Wallace lists Martha's use of the perfect tense as an instance of intensive perfect.[8] In this case, the English translations that render Martha's πεπίστευκα in the present tense understand it as an intensive perfect, accenting the fact that Martha's belief is an existing conviction.[9] Moloney, however, seems to claim that this perfect is an extensive perfect stressing a completed event in the past and which should be translated in English as a present perfect. Moloney's reading of the perfect of Martha's reply as extensive stresses Martha's completed past act of believing that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God. In this reading, Martha brims with pride as she expresses her long-held convictions about Jesus without taking his self-disclosure into account.[10] It is quite difficult however to conclude tone from tense. Whether it displays Martha's arrogance is quite another matter.

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[8] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), p. 576.

[9] F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 245, notes that "the perfect tense (pepisteuka) differs little in force from the present (pisteuō): 'I have come to believe', she means, 'and now, as a settled attitude of soul, I believe." Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John A Theological Commentary* (trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 399, also thinks that the perfect is used here to express "the continuation of what has been completed." Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971; repr. 1989), p. 551, claims that the force of the perfect indicates a "faith once given and permanently remaining." Edwin A. Abbot, *Johannine Grammar* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006, orig. 1906), p. 345, says that Martha's statement "I have believed" can mean "perfect conviction" or "firmness of conviction," in the words of Colleen M. Conway, *Men and Women in the Fourth Gospel Gender and Johannine Characterization* (Atlanta: SBL, 1999), p. 141.

[10] Moloney, *Gospel of John*, p. 328.

The English verb "to believe" can be both transitive and intransitive. When it is used transitively, the meaning conveys the idea of "accepting something or the statement of someone as true." When it is used intransitively, the verb means "to have faith." When Jesus asks Martha[11] if she believes what Jesus has just revealed to her, the verb is transitive. As Rudolf Schnackenburg observed, the statement πιστεύεις τουτο is the only instance in the gospel of John where the verb "to believe" takes an object expressed in this case in the accusative.[12] This means that Jesus is asking Martha to believe as true his statement of self-revelation; he challenges Martha to accept as true the staggering word *that* he is the resurrection and the life.[13] That Jesus is both the light as he reveals in the healing of the man born blind and the life as he practically demonstrates in raising Lazarus from the dead are central Christological claims in John.[14] In other words, he is asking Martha to believe the content of his self-revelation. When Martha responds with her "perfect" statement, she also employs the verb transitively. She produces another statement as the direct object of her belief, a statement that identifies Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God who is coming into the world.

It is instructive to look at Martha's use of the perfect of the verb "to believe" in terms of verbal aspect. Aspect is a semantic category that deals with the focus or the point of view of the action, either internal or external, which the writer or speaker wishes to present.[15] Stanley Porter claims that the perfect has a stative aspect. Martha says in effect, "I am in a state of believing." This means that Martha views or depicts her action of believing as reflecting

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[11] Neyrey, *The Gospel of John*, p. 197, n. 314, considers Martha the central character in this episode because of her extended exchange with Jesus.

[12] Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John 2:* p. 332.

[13] See Robert Kysar, *John The Maverick Gospel Revised Edition* (Louisville: WJK, 1993), p. 93. Von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, p. 494, observes that this identification of Jesus as the resurrection and the life "implies the highest level of Christology in the Gospel."Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Lazarus Story: A Literary Perspective," in Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser, *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), pp. 217-23, notes that this divine claim and characterization of Jesus is balanced in John 11 by a strong stress on human elements not necessarily found in the rest of the gospel.

[14] See Dorothy A. Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel The Interplay of Form and Meaning* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), p. 190, claiming that John 9 and 11 are "a narrative diptych" that expresses the main Christological claim of the gospel. Margaret M. Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel A Genuine Discipleship of Equals* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), pp. 115-39, regards the Man Born Blind and Martha as "a Johannine gender pair," the response of each to Jesus' self-revelation portrays the stages of growth in faith.

[15] Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p. xi, p. 88, defines verbal aspect as a semantic category which "grammaticalizes the author's reasoned subjective choice of conception of a process." Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 85, states that "aspect is concerned with the speaker's viewpoint concerning the action in the sense that it implicitly sets up a relationship from which the action is viewed. The crucial aspectual distinction is whether this reference point is internal or external to the action."

a given state of affairs without any reference to its beginning or end. Instead, Martha as the grammatical subject of the verb is the reference of the occurring action or the focus of the state of believing to which the evangelist wishes to draw the reader's attention.[16] In this seventh and last sign, which in the Fourth Gospel is always associated with belief, Martha becomes the prominent Johannine character whose act and state of believing is given a sharpened and close-up view.

With the perfect, Martha's action of believing is presented from an internal viewpoint. Certainly, Martha's act of believing has a beginning point in the past prior to the questioning of Jesus and antecedent to the time of her speaking, but as to when that state of believing began or when it will end is unspecified as this is not the primary concern. The use of the perfect in Martha's response to Jesus gives her state of believing that Jesus is Messiah and Son of God a heightened immediacy. This is due to the fact that the perfect presents her act of believing from the inside as though it is unfolding with a view of the details. Indeed, the specifics of the content which is the object of Martha's act of believing are clarified and expanded.

To summarize, the perfect in Martha's response is stative as it denotes her state of believing. In another sense, the verb which is in the perfect implies an action that is transitive in this particular case. Martha's ὅτι ("that") statement grammatically corresponds to the accusative τοῦτο of Jesus' question. Her indirect statement is the direct object of the verb "to believe" in the perfect; she declares this propositional content as the specific object of her action of believing. Yet, the τοῦτο of Jesus, which contains his self-revelation as master of life and death, precedes her confession. This gives precision and expansion to the unfolding content of Martha's belief as she uses the titles to respond to Jesus while she is in a state of believing.

Martha's Response

At first sight it might be said that Martha's response to Jesus seems slightly off, as if she lost the flow of the argument before replying. One would expect Martha to say in response, "Yes Lord, I *do* believe that you are the resurrection and the life"[17] since this is the statement to which Jesus asks Martha to give her assent. Martha does not use the present tense and she does not affirm Jesus' statement about life and resurrection and so she does not respond to the question Jesus poses. As noted above, Martha declares another statement using three titles for Jesus. Perhaps Martha, who has a

[16] See the discussion of the stative aspect of the perfect in Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), pp. 20-21, pp. 39-40. See also Stanley E. Porter, Jeffrey T. Reed and Matthew Brook O'Donnell, *Fundamentals of New Testament Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), p. 319. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, pp. 116-17, however, considers stativity as a kind of action or *Aktionsart* value rather than aspect.

[17] Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 394.

predilection for using the perfect tense in this episode (cf. 11:22, 24, 27) is yet to grasp the novelty of Jesus' self-disclosing word and does not know how to deal with it, declaring instead that she has believed perfectly that Jesus is the Anointed and Son of God coming to the world.

Martha's act of believing has an object or propositional content since ὅτι is a conjunction that introduces the indirect statement that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God who is coming into the world. Martha has held and accepted this statement as true. Most likely, her statement reflects traditional messianic expectations; it is a statement that she has believed concerning Jesus for some time up to this point in this story of revelation. Since the understanding of these titles has developed according to the revelation of Jesus' identity, Martha's use of the perfect underscores her state of believing which she knows to express thus far only in terms of traditional titles that other characters have used to show belief in Jesus, however imperfect. How the titles have been employed in the narrative up to this point influences Martha's situation of believing when she declares them as a response to Jesus. Martha's state of believing is invited however to open out to the self-disclosure of Jesus as resurrection and life.

Is it legitimate to say, though, that Martha has made an "act of trust in Jesus personally, using a series of three messianic titles," as Barnabas Lindars and some others have claimed?[18] From narrative indications, the reader can be sure that Martha does have every confidence in the person of Jesus, since in 11:22 she says that God would grant whatever he asked.[19] This is not however what Jesus is asking Martha. Had Jesus wanted Martha to believe in his person, Jesus would have used the expression πιστεύεις εἰς ἐμέ which he just used in 11:26 (cf. also 9:35-38; 12:44, 46). To pin her hopes and faith in the person of Jesus is not the point here, as this is already presumed in her earlier description as a loved follower (cf. 11:5). Why else would Martha bother the Lord if she did not have faith and confidence in the person of Jesus? Her response dramatizes rather how the self-disclosure of Jesus illuminates these titles. Martha echoes the titles various characters in the gospel have ascribed to Jesus, lending her voice to all the previous but necessarily incomplete knowledge of Jesus who is often referred to as the Messiah and the Christ coming into the world.[20] For the many characters that have declared Jesus as

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[18] See for instance Lindars, *Gospel of John*, p. 396; Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, p. 245; Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe*, p. 158. D.A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 414, suggests that Martha's response to Jesus reflects confident trust that involves "a mixture of personal trust (fiducia) and of confidence that certain things about Jesus are true (assensus)."

[19] For Sproston North, *The Lazarus Story*, p. 114, Martha's response is a version of the "ask, and it will be given" logion, which "serves to focus attention on Jesus' God-given powers and so provides a point of entry into the teaching on Jesus as life-giver and agent of resurrection…"

[20] Conway, *Men and Women in the Fourth Gospel*, p. 141, claims that "Martha, like the Samaritan woman, gains additional insight from Jesus' clarification.

such thus far, these titles are not necessarily related to life and resurrection. On the eve of his hour, as the story of revelation unfolds and Jesus concludes his mission and three-year public ministry, the narrative time has come for these traditional titles to acquire a new sense by letting the light of Jesus' self-revelation clarify and illuminate them.

Jesus therefore is introducing Martha to a more profound meaning of her belief, inviting her in fact to make the leap that he as the Anointed and Son of God is God's agent of life and resurrection. To bring his friends to authentic belief in him as the Sent One by seeing the glory of God in him is after all the stated reason for the raising of Lazarus (11:14-15; 39). The existing state of Martha's belief and knowledge of Jesus needs to expand and grow, but up to this point in the narrative, this is all Martha knows to say of Jesus, and who could fault her for declaring what she knows? Martha, who has a discerning and open-ended faith (cf.11:22), has always believed in Jesus, but she is yet to let Jesus' personal disclosure redefine the way she employs these titles presumably after the accompanying sign. Martha's "perfect" statement of belief is meant to show story-wise that the use of such titles is yet to catch up with the self-revelation of Jesus as to what the Christ truly is. That Jesus' self-disclosing word and his glory-revealing work sandwich Martha's "perfect" and bold confession is a strong indication of this dramatic unfolding and process of revelatory illumination.

It is often said that Martha shows lack of belief before the tomb of Lazarus as the odor of death confronts her (11:39). Whereas Jesus uses πιστεύεις, the indicative present active of the verb πιστεύω, to ask Martha earlier to believe his revelation in 11:26b, he now uses πιστεύσης, the aorist subjunctive of the same verb, to challenge Martha to believe, saying "Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" (11:40).This does not imply Martha's lack of faith.[21] Rather, Jesus' use of the aorist subjunctive of the verb "to believe" means that Jesus is projecting a possible state of believing for Martha that may obtain at some time and may even now exist.[22] In other words, Martha already believes but her current state of believing will come to a later point at which a new situation of believing that the Messiah and Son of God is life-giver and agent of resurrection begins. The obedience to the word of Jesus, manifest in the taking away of the stone (cf. 11:41), either by Martha and Mary or by others with their permission, is a pointer to this state of belief. Indeed, with the sign of raising Lazarus to life,

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[21] Esler and Piper, *Lazarus, Mary & Martha*, p. 120, claim that it is Martha's lack of understanding of Jesus' intention, not her lack of faith that is at issue here. In addition, Martha's statement could be viewed as giving voice to the indubitable reality of Lazarus' death. Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel*, p. 134, notes that "the 'sign' which will confirm that Jesus does indeed have the power over life and death becomes for her the means by which the faith she already possesses will be perfected…"

[22] For a discussion of the aorist subjunctive, see Porter, Reed and O'Donnell, *Fundamentals of New Testament Greek*, p. 155.

Martha's state of believing that Jesus is the Anointed and Son of God coming into the world fully deepens and opens out now to embrace the claim that Jesus is the agent of resurrection and life. There is then a possible state of believing in which the self-revelation of Jesus as giver of life and victor over death expands, revolutionizes even, the senses of the traditional titles. The widened and enriched space of believing seen in the complete realization of what it means to call Jesus the Christ and Son of God coming into the world is the kind of faith to which the Fourth Gospel invites its readers.

Johannine Characters and Titles for Jesus

Martha's confession of Jesus using three titles bears some resemblance to Peter's confession in 6:69. Both ascribe to Jesus a particular title, and both use the perfect to express their statements. At the conclusion of the bread of life discourse, Jesus challenges the twelve and asks them if they too wish to go away. Peter responds on behalf of the twelve by saying that "we have believed and we have come to know that you are the Holy One of God." The object of the verbs in the perfect "to believe" and "to know" taken as one expression, a hendiadys to convey certainty of conviction, is the statement that Jesus is the Holy One of God. The use of the perfects indicates that their Jewish expectations had been surpassed and that they now have a "firmly established attitude of faith"[23] and an intensified insight into Jesus. They know this of Jesus, and for them, this fact remains known. After being with Jesus, witnessing his works and hearing his words along the journey for some time, Peter and the disciples may have intuited that Jesus enjoys a unique relationship with God the Father (cf. 5:19-30). Since Jesus has already been confessed as the Messiah in the presence of Peter (1:41), Peter declares his firm knowledge that Jesus is the Holy One, the one set apart for and sent by God (cf. 10:36; 17:19). Since the essence of God is holiness, the title suggests Jesus' closeness and intimacy with God.[24] But what this description of messianic identity exactly implies at this point in the story, the disciples can only gather from the sign of the feeding of the multitude and the consequent bread of life discourse of Jesus. Peter's response can only hint at how Jesus' intimacy with God relates to Jesus' words of eternal life.

Nathanael is the first character in the gospel to declare that Jesus is the Son of God (1:49). His understanding of Jesus as the Son of God, however, is tied to the notion of kingship. In the Old Testament, the king of Israel is considered a son of God (cf. Ps 110:3). That Nathanael would call Jesus "Rabbi," "Son of God" and "King of Israel" implies that he does not have an adequate understanding of Jesus as the Son of God. Nathanael equates the

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[23] Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John*, p. 76; Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, p. 249, n.177. See also Moloney, *Gospel of John*, p. 229; Keener, *Gospel of John*, p. 697.

[24] Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John,* p. 77. See also Neyrey, *Gospel of John*, p. 134.

sonship of Jesus with kingship. This is unlike Jesus' appropriation of the title for himself when he talks about the power of the Son to give life to the dead who hear the voice of the Son of God (5:20-26). With this title, Jesus expresses a unique relationship with God, a relationship such that Jesus can do what God alone has the prerogative to do, namely the raising of the dead and the granting of life (cf. 17:1-3). Unlike Nathanael who speaks from a human perspective, Jesus understands that he has a divine mission and so operates from a divine perspective.[25]

Andrew is the first character in the fourth gospel to use the title Messiah or Christ when describing Jesus to his brother Simon Peter (1:41). John the Baptist indirectly refers to Jesus as the Anointed when he clarifies his identity as the one sent before the Christ in 3:28. The Samaritan woman, despite Jesus' assurance to her that he is the Christ, still wonders whether Jesus is indeed the Christ (4:25-29), understanding the title in its traditional sense. It is also likely that the man born blind confesses that Jesus is the Christ (9:22; 35-38). Martha is the last in the line of believing characters in the Book of Signs to declare the content of her belief that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God coming into the world. Many of the friends of Jesus who have encountered him up to this point in the narrative seem aware that Jesus fits the Jewish category of Messiah and Son of God. Certainly, their understanding of these titles as applied to Jesus has to evolve and mature. These titles, valid as they are, will acquire new meaning. Their lack of understanding (cf. 4:33; 6:60-66) is due to no fault of their own, since a new insight into the identity of Jesus as Christ and Son of God will come only from Jesus' self-disclosure.

However incomplete the characters' understanding of Christ, he is "One who is to come into the world," a title that encompasses both the Christological titles of Messiah and Son of God taken as one unit.[26] Martha's use of such a title or description for Jesus has already been employed earlier in the gospel. In the prologue, the true light is described as one who is coming into the world (1:9). The Samaritan woman speaks of Jesus as the Messiah who is coming (4:25). After witnessing the sign of the feeding of the five thousand, the people mistakenly declare that Jesus is truly the prophet who is to come into the world (6:14). Later in the Book of Glory, Jesus categorically declares and identifies himself as that one who has come into the world as light (12:46) and who bears witness to the truth (18:37). Jesus also claims that his coming into the world also means leaving the world to go to the Father (16:28). There are hints throughout the gospel as to what the title "One coming into the world" is about; it of course alludes to the motif of descent, which is a Johannine way of describing Jesus' origin and mission. It also looks forward to the crowd's greeting in 12:13 and relates to the prayer of Jesus in 11:42

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[25] See David Mark Ball, *'I Am' in John's Gospel Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications* JSNTSup 124 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 276-83.

[26] Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John,* p. 332. See also Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah*, n. 19, p. 372.

where he claims that the object of belief is that God has sent him. To comprehend completely the title requires waiting until the hour of full revelation and glorification of Jesus on the cross. It is only then that the one who is coming into the world will be known fully as the Sent one who ushers in the "inbreaking of the beyond into this life"[27] and who brings life and resurrection.

This short survey of the titles that Martha ascribes to Jesus simply shows that these titles have been employed in the gospel before her statement of confession. The use of the perfect in her response despite Jesus' question employing the present tense implies that prior to her speech, this is how the believing characters have so far understood or defined who Jesus is for them. Their understanding of the identity of Jesus is partial and lacking; they are limited in their comprehension. Martha's response recapitulates what the characters have so far expressed regarding who Jesus is.[28] With the perfect, the stress falls on Martha's state of believing, that is, what she and other characters have known and believed about Jesus. Of course, such a state of believing evolves, expands and matures as Jesus discloses who he is and what he is for in this drama of revelation.

Jesus has of course claimed the titles Messiah and Son of God for himself. In his dialogue with the Samaritan woman, Jesus identified himself as the Christ (4:25-26) who is the source of a spring of water that wells up to eternal life (4:14). In the discourse that functions as a response to the controversy provoked by the Sabbath healing of a man who has been ill for 38 years, Jesus claims that the time is coming when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and that those who hear will live (5:25), an association with life that Nathanael who used the same title for Jesus would have missed. On the lips of Jesus, "Messiah" and "Son of God" are defined in terms of his power to give life, an insight that will find dramatic convergence in Martha's confession and Jesus' self-revelation in the last sign in the Book of Signs.

In other words, facile affirmations of Jesus' identity using these titles will undergo a process of deepening. In keeping with the narrative unfolding of revelation, these traditional titles are yet to be exploded and expanded so as to incorporate a deeper and newer understanding of Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God, one who has come into the world to bring light, life and resurrection. The final repetition of the titles on the lips of Martha who is in a state of believing that is as though unfolding makes a point, as it allows the revelation of a propositional truth to become personal in the process of convergence as John's story of Jesus progresses.

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[27] Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, p. 404.

[28] As D. Moody Smith, *John* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), p. 223, has stated, "Martha has gone about as far as anyone can go." Conway, *Men and Women in the Fourth Gospel*, p. 143, observes that unlike the other characters' confessions, Martha's is allowed to stand on its own.

It is interesting to note that Martha's statement that Jesus is Messiah and Son of God and Jesus' statement that he is the resurrection and life are juxtaposed. Jesus asserts that he is life and resurrection while Martha asserts that he is the Messiah and Son of God. No matter, the two affirmations are brought together, the one qualifying the other. To Jesus' claim of "I am," Martha responds with a "You are." The "I am" of Jesus in fact subsumes the "You are" of Martha. The difference lies in the predicates of the two statements but identification is being asserted; the identification of the subject implies also the functional identification of the predicates. In the reader's mind, Jesus' statement of self-revelation now colors or shadows Martha's response that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God,[29] something that is fully confirmed as both assertions converge in the sign of raising Lazarus back to life. Jesus' self-disclosure redefines the titles and links a new meaning to them. In other words, the identity of Jesus whose word and work revealed him as the divine agent of life and resurrection is integrated into Martha's claim that he is the Christ and the Messiah. Through Jesus' revelation and Martha's "perfect" confession, these traditional titles – taken together – acquire a new content that specifies a personal, Christological and soteriological conviction.

A beloved of Jesus (cf. 11:5), Martha receives Jesus' self-revelation, giving her high status and making her a member of the elite flock whose sheep hear the words of Jesus.[30] After witnessing the culminating sign (cf. 12:18) in the raising of Lazarus, Martha glimpses the glory of God,[31] inviting her to incorporate fully into her belief the eschatological role of the Messiah, namely that the Anointed is indeed the giver of present and future life. Certainly, a full comprehension of what this means is possible only after the hour of Jesus' lifting up is finished at his glorification and resurrection, to which the raising of Lazarus points.

Far from being arrogant, Martha's knowledge of Jesus as Messiah is limited but open-ended, and from her limited knowledge, she can only acclaim and express her belief in Jesus as other characters have so far done. In other words, Martha's "perfect" statement implicitly continues the belief in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God but transforms at the same time that which has been completed in the narrative, implying that the present and implicit consequence and content of such a belief continues to unfurl in light of Jesus self-disclosure. Martha comprehends the full weight of the words of Jesus as the story of revelation unfolds. The dramatic exchange has provided a way for these titles to be affirmed and redefined at the same time.

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[29] As David Mark Ball, *'I Am' in John's Gospel,* p. 106, observes, "Martha serves as a foil to the characterization of Jesus, enabling the writer to draw out in relief his conviction concerning Jesus."

[30] Neyrey, *Gospel of John*, p. 196; Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 123-37.

[31] Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 194. Brown, *Gospel according to John*, p. 429, says that the miracles of Jesus are "signs of what he is and what he has come to give man, but in none of them does the sign more closely approach the reality than in the gift of life."

The identity of Jesus, who he is, is one of the major preoccupations of John's gospel. Jesus as a character in the fourth gospel is endowed with an aura of mystery.[32] Many characters desire to know who he is (cf. 6:25). The response to the invitation "what are you seeking?" which are the very first words of Jesus in the Gospel (1:38), is for them to come and see, to experience Jesus (cf. 1:46; 12:20). They look for him but they cannot find him (cf. 7:10-11, 34-35). When they do find him, they realize that there is a "more" quality about him. He is elusive and often escapes their notice even when he is in their midst. His disciples often lack the correct understanding of who he is. Various characters have a notion of him but Jesus corrects these notions with his self-revelation along the way if they persevere in following him. He cannot be tied to their fixed ideas of Messiah and Son of God. His self-revealing word facilitates the developing or ascending process of grasping his identity, implying that to have a proper Christological knowledge involves abiding in and staying with Jesus (cf. 15:7-8).

The pattern of Martha's coming into fuller understanding of these titles as applied to Jesus and what they mean for human life is also the pattern for the post-Easter community's comprehension of the identity of Jesus.[33] The circle of friends of Jesus undergoes a process of coming to a faith that reaches mature expression in the resurrection of Jesus and the sending of the Spirit. So for those outside of the narrative, it means relying on the work of the Spirit who reveals and communicates the truths about Jesus and his words and works in light of the community's situation (cf. 16:12-15). Consecrated in the truth, the Spirit penetrates and changes them inwardly with the truth that is the revelation Christ has brought (17:17). Jesus has revealed all truths about himself, but his friends grasp them in a limited way. When the Spirit "who brings the true glory of Jesus to light"[34] comes, the friends of Jesus will be led "to comprehend the depths and heights of the revelation as yet unperceived by them."[35]

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[32] See M.W.G. Stibbe, "The Elusive Christ: A New Reading of the Fourth Gospel," *JSNT* 44 (1991), pp. 19-38.

[33] It is often pointed out that Martha is a representative or a prototype figure. See for instance, Collins, *These Things Have Been Written*, p. 27; Esler and Piper, *Lazarus, Mary & Martha*, pp. 86-103; Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel Meaning, Mystery, Community Second Edition* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003), pp. 65-66. Lincoln, "The Lazarus Story," pp. 229-30, claims that if Martha is a representative figure, then the question of Jesus – Do you believe this? – is also posed to the reader. For a discussion of the historicity of the family at Bethany based on the idea of "protective anonymity," see Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 173-89.

[34] Haenchen, *John 2*, p. 144. As Neyrey, *The Gospel of John*, p. 270, also observes, the Spirit for the most part "brings nothing new nor speaks independently of Jesus." See also Francis J. Moloney, *Glory not Dishonor Reading John 13–21* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), pp. 87-88.

[35] Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 283.

The Self-Revelation of Jesus

The revealing word "I am the resurrection and the life," (cf. also 5:21-30), which is the center that draws the Lazarus narrative in,[36] is a novel understanding of messiahship and sonship. Like Martha, any believer to whom it is revealed has the task of integrating this startling revelatory claim into their idea of the Messiah. Martha's coming to full insight concerning Jesus and how these titles bear on the life of the believer reaches a high point in the raising of her brother Lazarus since this sign confirms, concretizes and dramatizes the life-giving work of Jesus showing him to be God's agent of resurrection and life.[37] The raising of Lazarus hints likewise at the unfolding extension and expansion of Martha's comprehension and knowledge of these titles as objects of belief. The various instances of Jesus' "I am" disclosure in terms "that designate basic and universal human needs and desires"[38] (cf. 6:35; 8:12; 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1) help define the contours of his messiahship and sonship.[39] In fact, layers of meaning are revealed and his identity becomes clearer as the story moves along towards the great unveiling which is the hour of Jesus' lifting up and the manifestation of his glory. As C.H. Dodd observed, the story is more than simply about the raising of Lazarus; it is actually a "story of Jesus going to face death in order to conquer death," a pattern earlier alluded to in the Good Shepherd discourse in 10:10-11.[40] Jesus meets the universal human longing for life since this conquest of death reveals Jesus as the giver of life and resurrection, expanding what it means to call Jesus the Messiah and the Son of God who has come into the world.

At the end of the gospel, the writer states that his purpose for its writing is to elicit belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (20:30-31), the selfsame titles Martha used to identify Jesus in her response to Jesus' challenge to believe that he is the resurrection and the life.[41] The goal of the gospel is to

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[36] See Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1984), p. 184; David Mark Ball, *'I Am' in John's Gospel*, p. 103. As Lincoln, *Gospel according to John*, p. 324, also notes, Jesus' question to Martha "underlines both that belief is essential and that Jesus' preceding words are the key to a true understanding of the episode."

[37] According to Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, p. 414, the raising of Lazarus is a "paradigm, an acted parable of the life-giving power of Jesus." Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, p. 244, also calls it "a paradigm of the grant of eternal life to all believers in Jesus." Haenchen, *John 2*, p. 64, claims that the raising alludes to "the bestowal of new existence in fellowship with the Father and with the Son." Barrett, *Gospel according to St John*, pp. 395-96, considers it an action with symbolic significance as it shows Jesus' life-giving power. See also Lindars, *Gospel of John*, p. 400.

[38] Moody Smith Jr, *John*, p. 118.

[39] Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St John*, 2: p. 89, notes that the main purpose of these self-disclosures is to illustrate in a positive way John's revelation of Christ.

[40] Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 367. See also Lincoln, "The Lazarus Story," p. 215, pp. 223-24.

[41] Many commentators have pointed out that Martha's confession and the gospel statement of purpose are parallel. See for instance Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to St John*, 2: p.

confess Jesus as such. The narrator's ideal Johannine confession, however, links the titles to life, claiming that believing in the name of Jesus produces life, a connection that is now made abundantly clear. To understand fully such a claim is made possible only after the drama of revelation has unfolded.

The episode with Jesus and Martha in John 11 previews what comes later in the gospel. Hence, the notion of Jesus as the agent of life now and in the next is a revelatory element that unfolds before Martha in this encounter; it becomes a vital part of her conviction as she sees the glory of God manifested in the raising of Lazarus, which is but a pointer to the hour of Jesus' glory. As the period of signs and coming to belief fades on the eve of Jesus' lifting up, Martha who is in a state of believing serves as a narrative catalyst who facilitates the dramatic convergence of these traditional titles and Jesus' self-disclosure as the giver of life and resurrection. Her "perfect" statement of belief participates in the narrative unfolding of the real meaning of these titles.

Now equipped with the knowledge and the experience that Jesus is indeed life and resurrection, it comes as no surprise to the reader to find at the close of the gospel that the traditional titles "Christ" and "Son of God" are intimately tied to the Johannine theme of life, understanding them in terms of the power of Jesus to bestow life here and the hereafter.[42] In the end, the seeming disconnect in Martha's understanding of Jesus functions as a road sign for the reader to make the necessary connections along the journey of revelation. It has in fact allowed the reader to come to a fuller comprehension of what it means to believe and confess that Jesus is truly the Christ and the Son of God who has come into the world.[43]

332; Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 141; Byrne, *Lazarus*, p. 53; Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 130-31; Köstenberger, *John*, p. 336; Bennema, *Encountering Jesus*, p. 147. Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah*, pp. 465-66, claims that the Johannine Christology expressed in John 20:30-31 fulfills the messianic confessions and quests for the identity of Jesus.

[42] See Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1: pp. 434-35.

[43] I would like to thank the *Southeastern Theological Review* peer blind reviewers for their helpful suggestions as well as Andrew Robinson, Peter Groody, Teresa Stevenson and Elise Garrison for their help.

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Be Holy: A Sermon on 1 Pet. 1:13-21

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Introduction

Today we are going to encounter a command that is both baffling and overwhelming. It is a command that many Christians misinterpret and misapply, the command: "be holy."

We usually have the wrong idea of holiness: we think of holiness as an aloof other-worldliness that is both impossible to maintain and irrelevant to daily living even if we could attain it. That command, however, is one of the most important, and most joy-inducing, commands to obey in the entire Bible. Peter's command is given in the context of his presentation of us, the church, as "aliens" in the world. Only by understanding what it means to be an alien will we ever understand what it means to "be holy."

When people live in a country that is not their own, they can assume one of several identities.[1] The first is that of an immigrant. As an immigrant, they try to become citizens of their host country, even though it is not their original home. Many Christians view the world this way. They may understand that they are citizens of heaven, but for all practical purposes, they live as citizens of the world. This is why they are so concerned with how everything is turning out for them *down here*. They leverage their resources to make a comfortable life *down here*. They fret over their reputation among others *down here*. They worry about what they will miss *down here*. Peter tells us, "No! You are not immigrants in this world!"

A second attitude someone can take is that of a tourist. Tourists never really get involved. After all, they are just passing through. They do not bother to learn the local language or eat any of the local food. They stick with their group, stay in Western hotels, and keep their eyes peeled for the closest Starbucks. Tourists rarely go to other countries to engage the culture, but rather to observe it from a safe distance. Christians fall prey to this attitude as well. They stay sequestered in their Christian ghettos, never engaging the world. They are just trying to pass through, not engaging the world but waiting until the rapture comes to take them home again. But Peter tells us that a tourist attitude is wrong too.

The third possible attitude—and the one that Peter urges us to adopt in this letter—is that of an exile: *"I urge you as sojourners and exiles* [one can render

[1] I owe this breakdown to a sermon series Tim Keller did on 1 Peter in 1993 entitled "Splendor in the Furnace."

this Greek term as "aliens"]*"* (1 Pet. 2:11 ESV). Exiles do not choose to be in the country they are in, as tourists and immigrants both do. Unlike immigrants, they are not seeking a transfer of citizenship. Unlike tourists, they are not just "passing through." Exiles plant their lives in a new country but retain the character of their original home. This is what Peter is talking about in this book. As Christians, we ought not to seek to become citizens of this world as immigrants do, but we ought also not to view the world from a distance, passing through as tourists do. We are exiles. We are aliens in the world.

The concept of exile has a very rich history in the Bible. God's chosen people, the nation of Israel, was driven into exile in Babylon for hundreds of years. The prophet Jeremiah told the people what God expected from them in their exile:

> Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. . . . Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare (Jer. 29:4–5, 7).

Just like Israel in Babylon, the church is *appointed* to be in exile. God has given us a mission for the place we find ourselves. So the church gets involved in people's problems and engages in their lives. Peter uses another analogy in chapter 2—that of an ambassador. An ambassador is someone who is sent into one country with a mission from another. Christians are there in the new country to serve it and enrich it, but our citizenship and our mission are from elsewhere.

Because we are exiles, Peter warns us that we should expect to be frequently misunderstood. We should expect the surrounding culture to move in a direction wildly different than our own. We should even expect a hostile environment. This hostility leads us into the passage for today, beginning at 1:13.

"Therefore, preparing your minds for action" (1 Pet 1:13) – The Greek here is, literally, "girding up the loins of your mind."[2] I assume that most of us have never had to "gird up our loins." This is actually a vivid word picture, but it requires a little understanding of the times to see it. Back in Peter's day, everyone wore robes: these are great for standing around, great for the occasional portrait, but not so great for running or doing battle! So when someone needed to do strenuous activity, they would tuck their robes into their belt, freeing them to move around. They called this "girding up their loins."[3] When someone was challenged to gird up their loins, they were being told, "You are about to get dirty, about to do battle. Roll up your sleeves and get

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[2] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (NAC 37; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003), p. 78.

[3] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, p. 78.

to it." That is what Peter is saying when he encourages us in the church to prepare our minds for action.

". . . and being sober minded," (1 Pet 1:13) – Sober-minded means we are not naively unaware of the environment we are in. The world is a hostile environment. We are engaged in a cosmic battle. Peter uses this same word again in chapter 5, warning his hearers to be sober-minded because "your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion" (1 Pet 5:8). If we knew that a lion was loose in our neighborhood, we would walk around differently! I felt this quite literally once when I visited Africa. I had just seen *The Ghost and the Darkness*, a Val Kilmer movie in which, essentially, a couple of lions attack and eat a lot of people. Everywhere I went that week, I looked around in a bit of terror that perhaps this would be the moment that I became another victim.

What Peter is saying is something many people desperately need to hear. We need to wake up and realize that we are in a battle! Some of us have no idea that a battle is raging around us, and the devil is destroying many of us. One of my favorite authors, Blaise Pascal, said that for many, life is like being in a carriage that is barreling towards a steep cliff. This cliff represents our own death, and we know that it is coming. But instead of dealing with the impending danger, we distract ourselves with the beautiful scenery and interesting conversation.[4] This is not morbidity; this is reality. One day we will die. Eternity is real. Heaven is real. Hell is real. The devil is real, and he is trying to sabotage our faith and destroy our souls. Wake up!

Be Holy

> Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet 1:13–16).

Be holy, like God is holy. This is a pretty huge command, right? The command is hard enough on its face, but add in "like God" and it becomes downright impossible. Let us take a look at it more closely.

There are three aspects we need to consider if we are to understand what Peter is saying here. First, we must understand what holiness is and what it means when we say, "God is holy." Second, in light of God's holiness, we need to ask what our response ought to be. It is not enough, however, to stop there. Our third and most crucial point will be to see by what power we are able to live a life of holiness.

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[4] Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* (ed. Alban Krailsheimer; New York: Penguin, 1995), p. 53.

What is Holiness?

The key concept to remember when reading the word "holy" is "separate." The Hebrew word that we translate as "holy" is *kadosh*, which carries the connotation of being cut away or removed.[5] The Greek word, *hagios*, has a similar meaning.[6] When God told the Israelites that He was holy, He was stressing that He was different from them. He was unique, one of a kind. "There is none holy like the Lord" (Exod 15:11). None—God is completely separate and different than us. Study the Old Testament and notice how Israel got into their greatest trouble when they forgot the other-ness of God, when they conceived of Him as a slightly greater version of themselves.

But God is not merely a being with more intelligence or power than humans. He is totally different. We see an example of this in the book of Job. Job levies a lengthy complaint against God, but when God answers him, His reply goes something like this: "Wait, who are you? And what universe have you created? When you create your own universe, come back and we can talk. Until then, do not deceive yourself into thinking that you and I are peers." Again, in Isaiah: "My thoughts are not your thoughts; my ways are not your ways; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:8–9). Or Paul, in Romans, responding to what I believe is the hardest theological question there is: If God knew that certain people would reject Him and spend eternity in hell, why create them at all? Paul's answer: "Who are you, O man, to answer back to God" (Rom 9:20)?

The point here is not that the answers to the hard questions do not exist, or that we should not seek them. They do and we should. But what God is saying here is that humanity is not in a position to challenge the purposes of the Almighty, because frankly, we just are not smart enough. We ought not to flatter ourselves that we *could* always understand His ways if He explained them to us. There comes a time when the mouth should stop and the knee should bow.

Again, this does not mean we check our brains at the door and stop asking the hard questions. But many of us need to change the way we approach God, because He is on a different plane than we are. He is holy. He is the Alpha and Omega, the great I AM, the uncreated. That demands a certain deference, which many of us fail to give Him.

Holiness also means separation from all that is impure. The Jewish people had a lot of regulations to keep them from entering the presence of God with any defilement, because God was absolute purity (e.g., Lev. 15–16). He was totally separate from any impurities. Holiness is not an attractive concept

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[5] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), pp. 201–202.

[6] John H. Elliott, *1 Peter* (The Anchor Bible 37B; New York: Doubleday, 2000), pp. 362–63.

for most Americans, but that is because we fail to understand it. At best, when I say "holiness," we might think of a sterile, ethereal vapor that pervades the room, reminiscent of a funeral parlor. Holiness, however, is the perfection of all that is good. Think of it as "wholeness," which is actually where our English word "holiness" comes from.[7] God is "whole" in justice. He is "whole" in love. Perfect justice, perfect love: who could want anything else? Who wants a government that is partially unjust? Or what girl wants to marry a guy who is unfair, disloyal, and dishonest? No—girls want a guy who is *holy*, if they understand it in terms of perfection.

God is so perfect that injustice and impurity are repulsive to Him. As Habakkuk says, His eyes are so pure that He cannot "look at" evil (Hab. 1:13). Now, this does mean that God is incapable of seeing evil things, but rather that He does not gaze at them.[8] We are like this too. Think of something absolutely heinous, like child molestation or torture. Who could watch that neutrally, without a knee-jerk reaction of revulsion? God, who is perfect beauty, perfect justice, cannot keep His eyes upon the impurity and injustice of sin.

We see this in one of the more bizarre events of the Old Testament, in which several Israelites were transporting the Ark of the Covenant on the back of a cart. The Ark represented the presence and purity of God, His holiness.[9] As they went along the road, one of the oxen pulling the cart stumbled and the Ark teetered on the cart. Uzzah, to keep the Ark from falling, put out his hand to steady it—and God struck him dead (2 Sam. 6:6–7). We read a story like this and want to scold God: "Come on, God! Uzzah was doing you a favor!" But Uzzah's blasphemy was assuming that his hand was cleaner than the dirt on the ground. The dirt on the ground had never rebelled against God, while Uzzah had. That ground, mired in mud and covered in oxen dung, was cleaner than the sinful hands of humanity.

God's holiness culminated in Jesus Christ, the "holy Son of God" (Rev. 1:4). When we touched him, his holiness did not destroy us—as with Uzzah—but healed us (1 John 1:1–3). This is one of the great enigmas of the Bible. It is seen, for instance, in Matthew 8: "When [Jesus] came down from the mountain, . . . a leper came to him and knelt before him saying, 'Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.' And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, 'I will; be clean.' And immediately his leprosy was cleansed" (Matt. 8:1–3).

Leprosy. It is a terrible disease, even today, but in Jesus' day it carried an added stigma. Anyone who touched a leper was liable to contract the disease

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[7] "Holy," *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/holy (accessed July 18, 2012).

[8] Kenneth L. Barker and Waylon Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (NAC 20; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999), pp. 313–14.

[9] Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus* (NAC 2; Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006), p. 569.

and become "unclean."[10] After all, when sick and healthy collide, it is the healthy person that gets sick, not the other way around. When my wife has a cold, there is no chance that her being around me will magically make her better, but there is a very good chance that lying next to her in bed will get me sick. But Jesus reverses this process: his holiness becomes contagious. This was possible because Jesus was not only holy in his purity, but in his love and power. His holy love absorbed our un-holiness and suffered our death, and his holy power conquered death by rising from the dead.

We must always keep in mind that God's holiness implies that He is separate and wholly distinct. But the greatest display of His holiness was not in His *separating* Himself from us, but in His *entering into* our sin and corruption, taking it upon Himself, and putting it away forever.

What is the Proper Response to God's Holiness?

We have just seen aspects of God's holiness. Peter says that the holiness of God demands a response from us. Look at verse 15: "but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct" (1 Pet 1:15). The life we live should be reflective of the God we love. There are several ways in which this plays out. Let us talk about a couple of them.

One way we respond to God's holiness is in our devotion to Him. Our commitment to God should be on a completely different level than our commitment to everything else. I often hear people talk about God as if what He really wants is to be at the top of our list of priorities. But that is not devotion. Imagine if I were to say to my wife, "Baby, of all the girls in my life, you are #1." What does that mean? Does it not imply that I have a list of girls with whom I am romantically involved, with my wife being my favorite? Would anyone be surprised if my wife was offended by that? It does no good to downplay the love I might have for other women, as if being only a little committed to them offends her any less. No, my wife is not #1; she is the only one. She gets her own list, of which she is the sole member!

So we should not say, "God is at the top of my list." *What list?* God gets his own list! Nothing else in our life created the universe we live in and died for our sins. Jesus is not our copilot. He created the plane we are riding in. He created the air that plane flies through. He governs the gravity that the plane counters as it soars through the air, as well as the process of lift that allows it to fly. The church must not relegate him to a figurehead position of respect in our lives. He is not to be the first among many priorities, but a completely all-encompassing ruler that commands our entire devotion. All other "priorities"—work, family, or the most intimate of relationships—do not compare to our devotion to Him.

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[10] Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (NAC 22; Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), pp. 138–39.

Another way that we respond to the holiness of God is by reckless abandon in worship. I often hear people compare our worship of God to the way we act at a football game, and I can appreciate the sentiment. But our worship of God ought to be on an entirely different plane than our enthusiasm at a sporting event. There are times that I look around our sanctuary during worship, and what I see disturbs me. For many people, worship apparently means standing in a subdued manner, coffee cup in hand, with a bored look on their face. This is nothing like what God commands in Scripture. All throughout the Bible God tells His people to respond with physical and audible enthusiasm:"*Clap your hands*, all you people; *shout* unto God with the voice of triumph" (Ps. 47:1, emphasis added); "May those who delight in salvation *shout for joy*" (Ps. 35:27, emphasis added); "I command men everywhere to *lift up holy hands* in prayer" (1 Tim. 2:8, emphasis added). Standing in reverent awe has its place, but where is the enthusiasm that leads to shouts of praise? This is not optional: these are commands! God is holy; He is "other." He deserves our reckless abandon in worship. People ought to know that our adoration of Him is on an entirely different plane than our excitement about anything else.

I have often heard the objection, "That just is not my personality." But where is there anything in those verses about personality? Do the Psalms say, "Clap your hands, all you type-A, extroverted people?" No! Clap your hands, *all* you people! God is worthy of this sort of praise whether our personality tends that way or not. Besides, I wonder if many of us want to use this as a smokescreen. I have seen many Christian men at football and basketball games. The shouting-and-clapping-and-jumping-around-like-a-madman part of their personality is there!

Others might object for a different reason: "If the feelings are not there," they say, "then it is wrong to go through these motions and be hypocritical." On one level, I can appreciate this—we ought to live sincerely and avoid hypocrisy. However, it is also true that worship should not to be based on our feelings but on the worthiness of the object of worship. When we recognize how worthy God is to be praised, we worship Him whether our feelings are there at the moment or not. The question in worship is not what you feel like, but what He is worthy of.

The physical aspect of worship often aids the emotional. When I bow my knee, my heart follows my physical posture and becomes reverent. Our bodies and souls are united; this is how God made us. So when God commands shouts from the lips, He is still concerned with the heart. He just knows that when we shout with our mouths, our hearts can awaken and shout for joy as well. As in many dimensions of the Christian life, we act our way into our feelings, not feel our way into our actions.

How do we Gain the Power to "Be Holy?"

This is certainly the million-dollar question. It is simple enough to say that we ought to be holy because God is holy. But how do we do that? The next few verses show us.

> And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you (1 Pet. 1:17–20).

In these verses, who is holy? Jesus, not us. Yet, Peter explains, the blood of the only truly holy one was spilled in order to ransom us. This is the gospel—Jesus in my place. Jesus' holiness took the punishment demanded by our unholiness and absorbed its consequences forever. This is such a magnificent truth that Peter calls it "precious."

When we use the word precious, we refer to something that can never be replaced. Christ's blood does for us something that nothing else can do. Peter is quick to point out that this gift is not something passed down from previous generations. This runs contrary to our way of life, in which we attempt to pass down all of our greatest accomplishments to later generations. We pass our money to our children and grandchildren, hoping that they will live without worries. But money does not produce morality, responsibility, or happiness. Often the increase of money and power leads to the increase of greed, exploitation, and misery. Money is a helpful tool, but it is no savior.

We pass down our scientific achievements to later generations as well. What was science fiction to one generation is mundane reality to the next. But science cannot take away our problems. Our grandparents left us both the motorized car *and* the atomic bomb. Our generation will leave us both cool inventions like the iPhone and Siri, but also the propagation of Internet pornography. Science is not equipped to deal with soul issues. Studies have shown that depression and suicide rates are actually higher in scientifically sophisticated countries than in more developing ones.[11]

We pass on religious traditions, but these cannot save either. It is good to honor our parents and their religion, but religious traditions that are passed down usually serve to make people proud. Religious traditions often make us self-righteous, xenophobic, and can even make us persecute others.

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[11] Maia Szalavitz, "Why the Happiest States Have the Highest Suicide Rates," *Time Magazine*, http://healthland.time.com/2011/04/25/why-the-happiest-states-have-the-highest-suicide-rates/ (accessed July 19, 2012); Allison Van Dusen, "How Depressed in Your Country?" *Forbes Magazine*, http://www.forbes.com/2007/02/15/depression-world-rate-forbeslife-cx_avd_0216depressed.html (accessed July 19, 2012).

We pass on government traditions, but no government, right or left, has been able to save. Communism casts itself in the role as the great savior, but how many millions did Stalin and Mao Tse Tung slaughter on the way to their "perfect" governments? Has communism really produced any nation we would want to live in? On the other end, we are beginning to realize that capitalism, too, can be abused and exploited. Was it capitalism that forced the United States to end the tragic practice of slavery? Has capitalism been able to eradicate poverty in more recent years? This is not to say, of course, that all governments are equal: there is a large difference between an American housing crisis and millions of dead Chinese. But even the best government is incapable of addressing our deepest needs.

Our problem is and always has been vis-à-vis God, so the solution must come directly from Him. The perfect death of the eternal Son of God was the only thing that could save us. Jesus himself even pleaded with the Father, shortly before dying, that if there were *any other way*, that he could be spared a gruesome death (Matt. 26:39). But there was no other way. And that makes the blood of Jesus precious, because it accomplished for us what nothing else could do. It restored us to fellowship with God and filled us with the peace that comes from the presence of God.

I read a story recently that illustrates the idea of "precious." Two men, hiking in the Himalayas, got trapped in a fierce snowstorm and lost their way. The temperature dropped 60 degrees in a matter of minutes. In their attempt to weather the storm out for the night, the two men gathered a small bundle of kindling, but all they had to light it was a half of a match. They knew they had one chance to start the fire, and otherwise they would die. That match became the most precious thing in the world to them, because only it could deliver for them what they needed (And yes, they survived; how would I have known the story if they died?).[12]

Peter tells the church to live with an awareness of the preciousness of what Christ has done for her. This awareness will give us the motive for holiness. Motive is an English word derived from the word "motor," or "drive." Our motive is what drives us to do something. So where do we get the drive to be holy? Only from understanding the precious sacrifice of Christ which made us holy.

We find an excellent example of this in 2 Samuel 23. David is on the run from the Philistines, who had recently taken over Bethlehem—David's hometown—and stationed their soldiers there. After a long day of travelling, David remarks to himself, "Oh, that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate" (2 Sam. 23:15)! Now, David and his band of men have water, but he is nostalgic for the days of his youth when he could draw water from his hometown well.[13]

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[12] A. W. Tozer, *Living as a Christian: Teachings from First Peter* (ed. James L. Snyder; New York: Regal Books, 2009), pp. 49–51.

[13] A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel* (WBC 11; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), p. 276.

Some of David's mighty men overhear this little murmur, and decide of their own volition to sneak into enemy territory while David is sleeping and get some of that water for him. So that night they fight their way through the Philistine line to the gate, which is in plain sight. They draw water from the well, all the while fighting back the Philistines. Once they draw some water, they fight their way back out. This is a total Jack Bauer type maneuver! They manage to get back to David in time for him to wake up, and there they are, presenting him with some Bethlehem well-water.

David takes the water, but instead of drinking it, pours it onto the ground (I have to admit, if I were one of the mighty men, I would be a little upset about that). David is not shaming these men, though. He is honoring them. He says, "Far be it from me, oh Lord, that I should . . . drink the blood of [these] men" (2 Sam. 23:17)! David is saying, in essence, that he could never take comfort in something that put the life of his men in danger.[14]

Here is what is so great about this little-known story. First, we see what holy devotion looks like. Holy devotion is shown by the fact that David's men are willing to risk their lives not for one of his commands, but just for a sigh, a murmur! David's wish becomes their command because of their love for him. The second aspect of this story that sheds light on holy devotion is the motivation. David's men feel so strongly about him because they know he feels the same about them.

When *we* hear or read that story, *we* should think of Jesus. He not only risked his life to get us what we desperately needed; he sacrificed it. And he did not honor us by pouring out mere water on the ground; instead he poured out his lifeblood itself. Jesus was wholly devoted to us, just as David was to his men. If the devotion that David showed to his men resulted in such a radical show of devotion back to David, how much more should the devotion that Jesus has shown to us result in radical devotion back to him? The precious blood of Christ becomes the very power by which we can become holy.[15]

If the church would realize this, we would begin to seek out the sighs and murmurs of God's heart. We would not ask questions like, "How much do I have to give? Is 10% okay?" Questions like this come not from love, but from obligation. When we understand the devotion that Jesus has shown us, we will respond by asking, "How much do I *get* to give?" When we recognize that God cares about the lost people around the world, we will respond as David's men did, saying, "God, here is my life. What can I do to reach these people?" When we understand that God loves the orphan, the widow, and the poor, we will say to Him, "God, how can I serve these people?" We will strain to hear the murmurs of God's heart because these become our delight.

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[14] P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel* (The Anchor Bible 9; Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Company, 1984), p. 496.

[15] Again, I am indebted to Tim Keller for this insight.

"And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds" (1 Pet 1:17) – Peter gives us another angle on this in verse 17. This verse has confused me for years, but in studying it I believe I now understand how it fits. Look at the last phrase—judges impartially according to each one's deed. That sounds like bad news for us, does it not? None of us can stand before God's bar of justice and claim to be righteous. But look at the first part of this verse. We get to call that same God "Father," a term of intimacy. This verse is the gospel! Jesus absorbed the punishment that we deserved so that we would have the chance to call God our Father. We no longer have to fear judgment, because God looks to us as a father to his children.[16]

". . . conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile" (1 Pet 1:17) – This is not fear of judgment, since Jesus has already been judged in our place and we have nothing left to fear. This "fear" is more like a reverential awe.[17] This is the kind of awe that a child has for his father. Imagine a 13-year-old boy hanging out with his friends, and they start to do some things that he knows is wrong. They might taunt him, saying, "What, are you afraid that if you do this your father is going to hurt you?" The boy would respond, "No, I am afraid that if I do this that *I* will hurt *him*." The boy's father is precious to him, and he fears acting in any way that would dishonor or hurt him. This is the sort of fear that Peter is talking about.

Our reverential fear for God is supposed to be something that we first learn in relationship to our own parents. This may be a sore spot for many who did not have great parents. People with distant or abusive fathers read verses like these and have totally different emotions attached to the idea of God as a father. Ideally, however, a person's relationship with his parents ought to prepare him to relate to God. At first, he obeys his parents because he is afraid of what they can do to him, but as he matures, he seeks to obey and honor them because of his devotion and love.

There is a warning here for parents as well. If children learn to interact with God first by interacting with their parents, it is crucial that we parents model the character of God for our children. I do not let my children backtalk or disrespect me, not because I have a large ego, but because for a time I am a model of God for them. On the other hand, it is just as important for parents to model the sacrificial love and tenderness of God, so that our children learn that God cares for them. As parents, we are like the training wheels for their relationship with God. They first learn to relate to God by relating to us.

"[Through Jesus we] are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (1 Pet 1:21). This last verse, particularly the phrase "in God," arrested me as I studied this past week. It tells

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[16] Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Essays* (London: MacMillan & Co., Ltd., 1946), pp. 142–43.

[17] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, p. 81.

us that God's goal in the gospel is for us to gain a first-hand, direct relationship with Him—a felt sense of His love, a personal trust in God.[18] For many Christians, sadly, relating directly to God is not part of their Christian experience. Christianity is more a lifestyle or a set of morals. There is no passion for God, no first-hand trust in Him, no experience His love that makes them cry out "Abba, Father."

Peter says that God accomplished salvation the way that He did so that we would know *Him*, adore *Him*, have faith in *Him*. This is why it was so crucial that Jesus be God and not merely a great prophet, or even—as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons say—that he died for our sins but was not God. Our gratefulness to Jesus makes us love the God who was in Jesus of Nazareth saving us from our sin! I may be very thankful that the Father sent Jesus to die in my place, but my heart longs to worship the one who saved me! God would not relinquish the role of Savior to any other than Himself, because He wants our faith and our hope and our love to be in Him alone. This is why He says in Isaiah, "I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior" (Isa. 43:11).

Have *you* truly sensed how precious you are to God? Have you sensed that Jesus came to the earth to seek and save you? Have you ever personally felt the value of Christ's blood given for you? The call is for us all to go buckle down and "be holy." That will hardly last five minutes! Instead, I urge you to the foot of the cross of Christ. Let us look there at the limitless ocean of love that God has for us. Let us stand on the shores of that deep ocean and listen to the waves lapping on the beach until the sounds of those waves sink deep into our hearts. Each of us is precious to God. Let us accept His love, allowing the sighs and murmurs of His heart to become precious to us.

[18] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, p. 89.

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The Bible and its Long and Variegated Reception in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in Literature, the Visual Arts, Music and Film: A Presentation and Review of the First Volumes of the *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009–)

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Hans-Josef Klauck, Bernard McGinn, Paul Mendes-Flohr, Choon-Leong Seow, Hermann Spieckermann, Barry Dov Walfish und Eric Ziolkowski (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2009). Volume 1: *Aaron–Aniconism*. 1224 cols. Cloth. ISBN 978-3-11-018355-9. €

Hans-Josef Klauck, Bernard McGinn, Paul Mendes-Flohr, Choon-Leong Seow, Hermann Spieckermann, Barry Dov Walfish und Eric Ziolkowski (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2011). Volume 3: *Athena–Birkat ha-Minim*. 1224 cols. Cloth. ISBN 978-3-11-018371-9. €

These books are Volumes one and three of an ambitious and prestigious new project. During the production and publication of the 36-volume *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (G. Müller *et al.* eds.; Berlin, New York: W. de Gruyter, 1976–2007), the need for a new biblical encyclopaedia emerged clearly. However, it also became clear that such a project would have to be different from the single or multiple Bible dictionaries of the past in order to serve the present and the future: "… an encyclopaedia documenting not only the origins and development but also the vast influence and broad reception of the Jewish and Christian Bibles, including all their figures, themes, and motifs, would be an innovative and groundbreaking contribution to biblical scholarship" (1, vii). After a decade of careful planning, the result of this insight and process is the *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (*EBR*) to be published in 32 volumes. The editors describe its focus as follows in the introduction to *Volume one*:

> *EBR* pursues the twofold task of (1) comprehensively recording – and, indeed, advancing - the current knowledge of the origins and development of the Bible in its Jewish and Christian canonical forms and (2) documenting the history of the Bible's reception in Judaism and Christianity as evident in exegetical literature, theological and philosophical writings of various genres, literature, liturgy, music, the visual arts, dance, and film, as well as in Islam and other religious traditions and contemporary movements. With this broad program of reception history, *EBR* moves into

> new terrain in recognition of the fact that biblical texts not only have their own particular backgrounds and settings but have also been received and interpreted, and have exerted influence or otherwise have had impact in countless religious, theological, and aesthetic settings (ix).

The "Introduction" to Volume one first delineates the "New Circumstances in Biblical Studies" that have led to *EBR* and of which it is an expression. Biblical studies underwent a global upsurge in the past century in terms of the number of those involved and by increasing diversification of interpretive methods. This process was "de-Europeanising and globalising biblical studies, the field was being further enriched by the perspectives of other religious traditions and denominations" (ix). In addition, the founding of the modern state of Israel and its vibrant academic life has made a distinct contribution. "'Material culture', iconography, epigraphy, and the discovery of new archives have changed our understanding of the Ancient Near East and classical antiquity as essentially as they have transformed our view of the background and formation of the Bible" (x). In view of these developments, there is the need for a comprehensive reference work with a broad, international scope. Its purpose is to "summarise and synthesise the vast current knowledge of biblical studies and allied disciplines while creating links, identifying problematic areas and lacunae in scholarship, and stimulating new research" (x).

The authors of the Old and New Testament entries (or at least of the shorter entries on larger topics) will be hard pressed to achieve these ambitious goals in the relatively limited spaces allotted to them. Their particular challenge is that readers who are not biblical scholars themselves or otherwise well-versed in the Bible, and are for various reasons more interested in the different aspects of reception, need a sufficiently broad summary of the biblical evidence itself in order to understand its reception. At the same time, such readers are enabled to appreciate the current academic discussion of the biblical material (included in "the vast current knowledge of biblical studies"), although this is – probably more often than not – irrelevant to its reception history (other than showing that the current academic understanding of a large amount of biblical material is different from its reception in the past). For these reasons, the presentation and discussion of the biblical material must not be too technical and should not assume too much. At the same time, the entries on biblical material are to "create links, identify problematic areas and lacunae in scholarship, and stimulate new research". Is this combination of aims over-ambitious or even a contradiction in itself?

A further development is the "New Exploration of the History of Reception". The editors note that today, "aside from the classic historical questions about the conditions and circumstances of the Bible's origin, inquiries into the reception and culture-forming influence of the Bible draw considerable attention" (xf):

> As a now well-established branch of biblical studies, *Auslegungsgeschichte* (history of exegesis) continues to contribute to the debate about the meaning of the biblical texts as they have been expounded in the histories

> of Judaism and Christianity. In addition, there is increasing attention among scholars to the reception and adaptation of biblical themes, motifs, and characters in music, art, literature, and film, as well as in Islam and various non-monotheistic religious traditions and new religious movements. Such studies have shown how biblical traditions have transcended the realms of the church and synagogue and entered the cultural consciousness not only of Western societies but of other cultures as well (xi).

In addition, the scope of *EBR* will be interdisciplinary and international. The editors describe how the project has been divided into five main domains and sub-domains, each under main editors and area editors. They write in closing:

> While not omitting anything that may shed light upon biblical traditions, *EBR* aspires to completeness only in its coverage of the scriptures themselves and their formation. Inasmuch as a complete accounting of the global history of their reception and influence over two millennia is impossible, EBR documents that history in ways that pragmatically account for the major themes and issues and provides the necessary guidance for further research (xi).

Three entries from *Volume three* serve as representative examples of the scope, emphases and procedure of *EBR*:

Atonement: The entry on *atonement* consists of seven sections: "Atonement I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament" (C. A. Eberhart, 24–32, general considerations, atonement in the sacrificial cult of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, atonement in secular and other texts from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, survey of scholarly atonement theories); "II. New Testament" (C. A. Eberhart, 32–42; introduction, cultic and secular atonement images as the New Testament basis, secular and other atonement images in the New Testament, survey of recent scholarship; excessive bibliography!) and "III. Judaism" (D. Stökl Ben Ezra, 43–50, Yom Kippur, other atoning sacrifices and atonement outside of the Temple cult in Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism, for Rabbinic Judaism the Rabbinic understanding of atonement in the sacrificial temple cult and non-sacrificial means of atonement are described; Medieval Judaism is covered in cols. 50–52 by Y. S. Goldberg and modern Judaism in cols 52f by M. Zank). Atonement in Christian thought is treated in "IV. Christianity" (53–62) by F. M. Young (Greek Patristics and Orthodox Churches), R. Scott Clark (Medieval Times and Reformation) and W. C. Gilpin (Modern Europe and America: early usage of the term, varied biblical images of atonement, historical criticism and atonement, influence in modern literature, economic thought, philosophy, and legal ethics; apparently other parts of the world had and have nothing to contribute – an observation to which we shall return below). The remaining sections are: "Atonement V. Islam" (D. Thomas, 62f); "VI. Literature" (G. W. Shuck, 63f) and "VII. Music" (N. H. Petersen, 64–66). Cross referenced are the entries "Azazel", "Expiation" and "Scapegoat".

Baptism: This is discussed in six sections: L. Hartmann contributes "Baptism I. New Testament" (442–451, Greek terminology, John's baptism, Jesus'

baptism by John, baptism in early Christian communities, Paul, the so-called Deuteropauline letters, the Acts of the Apostles, 1 Peter, Hebrews, Matthew 28:16–20; Gospel of John, Mark 16:9–20). "Baptism II. Christianity" (451–464) by B. D. Spinks covers baptism as seen by the Greek and Latin Fathers, Orthodox Churches and early Medieval times, Medieval times and Reformation era, modern Europe and America (apparently again other parts of the world had and have contributed little or nothing to the Christian understanding of baptism in view of the biblical evidence; however, see below). The subsection on the Reformation era twice mentions "Anabaptists" (a dated and polemical term) twice in the context of Luther and Zwingli and notes in closing: "The more radical Reformed, particularly the Anabaptists, emphasized the need for conscious faith and repudiated infant baptism, teaching that a mature confession of faith was a necessity for true baptism. Baptism in this tradition was primarily an act of obedience and a sign of church membership" (459f). The subsection on modern Europe and America gives more room to various Baptistic traditions: mention is made of American Baptist theologian James McClendon (460), "some British Baptists ... concerned to give more value to the act of baptism, to see it not as a mere sign, but as a rite which is a sacrament of presence and prophecy" (460, also 463) and to the North American Mennonite tradition which published in 1995 "a pastoral and practical guide for a renewed adult catechumenate, which for a Believer's Baptist Church, marks a considerable development" (463).

This treatment (also apparent in many other entries in *EBR*) indicates a fundamental problem of an encyclopaedia of the Bible and its reception: most aspects of baptism in the Christian tradition are part of the reception history of the Bible and therefore must be treated in an encyclopaedia devoted to its reception. At the same time, treatment of baptism in such an encyclopaedia should be different from the standard treatment of baptism in any theological dictionary (eg. in the recent 15 volume encyclopaedia *Religion Past and Present*, published by Brill)! The focus must be particularly on *how the Bible was* received or what impact it had on subsequent systematic theological reflection of baptism (including the impact on ecclesiology) and on its practice in the church. After all, the radical wing of the Reformation in the 16th century strongly argued its case with reference to the New Testament! None of that appears in the present treatment of baptism in Christianity. Possibly the longer entries with several subsections require more intensive editorial attention.

Only in closing does the author of "Baptism II. Christianity" briefly refer to developments in the non-Western world: "Newer churches in Asia and Africa have questioned whether they should simply accept adaptations of products of European culture, whether from the older age of imperialism or more recent times. Some have sought riches in their own cultural rites of initiation that could be incorporated in rites of Christian baptism. F. Kabasele Lumbala, for example, describes a rite of adult baptism in Zaire, where the renuntiation entails the baptizand lying down a mat and being covered with

banana leaves while a song of penitence or mourning is struck up. During the baptism incense is wafted around and an elaborate conferring of a new name takes place" (463). No reference is made to the resemblance of early Christian baptism to Jewish rites of purification, etc. Two further examples are briefly described, one from Sri Lanka (a contextualised baptismal rite from the Christian Worker's Fellowship) and one from African-American congregations (463f). However interesting these examples are, it is not apparent how such developments can be understood *as part of the varied reception history of the Bible*. What *Wirkungsgeschichte* does biblical evidence on baptism have in the non-Western world?

"Baptism III. Judaism", by R. Chazan (464f), deals merely with Medieval Jewish (polemical) responses to Christian baptism; neither here nor in the section on baptism in the New Testament is there any reference to proselyte baptism or to the relationship of John's or Christian baptism to rites of ablution; cf. the entries "Ablutions I.–III." in vol. I, cols. 108–120 (in these entries one looks in vain for Islamic reactions to Christian baptism). The last sections are "IV. Literature" (J. F. Keuss, 465–468) and "VI. Film" (J. DeCou, 470–472) who notes that "An analysis of 'baptism in film' must take into account both the literal depiction of the ritual and its figurative implication in the use of water as a symbol or regeneration", 470). Cross reference is made to the entries "Baptism of Jesus", "Baptisteries", "Baptists", "Confirmation", "Infant Baptism" and "John the Baptist"; cross reference to the entries "Ablutions" should have been added.

Bathsheba: The entry on *Bathsheba* appears in eight sections: "Bathsheba I: Hebrew Bible/Old Testament" (J. van Seters, 598–600), "II. New Testament and Early Christianity" (L. Huizenga, 600f), "III. Judaism (T. Kadari, 601–603), "IV. Islam" (M. E. Pregill, 603–605); "V. Literature" (J. L. Koosed, 606); VI. Visual Arts (G. Sturmwasser, 607–610, description of the normative figure of Bathsheba in the visual arts, attribute and/or symbol, scriptural episodes of Bathsheba in the visual arts, frequent iconographic motifs of Bathsheba in the visual arts); "VII. Music" (H. Leneman, 610–612) and "VIII: Film" (J. C. Exum, 612f). Cross reference is made to the entries "David" and "Uriah".

Obviously, most entries are not as elaborate in their presentation and contain only one, two or three subsections. Many of the bibliographies distinguish between primary and secondary sources.

This subdivision of the longer entries makes it possible to draw on specialists in the field for each section. This is necessary, as a comprehensive and high-quality presentation of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* – in particular for the larger entries – is increasingly beyond the scope of individual scholars. The disadvantage of this encyclopaedic approach is that it is left to the readers to arrive at a conclusion, to produce a comprehensive picture, to see lines of development and to discover the differences and common features of the manifold and colourful *Wirkungsgeschichte*. The longer articles with many subsections could benefit from concise summaries and analyses of the reception in order

to provide more readily the synthesis that *EBR* endeavours to achieve. A further disadvantage is that scholars who write the entries on the biblical material will not always be familiar with the diverse reception of the material they present. Thus they might fail to provide the information necessary for making sense of the reception history (see above), or they might provide the kind of information suitable for a more traditional Bible dictionary but unsuitable for the present purpose. Should the biblical articles perhaps be written (or at least revised) once the reception has been covered and can be made available to the authors of the biblical sections? Do the authors who contribute the entries on the reception of biblical evidence at later stages and in different traditions focus sufficiently on the reception of the Bible or merely summarise the history of the dogma of the traditions on which they write?

The article structure of *EBR* has the advantage of giving immediate indication of the traditions in which some biblical material was received. Which Old Testament material only came to play a role in Jewish reception? What was only received in Judaism and Christianity? In some cases, there is reception only in Judaism and in Islam. Which New Testament material was received not only in Christianity but also in Islam? In addition to the helpful summaries and fresh perspectives of the individual entries, it is observations like these that make *EBR* a source of inspiration. Although the length of entries does not necessarily always reflect the importance of the biblical material or its manifold reception, it does provide at least some indication as to the extent of the reception at later stages.

EBR includes apocryphal and pseudepigraphical books. In addition to biblical names, places, persons, themes etc. which are covered in standard Bible dictionaries, *EBR* also includes interpreters of the Bible or institutions related to the Bible and/or its interpretation in the widest sense, methods of interpreting the Bible or elements and aspects of its reception. The nature of these non-biblical key-word-entries is not made clear. The following examples from Volume three give an idea of their scope:

> Baptisteries, Baptists, Bar Hebraeus, Bar Kokhba Revolt, Bar/Bat Mitsvah, Bar Salibi, Dionysius, Baraita, Baraita de-Melekhet ha Mishkan, Baraita of the 32 Rules, Barbelo-Gnostics, Barcelona, Disputation of, Bardaisan of Edessa, Bardesanites, Barlaam and Josaphat, Barmen, The Theological Declaration of, Barnabas, Acts of, Barnabas, Epistle of, Barnabas, Gospel of, Baron, Dvora, Baroque, Barr, James, Barth, Jakob, Barth, Karl, Bartholomew, Acts of, Bartholomew, Gospel of, Bartolommeo della Porta, Fra, Baruch Writings, Bashyatchi, Elijah, Basil of Caesarea, Basilica, Basilides, Basilidians, Basilides, Gospel of, Baskin, Leonard, Bastet, Bataille, Georges, Batashi, Tell el-, Bat-Dor Dance Company, Batsheva Dance Company, Baudelaire, Charles, Baudission, Wolf Wilhelm Friedrich Graf, Bauer, Walter ...

While the entries of *EBR* are at times a colourful mixture, its choice of procedure does link the Bible inextricably with its reception and underlines that clear lines cannot be drawn, in particular as the broad reception of the Bible

did not begin at a later age – as might be argued for classical antiquity (although the Middle Ages cannot be understood without the heritage of the ancient world!). From the very beginning the reception process has started. In addition, the Bible had a more varied reception history than other aspects of antiquity in general.

In view of the first three volumes of *EBR*, there is much to look forward to in the future volumes (Volume two, published in 2009 covered *Animism–Atheism*). In addition to offering a comprehensive, up-to-date Bible dictionary (the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, D. N. Freedman (ed.); New York: Doubleday, dates to 1992; a recent alternative or supplement would be the *New Interpreter's Bible Dictionary* in five extensive volumes published between 2006–2009; Nashville: Abingdon, see www.newinterpreters.com), *EBR* offers stunning surveys of the rich *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the Bible. It firmly places biblical studies in the larger realm of cultural studies. With all the justification and obvious benefits of this approach, one wonders what this procedure and shift (which reflects current developments in biblical studies, theology as a whole and the humanities *in their university contexts*: may one speak of a *paradigm shift*?) does or – perhaps better – reflects with regard to the status and role of the Bible and its reception in the church, in theology and in society.

EBR succeeds in documenting the Christian reception of the Bible in the Western and Eastern Orthodox traditions. Doubtless, these are the areas where the Bible had its longest history in its Christian reception. Some of the entries trace that reception to the present. However, since the beginning of the twentieth century the Bible had an equal or even stronger impact in the global South, predominantly in its Christian communities and its cultures but also in its academies. In addition, while the Western academic reception might be better documented or more readily accessible, it is not to be privileged as such. Not to include this discussion on an equal footing with the more traditional reception may still be permissible at the moment (at least from a Western perspective) and may perhaps even be necessary to keep the project in manageable size. However, as the present century moves on, future volumes (and perhaps editions) of *EBR* will need to broaden their survey of the Christian reception of the Bible, not only to do more justice to the developments of the past, but also to be representative of the present. There are a number of recent sources available which seek to capture this wider reception of the Bible, e.g. the *Africa Bible Commentary*, the *Global Bible Commentary*, the *Global Dictionary of Theology: A Resource for the Worldwide Church* or the recent *Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*.

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Book Reviews

Khaled Anatolios. *Retrieving Nicaea, The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011. 322 pp. ISBN: 9780801031328

For those who know Anatolios' work it will come as no surprise that his contribution on fourth century Trinitarian doctrine is well worth the investment. To be sure, this is not a work for beginners, but it can certainly be read with profit by those who have a solid foundation in early church history and doctrine. Anatolios' overall plan is to engage and interact with Trinitarian theology in the period leading up to Nicaea, and then reflect on its development after the first ecumenical council through the works of Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine.

Anatolios opens by asserting that when the early Church Fathers reflected on the Trinity, they did not do so as a matter of speculation or philosophical pedantry, but with the purpose of expressing, "coherent construals of the entirety of Christian existence". (p. 1) Quite apart from treating the Trinity as an abstract concept, as difficult as it is to penetrate, they were adamant that, given proper understanding and priority, this is doctrine that has implications for every area of life. It is Anatolios' hope that by retrieving this dimension of Trinitarian expression something of the texture and flavor of those early dialogues will return to our contemporary treatment.

To this end, Anatolios borrows from the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel who posited a distinction between primary reflection and secondary reflection. Simply put, primary reflection places a subject at a distance from the thinker while secondary reflection continually asserts and appropriates a connection between the subject and the one reflecting on it. Anatolios contends that, today, we have a habit of engaging in primary reflection on the doctrine of the Trinity, but in the early church, theologians of all descriptions (heterodox as well as orthodox) were far more interested in secondary reflection. The reason is that their doctrinal confessions were made in and came out of the context of worship. *Retrieving Nicaea* is about more than just terminology and disagreements, it is about recovering the unity of Christian experience that is made possible under an orthodox appreciation of the Trinity.

The opening two chapters address the doctrinal situation leading up to Nicaea. Here, Anatolios wends his way through the complexity of the debates of this period with clarity, to say nothing of his grasp of the personalities involved. In the midst of this narrative and commentary, two foundational points bear highlighting if for no other reason than because they are all too often forgotten. First, those who argued against the orthodox position such as Asterius, Arius and the two Eusebius' (Caesarea and Nicomedia), did not represent a unified perspective. What Arius meant by will, for example, was

not precisely the same as what Eusebius of Caesarea meant or what Asterius meant. Second, Anatolios rightly asserts that, for the most part, the protagonists on all sides of the issues surrounding the nature of God and the deity of the Son were Trinitarian. It is an oversimplification to believe that Arius, for instance, did not believe in the Trinity. Granted, his conception of the Trinity was far from orthodox, but he did believe that Father, Son and Holy Spirit were united through deity as a trinity.

Turning to Athanasius, Anatolios points out that one of the fundamental differences between the great bishop and the Arians (in the broader sense of incorporating most of those who disagreed with the orthodox faith) was that the Arians started their Christology from the limitations of Christ's humanity as well as his suffering, whereas the orthodox began with the self-emptying of the Son of God. By starting at this point, Athanasius argues that the Son cannot be a middle deity whose task is to mediate between the transcendent Father and his creation. The Son's role is certainly mediatorial, but can only be successfully so if there is ontological correlativity. It is this very ontology that forms the only sound basis upon which the sacrificial offering of the Son's body on behalf of sinners makes sense. What is more, this sacrificial offering of Christ's body is no mere abstract theologizing, but remembered and practiced at the core of community worship in the Eucharist. The extent of the deity of Christ is not at issue; the character of Christ's deity is what matters. As is clear from an examination of the shared names for Father and Son throughout Scripture, the character of the Son's deity as revealed through his incarnation is kenosis or humility. This is God for us in the most gloriously radical way.

What Gregory of Nyssa brought to fourth century doctrinal development and brings to us today is a clear exposition of Trinitarian hermeneutics. Gregory avoided becoming bogged down in the either/or of apophatic and cataphatic knowledge and affirmed that both yield true knowledge, yet neither provides knowledge which is coextensive with divine ontology such that human circumscription is final or that further comprehension is excluded. Knowing God is not accomplished in delimiting his nature through definition, but a matter of receiving his revelation in wonder and praise. The heart of Gregory's epistemology is not located in discussions of essence, persons or nature, as important as such matters are; rather, it is located in the much wider forum of God's revelation of himself in the whole of Scripture and creation. Knowledge through worship is how we approach the Trinity.

Moving from east to west, Anatolios completes his triumvirate of theologians with Augustine. And why not, since Augustine's *De Trinitate* is still required reading for many students the world over? For Anatolios' purposes, the significance of Augustine's tome is that Christ is the, "supreme sign and sacrament of divine self-disclosure". (p. 279) It is only in apprehending this Trinitarian God through the Son, and thus also through the Spirit, that our anemic and broken knowledge of deity, to say nothing of our own fallen being, is healed. Following in the footsteps of Athanasius and Gregory, Augus-

tine recognized that the only kind of knowledge of God worth having is the kind that lets go of the notion that we must comprehend him, and embraces the idea that we understand ourselves and God with greater clarity when we realize that we are comprehended in him. This is not only a God worthy of worship, but also a God who is supremely revealed in worship.

Anatolios' book is one of both breadth and depth, though at times his desire to make a point through repetition can become a touch tiresome. Still, *Retrieving Nicaea* not only deserves to be read by graduate students, but should be read by those still in the throes of lecture preparation. The details of this book need not be reproduced in an introductory course covering fourth century doctrinal development, but they will provide reliable guidance on how to approach the Fathers on this most important of topics. Most significantly, this monograph reminds us that worship is the most appropriate context for reflecting on Trinitarian doctrine. The ancients who wrote works still read by theologians today, were pastors who led their congregations into praise and adoration of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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Birmingham, AL

James Bollhagen. *Ecclesiastes*. Concordia Commentary. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011. xxvi + 475 pp. Hardback. ISBN 9780570063872. $49.99 Hardback.

In the past few years, numerous commentaries on the book of Ecclesiastes have emerged from evangelical presses, including major volumes by Craig Bartholomew, Michael Eaton, Peter Enns, Daniel Fredericks, Douglas Miller and Daniel Treier within the past three years alone. With such a spate of studies on Ecclesiastes, one has to wonder if Qohelet's observation that "of the making of many books there is no end" has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. What could yet another commentary say that has not already been said before?

In his excellent contribution to the Concordia Commentary series, James Bollhagen effectively draws upon his many years of teaching as a professor of exegetical theology as well as his decades of pastoral ministry. The felicitous result is a study of the enigmatic book of Ecclesiastes that is fluent both in the language of the academy and in the needs of the church. What Bollhagen has written could only have been accomplished after many years of attentive study of the Hebrew text of Ecclesiastes as well as its extensive history of interpretation. But the theological depth and insightful application that mark this commentary have been borne out of faithful parish ministry to God's people across the full range of human experience. Thus, this study of Ecclesiastes breathes the fresh air of genuine engagement with life, rather than the dank aroma of theory separated from the questions and pains that dominate the lives of people in the contemporary world.

In his analysis of the Hebrew text of Ecclesiastes, Bollhagen demonstrates careful attention to its philology and grammar, as well as to the use of its Hebrew terms throughout the biblical text. His comments on the text are especially rich in their intertextual connections and in their interaction with an extensive array of interpretive literature. In particular, Bollhagen draws deeply from the Church Fathers, but he also makes effective use of Jewish and Christian commentary up to the present time, amply satisfying the agenda of those who champion the theological interpretation of the Bible.

The Concordia Commentary series takes a confessedly Christological approach, and this is evidenced in Bollhagen's frequent discussions of Christ and the Gospel in Ecclesiastes. When viewed against many other studies of the book that scarcely mention how Ecclesiastes relates to New Testament themes, Bollhagen's theological approach provides welcome new insights, even if at times it seems as though some might be a bit forced upon the text, rather than emerging intrinsically from the textual meaning. For example, Qohelet's exhortation, "Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart" (9:7) does not seem to lead the reader directly to the blessed communion between God and his people in the Lord's Supper, as Bollhagen suggests (p. 330). The same point could be made as a broader application of the text, rather than being presented as its intended authorial meaning.

Bollhagen's pastoral experience and heart result in a commentary rich with application for the life of faith. Combining clear comprehension of the adversities, pains and questions that frequent the lives of God's people with deep compassion for them in their struggles, Bollhagen again and again speaks God's truth in Ecclesiastes into life today with penetrating force.

In short, the content of this commentary is substantive and well worth careful reading. Its greatest asset, however, is the pattern it presents for moving from Ecclesiastes to broader theological understanding and to meaningful application to life. For these reasons, this commentary is not just another volume to be consigned to the endless pile of unnecessary books, but it is a stimulus to read Ecclesiastes with attention to the text, its theology, and its significance for life.

Daniel J. Estes
Cedarville, Ohio

J. R. Daniel Kirk, *Jesus Have I Loved, but Paul? A Narrative Approach to the Problem of Pauline Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. 214 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9780801039102. $21.99 Paperback.

Because of the way Paul's letters have been received over the last two millennia, and because the church at times has used his writings to justify violence, oppression, and exploitation, there are many good people who don't like him. Others believe Paul's gospel differs from that of Jesus. Jesus preached discipleship in the kingdom of God, whereas Paul was concerned

with individuals cultivating inward piety and a life of private devotion to God. Daniel Kirk's excellent new book takes on both of these misconceptions, demonstrating that Paul's gospel is in direct continuity with the preaching of Jesus.

Kirk demonstrates the organic connection between Jesus and Paul by relating both of them to the narrative of Scripture. Paul may indeed use different terms and metaphors than Jesus, but they're working from the same story and speaking of the same cosmos-transforming realities. Kirk discusses the broader dimensions of the relationship between Jesus and Paul in earlier chapters before handling specific issues in subsequent chapters.

One problem that has plagued New Testament studies is whether Paul had much to say about the Kingdom of God. This is a major topic, of course, in the Synoptic Gospels. The problem here is that whereas Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of God, Paul doesn't use this term very often. Might it be the case that whereas Jesus preached the in-breaking reign of God and a communal ethic, Paul preached only personal transformation and private devotion? Not at all. Kirk's discussion of this issue in the book's second chapter is excellent.

Kirk begins by rehearsing the narrative of Scripture, tracing its dramatic contours. Scripture tells the story of God's commission to humanity to rule creation on God's behalf. Humanity surrendered this task and plunged the whole of creation into slavery to Sin, Death, and the powers of darkness. This multi-faceted mess demands a profoundly far-reaching solution, one that actually deals with the problem. For God to enact anything like a serious salvation means he must deal with the problem of humanity's rule over creation. For God's world to function rightly, there must be human agents of God's reign overseeing creation's flourishing.

This is the point of connection between Jesus and Paul. In Mark's Gospel, "Jesus is the agent of the reign of God because he is the human being entrusted by God with the task of restoring humanity's God-subjected and God-ordained rule to the world" (p. 38). Jesus demonstrates the restoration of God's rule by casting out demons and healing sickness—acts of shalom-restoration in fulfillment of God's original commission to humanity. Kirk connects Jesus' status as Son of Man in Mark to Paul's use of Jesus' resurrection. This may be a bit surprising at first glance, but it makes perfect sense. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead represents the in-breaking of the future reality of God's restored creation into the present. The future invades our present reality and radically transforms it, bringing the attendant realities of the New Creation, God's Kingdom presence.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead and his installation as cosmic Lord, then, is the connection between Paul and Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God. For Paul and the Gospels, Jesus fulfills the hopes of a human obeying God's original command to rule creation on God's behalf, overseeing its flourishing for the glory of God. And all those who confess Jesus as Lord participate in the reality of God's gracious reign, being "drawn by the

Spirit of God into the realm where Jesus is reigning over all things in God's name and thereby making all things new" (p. 50).

Kirk exploits this narrative approach to address difficult issues facing Christians, such as gender roles, sex, and homosexuality. This book is great for anyone looking for a good workout in the Gospels and Paul. But beyond that, Kirk's clear-eyed vision of the hope-generating and heart-igniting realities of God's comprehensive salvific work and his ability to articulate them compellingly make this a "must-read."

Timothy Gombis
Grand Rapids, Michigan

John Goldingay. *Key Questions about Biblical Interpretation: Old Testament Answers.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. xii + 384 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9780801039591. $24.99 Paperback

In his *Key Questions about Biblical Interpretation: Old Testament Answers*, John Goldingay offers helpful insight into several areas of inquiry related to the Old Testament, or as he is fond of saying, the First Testament. This book is a companion to Goldingay's 2010 volume, *Key Questions about Christian Faith: Old Testament Answers*. Whereas the earlier work dealt with theological questions such as "Who is God?" and "What is sin?" as they relate to the OT, in the present treatment the questions have to do more specifically with hermeneutical issues that arise from and are related to the study of the OT. The 23 chapters all have been published elsewhere, either in journal articles or edited volumes. They have all been revised and updated to varying degrees.

Goldingay considers these questions under four different rubrics. First, topics related to Scripture as a whole are considered. The nine chapters in this section explore questions ranging from "What is Involved in Understanding a Passage from the Bible?" (chapter 1) to "How Might Preaching Be Scriptural?" (chapter 8). This major section is the broadest, covering both the most general and widest range of topics relevant to both Old and New Testament interpretation.

Whereas Part 1 is the most general, Part 2, entitled "Concerning Narrative," is the most narrowly delineated section. Consequently, the rationale for grouping these four chapters together was more apparent than for the other three sections. Here Goldingay deals with questions of biblical narrative's relation to systematic theology (chapter 10), our individual lives (chapter 11), and preaching (chapter 12). Finally in this section he tackles the difficult issue of historicity and biblical narrative (chapter 13).

The four chapters of the third major section address questions related to the OT, or First Testament, as a whole. In chapters 14 and 15 Goldingay attempts to navigate the relationship between the OT and Christian faith, and the question of reading the OT Christologically. Next he identifies five principles that define particularly evangelical study of the OT (chapter 16), and then six principles for the way OT theology relates to the canon (chapter 17).

In the final section, Part 4, "Concerning the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings," six chapters cover an array of remaining issues. The first chapter in this section asks, "How may we interpret the Pentateuch?" (chapter 18) and answers by considering ten different interpretive interests as they relate to Genesis–Deuteronomy. The next three chapters deal with biblical prophecy and then, after a chapter on the apparently rhetorical question of whether masculist interpretation exists (chapter 22), Goldingay concludes the collection by asking the broad question, "How may we interpret Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings?" (chapters 23).

Overall this is an important and timely work. It will provide many students and pastors a valuable resource for wrestling with difficult hermeneutical issues. Because of its (and its author's) acumen and wide range of material covered, readers will likely find themselves referring often to this valuable reference resource.

Given the scope of this volume a detailed assessment is not possible here. Nevertheless, a few observations may be helpful. At times the rationale for grouping the chapters into the four major sections was either lacking or unclear. Some readers might find this difficult, particularly if they are expecting fluid development or continuity from one chapter to the next. This lack of clarity is likely due to the fact that these essays were all written individually at different times in different contexts. This book is probably best approached as an edited compilation of distinct yet related essays.

More specifically, readers who tend towards a more conservative biblical hermeneutic might take issue with some of Goldingay's remarks. Two particular points come to the surface explicitly and also appear basic to his overall interpretive approach. First, in his discussion of the differences between premodern, modern, and postmodern interpretation, he appears to speak favorably of "charismatic interpretation," whereby the Holy Spirit inspires people "to find God saying things to them through a text that ignores the meaning the text had when the Holy Spirit inspired it as an exercise in communication between God and people in its original context" (36). Although Goldingay does offer helpful insight into matters such as determinate meaning, authorial intent, and the reader's role in the interpretive process, here and at other points readers of his book may be left with more questions than answers on these issues.

One other matter that bears mentioning has to do with the way Jesus and the NT writers refer to the OT. Goldingay takes issue with those who "attempt to show that at each point the meaning the New Testament attributes to the text is the same as the meaning it would have had for its writers and first readers" (40). He says this approach is plausible with some passages, but other instances render this an "unrealistic general claim." For example, Goldingay simply states as a matter of fact that there is no hint of correspondence between Hos. 11:1 and Matt. 2:14. Elsewhere he calls it "mostly wishful thinking by Christians" to claim that there is an increasing hope for a coming anointed king in the OT. (234) Particularly related to the Psalter he

asserts that there is no evidence that it was designed to be read messianically in its final form. Unfortunately however, Goldingay stops short of giving adequate voice to the position that the often Christological meaning the NT writers attribute to OT texts may indeed correspond to the originally intended meaning. There are many and reputable treatments of individual texts like Hosea 11 in Matthew 2, not to mention the canonical Psalter, that he may have done well to address.

These and other elements of Goldingay's hermeneutic may concern some readers. Nevertheless, this volume as a whole provides a great deal of relevant, accessible, and thoughtful insight into a variety of issues related to biblical interpretation.

Josh Mathews
Mill Valley, California

Kevin J. Vanhoozer. *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010. xix + 539 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-0-521-47012-4. $138.00 (Hardback).

Kevin J. Vanhoozer's *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* is a sophisticated and compelling construal of God's being and action in terms of divine communicative action. Part I treats several biblical texts and hones in on key issues in understanding God's communicative action, while Part II revisions classical theism by replacing communicative rather than causal categories, and Part III sets forth certain implications of triune communicative theism.

The author begins the book by quoting portions of 2 Peter 1:16-19 and noting that the apostle Peter builds his theology upon on eyewitness and "earwitness" testimony to the God who speaks. For Vanhoozer, this passage makes clear a central tenet for theologians building a doctrine of God: "To speak well of God one must first let God present himself" (3). Theology finds its starting point, trajectory, and parameters in God's communicative acts. Vanhoozer's central foil is Rudolf Bultmann, whom the author sees as "the quintessential example" of the twentieth century Protestant liberal theological method which reduces theology to anthropology by transforming biblical statements about God into existential statements about humanity.

In response to Bultmann's program of demythologization, Vanhoozer offers a program of remythologization. For Aristotle, *mythos* was a unified course of actions that included a beginning, middle, and end. The meaning of the *mythos* was inescapably intertwined with the full rendering of its dramatic action. After Aristotle, Paul Ricoeur reconfigured *mythos* by showing how *mythos* and *mimesis* work together in order to render coherent personal actions in time and to show that *mythos* is more an operation than a genre. For his part Vanhoozer builds upon Ricoeur's work but goes beyond him by showing how *mythos* configures divine (rather than merely human) action and by associating it with the polyphonic diversity of the biblical narrative.

Of the many strengths of *Remythologizing Theology*, this review will mention several. First, Vanhoozer successfully demonstrates that communicative action is a fruitful model for conceiving the doctrine of God, and a helpful counteractive to recent missteps (e.g. Bultmann, Moltmann). Toward that end, he draws upon Donald MacKinnon's observation that theology is perhaps the victim of Plato's victory over the poets, and asserts with MacKinnon that this victory is to the detriment of Christian theology. He rejects speculative metaphysical attempts to project God's being and actions, and argues that God projects his own story by means of triune communicative agency. For Vanhoozer, "the *mythos* of the Bible—the Christological content and canonical form—is the written means of God's triune self-presentation. In a word, the *mythos* is the medium (and the message)" (11). Second, Vanhoozer views the Bible as the plumb line for a Christian view of God. He holds a high view of Scripture and provides a sophisticated method that falls in line with that view. Third, Vanhoozer's revelational epistemology comes through clearly in this book. His critical realism is appropriately humble in recognition of human depravity and in light of our historical and cultural locatedness, and yet is also confident that we can arrive at truth precisely because of God's communicative initiative.

This review's criticisms of *Remythologizing Theology* are few. Concerning *mythos* and remythologization, one wishes that Vanhoozer would have given a deeper and more detailed probing of the biblical *mythos* itself. Although his treatment of *mythos* as a concept and his unfurling of a remythologizing method are robust and profitable, his treat of the biblical *mythos* itself was thin by comparison. Concerning its nature as an exercise in theology, the book is heavily methodological even though it is a work of constructive theology. This is understandable in light of Vanhoozer's body of work in theological method and related disciplines, but one hopes that he will continue to allow his methodological prowess to issue forth in increasingly substantive constructive theology, and perhaps even in pastoral theology. Vanhoozer's evangelical mind and pen are a gift to God's people.

In light of its many strengths, and in spite of a few minor criticisms, *Remythologizing Theology* is strongly recommended as a rare combination of biblical fidelity, methodological sophistication, and disciplined theological creativity. It will serve well as a resource for scholars or graduate students studying the doctrine of God, theological method, or related topics.

Bruce R. Ashford
Wake Forest, NC

Matthew Levering. *Predestination, Biblical and Theological Paths.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 228 pp. ISBN: 9780199604524

At the risk of oversimplification, there are essentially three types of books. There are bad books; books that should never have been published for one reason or another. There are books that are essentially a compilation

of known or available information that include some reflection and considered opinion, but are not creative or ground breaking. Then, there are books that are creative; these are the sorts of books that challenge paradigms of thought and begin the process of providing new understanding. This book most definitely belongs to the second type. It is a collection of perspectives on the doctrine of predestination with some, very limited, reflection, but should not, for this reason, be overlooked or ignored.

The way in which Levering scans the theological scene of church history on predestination is productive in that he identifies five perspectives that emerge from the sixteen personalities he engages. The perspectives he uncovers include: first, those who desire to minimize God's involvement in salvation; second, those who seek to emphasize the priority of God's transcendence; third, theologians who implicate God in the evil performed by those who reject the gospel; fourth, those who insist that God's love demands that he seek to save all rational creatures, though not all are saved; fifth, supporters of some version of universal salvation. Amidst all this, Levering's sympathies lie most consistently with the fourth group.

The fourth group includes, most notably, Catherine of Siena and Francis de Sales. These two, more than anyone else in Levering's estimation, are the most successful at navigating predestinarian waters precisely because they are content to remain more aloof from the kind of systematic formulations that tie others in knots. These two proponents, of which Catherine is the chief, admit that divine causality is a reality, affirm divine permission for rebellion, yet place no limitations on God's love for all people regardless of their obedience or rebellion. Holding all these together is, as Levering freely and repeatedly admits, problematic when they are taken to their logical conclusions, but this is exactly what neither Catherine nor Francis do. In short, they are content to affirm what they believe is theologically warranted and stop there.

On the one hand, such a position may appear admirable because it avoids any conflict. On the other hand, it is not entirely fair to argue that because Catherine, for instance, refused to address how God's love for all humanity is reconciled to his transcendent causality and the fact that not all are saved, she somehow has achieved a more venerable position. In fairness, while this characterization is a weakness in this work, it does provoke Levering to make the oft forgotten point that virtually all who write on predestination eventually admit that God has simply not revealed enough for us to comprehend predestination completely. In other words, everyone's position has problems or limitations. Some may emphasize God's love more than his justice in the face of sin; others may place God's relationship to causality further or closer to the exercise of human will; still others may choose to juxtapose divine attributes with discreet departments of soteriology in diverse ways, but all struggle with the fact that predestination and foreknowledge are realities presented by Scripture just as much as human responsibility is.

One final criticism I have of this book is that while Levering's descriptions of the various positions are remarkably thorough given their succinct-

ness, there is a recurring habit of identifying possible weaknesses in only a few sentences at the end of each micro narrative without any discussion of how the writer under consideration might respond. This leaves the reader with the impression that an individual theologian has shortcomings for which there is no satisfying response.

The fact that the majority of the readership for this journal is Southern Baptist, and in consideration of the rising specter of ever increasingly heated debates within the Convention over Calvinism in general and predestination in particular, it is intriguing that a Catholic has produced a book that all within this branch of Protestantism would do well to read. In other words, regardless of denominational or confessional affiliation, none of us can afford to turn a deaf ear to the polyphony of theological voices that surround us. Lervering's critical engagement with sixteen representative theologians and writers spanning two thousand years may not be as robust as this reviewer had hoped nor is his handling of exegetical arguments as savvy as the title might lead us to believe, but his investigative thoroughness and fairness is a model for all. For students and pastors alike who wish to join the conversation on this topic, this book and volumes like it should be required reading.

David S. Hogg
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Richard Bauckham. *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation.* Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010. 226 pgs.

Richard Bauckham is professor of New Testament studies and Bishop Wardlaw Professor at the University of St. Andrews. His book, *The Bible and Ecology* is a recent additions in the Christian discussion of the environment. This volume is an expansion of a series of lectures he presented at Sarum College, Salisbury in 2006. In this book, Bauckham carefully examines a number of biblical texts for their impact on a Christian perspective on ecology.

Bauckham deals with the biblical perspective on environmentalism in five chapters. In the first chapter, Bauckham seeks to debunk the idea of stewardship as the sum of the biblical perspective on creation care. Reacting to what he views as an abuse of 'dominion' from Gen. 1:26, Bauckham seeks to demonstrate that the idea of complete human control of the environment is hubris. In doing this he cites James Lovelock's Gaia Hypothesis as a valid option for understanding the complexity of creation, and limiting man's role to that of minor participant in the created order rather than as vice-regent of God.

The second chapter reflects Bauckham's attempt to clarify the human role in creation by removing anthropocentrism as a valid option for creation care. To do this, Bauckham expounds God's discourses to Job, showing that God was powerful enough to create the earth and continues to work in maintaining it. Bauckham presents the options as attempting to control creation

and thereby defacing God's order, or allowing God to superintend his own creation.

Having undermined an active role for humans in creation care, Bauckham seeks to find a place for humans in the community of creation. He argues for limited consumption of the earth's resources, citing the Sermon on the Mount as evidence for that. Bauckham also emphasizes the doxological aspect of creation, lobbying for humans to participate as fellow worshipers with creation. Additionally, he makes a strong connection between the fall of man and the pollution of the environment. This connection is stronger than the typical evangelical understanding that the fall had physical results, and actually equates the negative physical results of the fall to human degradation of the environment rather than an act of God.

Bauckham's fourth chapter argues for a more positive view of wilderness than is usually gleaned from Scripture. In contrast to a common view of wilderness being a place of testing or evil (e.g., the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, Jesus' temptation, the release of the scapegoat's release into the wilderness), Bauckham tries to paint a more positive view of untamed nature than some traditions have held. This chapter serves to underline his point that the human impact on creation should be minimized.

In the fifth chapter, Bauckham considers the New Testament perspective on creation and looks forward to new ecotopia. Having focused primarily the Old Testament for the first four chapters, Bauckham covers ecological themes in Christ's work and the documents of the early church. In this chapter, Bauckham describes the work of the gospel as the redemption of all of creation, rather than merely human salvation. He then predicts that the New Heavens and Earth will be an ecological paradise, so that one of the major aspects of the existence in Heaven will be the enjoyment of nature. In this enjoyment, humans will be joining creation in worship of God, the ultimate end for which everything was created.

Bauckham's book is well written and cogent, and it has three significant strengths and weaknesses. The first strength is that Bauckham covers the major passages in Scripture which relate to ecological themes in a more comprehensive manner than any other available resource. This fact alone makes the volume a significant contribution to the conversation on creation care. Second, Bauckham successfully dispels the notion that humanity is singularly responsible for fixing all of the ills of creation: it is simply not within man's capacity to complete a work which began in Christ. The third and most significant strength is that Bauckham successfully integrates creation care with an authentically Christian worldview. Many discussions of creation care in the church are addenda to the core principles of Christianity; Bauckham shows that creation care must be an integral part of how a Christian lives out the gospel.

Despite its strengths, there are three significant weaknesses to this volume. First, Bauckham makes the erroneous assumption that scientific theories, such as Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis and Darwinian evolution, come

without any philosophical baggage. By allowing these views to be accepted uncritically, Bauckham disregards the significant neo-pagan and materialistic presuppositions which surround and permeate both theories. A second weakness is that Bauckham attacks a strawman version of stewardship. Very few Christians actually hold to the view of stewardship as total, technologically driven, human control of all aspects of creation. Despite this, Bauckham presents this view as normative of the stewardship view of creation care and proceeds to pummel it. Bauckham ignores the broader evangelical perspective of stewardship that man has a unique role as vice-regent in God's ecology to work in concert with God in nature for the restoration from the effects of sin. The third and most significant weakness is that Bauckham uses possible secondary meanings of texts to support his view. In most instances, the secondary meaning is valid and can be used to support his hypothesis, but it tends to subvert the primary thrust of the meta-narrative of Scripture. If one read *The Bible and Ecology* in isolation, it would give the impression that God's main focus was the redemption of creation with man's salvation as an afterthought. This blurs significant lines in soteriology and could lead to misunderstandings about the nature and extent of the atonement.

This volume is a significant contribution to the ongoing debate over creation care and its place in the Christian worldview, mainly because of its comparative comprehensiveness. The book is well written and covers the topic in a broad and engaging manner. Despite the weaknesses discussed above, this book is a must read for those Christians who are interested in how the Bible interfaces with ecology and the environment.

Andrew J. Spencer
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Caitlin Carenen. *The Fervent Embrace: Liberal Protestants, Evangelicals, and Israel.* New York: New York University Press, 2012. 265 pp. $55.00.

Caitlin Carenen, Assistant Professor at Eastern Connecticut State University, writes *The Fervent Embrace: Liberal Protestants, Evangelicals, and Israel.* Divided into seven chapters, the author provides an account of American Protestant political involvement with the nation of Israel and the Jews from 1933-2008. The thesis is that American Protestant thought concerning the nation of Israel and the Jews changed with the Holocaust.

In the beginnings of each chapter, Carenen summarizes many of the pertinent historical events of the time and then gives her understanding of the often conflicting evangelical and liberal Christian responses. The early chapters address the anti-Semitism of American Protestants. The author explains that while American Protestants were more tolerant than their German counterparts, concern for the Jews or Jewish nationalism was subdued over patriotism (3, 16); anti-Semitism was prevalent among both liberals and evangelicals. It was during this time that liberal Protestants were influential in

Washington and evangelicals were small in number. In the middle chapters, Carenen discusses changes toward a more pro-Israel policy. She notes that after the Holocaust, evangelicals focused more on eschatological reasons for assisting the Jews, while liberals centered on humanitarian ones. While liberal and evangelicals differed in their approach, both eventually gave their support to the Jews. During this time, evangelicalism was rising to prominence and liberalism was declining. The latter chapters further discuss the rise of evangelicalism, the subsequent fall of liberalism, and the political ramifications. The nation of Israel, and the American Protestants support of it, increasingly was being seen in the light of fulfilled biblical prophecy with humanitarian concerns, comparatively speaking, being ignored.

Carenen's desire to examine the general American Protestant response to the Holocaust is a noble one. While determining which historical events to include is difficult, throughout the narrative, she seems to reflect a relatively unbiased and accurate view of history. Though the work seems a bit disjointed at times, she correctly addresses the anti-Semitism that existed among American Protestants. She also is accurate in mentioning the rise of evangelicalism, the decline of liberalism, and its affects on American political thought. Overall, her depiction of the history of the time allows for frank and open discussion.

While Carenen's understanding of history and her discernment of which events to include are fine, her grasp of theology needs some attention. Carenen is correct when she states that theological liberals focus less on theological dogma while evangelicals believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, the divinity of Jesus, and salvation through Christ alone (xi-xiii). She also properly explains that along with the Holocaust, the rise of a tertiary doctrine (eschatology) with an uncertain theological understanding (premillennialism) drove evangelicals to become supportive of the Jews and the nation of Israel. Further, she describes correctly the type of ecumenism liberals used to support their understanding of human rights. Interestingly, this desire for unity at the expense of doctrine seems to have aided in their numerical decline and their lessening in political importance.

Perhaps because liberals tend to be less dogmatic about doctrine, much of what she mentions about their theology is acceptable. However, her understanding of certain doctrines of evangelical theology is imprecise. Generally, she places all theological conservatives together. However, she falls short when she tries to distinguish between the terms "fundamentalist" and "evangelical." The fundamentalist movement has changed since it originated in the 1920s to combat Protestant liberal theology. By the late 1980s, it came to denote a faction among theological conservatives that centered on defeating secular humanism.[1] Evangelicalism, while having similar concerns, differed in

[1] C. T. McIntire, "Fundamentalism," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed, edited by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 472-75.

that its focus was the salvation of unbelievers.[2] If the word "theological conservative" were used over evangelical or fundamental, her work would be less confusing. The belief that evangelicals or theological conservatives rejected modernity, specifically, higher criticism, is also incorrect. Evangelicals did not rebuff the scientific study of Scripture; they repudiated antisupernaturalist assumptions that led many higher critics to assert the composition of Scripture was not facilitated by divine revelation. Further, Carenen is incorrect in her belief that all evangelicals held to a premillennial understanding of eschatology. Not all academics at theologically conservative seminaries would adhere to this belief. Her lack of precision regarding theologically conservative positions easily could have been remedied by reading articles in an evangelical dictionary, such as the one listed below.

Overall, *The Fervent Embrace* is a work that addresses a relatively new phenomenon in American Protestantism: the support for Jews and the state of Israel. While there are some misconceptions about theology, it is a piece that should be read by both American Christian theological liberals and conservatives. Recognizing one's history, and learning from interpretations of it, should be important to all Christians.

Philip O. Hopkins

Paul J. Griffiths. *Song of Songs*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011. lviii + 182 pp. Hardback. ISBN - 9781587431357. $32.99 Hardback.

In this latest addition to the Brazos Theological Commentary series, Paul J. Griffiths, Warren Professor of Catholic Theology at Duke Divinity School offers theological exegesis of the Song of Songs. While recent years have witnessed the release of numerous commentaries on the Song, this volume adds a few unique methodological features.

First, rather than grounding his exegesis in the oldest complete Hebrew manuscripts (Leningrad or Aleppo), Griffiths engages the latest edition of the Latin Vulgate, *Nova Vulgata Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio* (1998). With a vigorous defense for the value of studying translations, this author contends against the single-inspired-text view, arguing that all extant versions of the Song are "confections," each equally worthy of our reading and study. In his words, "Hearing the Song in English is not second best to hearing it in Hebrew: both are confected versions, and each is fully the word of the Lord" (xxvii). According to Griffiths, the New Vulgate was intentionally chosen in order (1) to engage with largely untranslated, pre-modern, Western commentaries, the majority of which are based on Jerome's translation, and (2) to contribute to a renewed appreciation of the Song's liturgical possibilities (xxxii-xxxiv).

[2] R. V. Pierard and W. A. Elwell, "Evangelicalism," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 405-10.

However, this textual choice may seem natural in the Catholic theological tradition, but most modern readers will likely assume that a commentary on the Hebrew Bible will be based on the Hebrew text rather than the recent edition of a second generation translation!

Indeed, there is immense value in studying ancient translations through which God has preserved His Word. Yet, the study of translations should always be done in consultation with those sources on which the translation was based. Yet, it does not appear that Griffiths consulted the MT or LXX, relying solely on the Vulgate. The flaws of this methodology are evident from the beginning. For example, Griffiths laments the problem of identifying the speaker in 1:2-4, "Here, in the opening words of the Song proper, there are only pronouns, none gendered, none linked to a proper noun. . ." (7). Yet, the Hebrew MT clearly indicates that the woman is speaking, using masculine verbs and pronouns, "May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your (masc.) love is better than wine" (1:2). This is only one example of the problems with basing exegesis on a secondary translation.

Second, in contrast to the allegorical or literal approaches to the Song, Griffiths attempts to blend these two interpretations together in his figural reading, "preserving both the text's figures and what they figure" (xxxix). Thus, the Song's male voice is not merely a human lover but also the Lord, God of Israel and the Church. Similarly, the female beloved is a love-struck maiden as well as a figure of national Israel, the Christian Church, the individual human soul, and/or the Virgin Mary. Despite acknowledging that these figures are never explicitly mentioned, Griffiths does not discuss what textual indicators (other than one's external theological system) signal these characters as the intended figures. Also, this author does not grapple with how such erotic lyrics can be applied to one's relationship with God. As C. D. Ginsburg aptly noted, with reference to the man's comparison of his beloved's body to a palm tree with pendulous fruits, "We earnestly request those who maintain the allegorical interpretation of the Song seriously to reflect whether this verse [7:8], and indeed the whole of this address [vs. 8-10], can be put in to the mouth of Christ as speaking to the Church. Would not our minds recoil with horror were we to hear a Christian using it publicly, or even privately, to illustrate the love of Christ for his Church?" (*Song of Songs*, 181). Such figurative readings collapse under the weight of the Song's details.

Finally, in line with the series' stated purpose, Griffiths employs Scripture to interpret Scripture. For example, since every other scriptural song is "a poetic ejaculation to the Lord" (2), Griffiths concludes that the Song's superscription indicates that this book is best understood in like manner. Yet, such a hermeneutical method ignores the Song's unique genre. Perhaps, the hermeneutical key to understanding the Song is not found in Scripture but in comparison with similar love lyrics from the Near East.

Therefore, despite Griffiths' valuable defense for studying translations and his important survey of pre-modern Christian interpreters, the weaknesses of this volume are significant. Rather than forcing foreign figures onto the

text, readers would have been better served by a discussion of how the Song's literal reading fits with and contributes to the theology of Scripture. Readers may also be disturbed by the frequent intrusion of the author's Catholic theology, particularly his Marian exegesis.

Brian P. Gault
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Wayne Flynt. *Keeping the Faith: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives.* University of Alabama Press, 2011. 400 pp. Hardcover. ISBN 9780817317546. $29.95 Hardcover.

Wayne Flynt, a lifelong Baptist, was one of the premier historians of the American South during the late twentieth century. In *Keeping the Faith,* Flynt tells his story, that of Baptists and academia in the contemporary South. With wit and humor, Flynt escorts the reader through his childhood in 1950s Alabama – from being raised by his white working-class Baptist parents , to his years at Howard College (now Samford University), and the earning of his Ph.D. in History at Florida State University in 1965. Hired immediately by his alma mater, Flynt spent twelve years teaching at Samford, pouring himself into his work. However, his advocacy of both racial integration and the establishment of a quasi-faculty labor union strained his relationship with school leaders. In 1977, Flynt left Samford and joined the faculty at Auburn University, where he spent his remaining twenty-eight years in academia, and serve as Chair of History Department, publishing nine books, and directing twenty three doctoral dissertations.

At Auburn, Flynt established himself as a respected scholar of Southern history and religion with his two most notable works: *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie* (1998) and *Poor But Proud: Alabama's Poor Whites* (1989), which won the prestigious Lillian Smith Award for Non-Fiction. With these works and others Flynt encouraged his fellow historians to include otherwise neglected groups in their telling of the American story, namely poor whites and religious individuals. He championed the notion that if historians truly wish to render an accurate explanation of the past, then they must not only include groups which they, as elitist secularists, would prefer to ignore, but also consider their ideas and actions objectively. This line of thinking led him to advocate for the hiring of historic minorities (such as women and blacks) in higher education, but also (to the chagrin of some of his colleagues) poor whites, Republicans, Pentecostals, and others typically not proportionally represented on the faculties of state universities.

Flynt's inclusivism and pluralism had its limits, however. An active Southern Baptist layman who served as chairman of the Alabama Baptist and the Southern Baptist Historical Commissions, Flynt invested much of his adult life in the Southern Baptist Convention, but clearly has little regard for the conservatives who won control of the convention during the last two decades of the twentieth century. In *Keeping the Faith,* he denounces the tac-

tics used by Southern Baptist conservatives to win control of the convention. Flynt, however, does not identify any questionable tactics allegedly used by Southern Baptist conservatives, and he fails to point out that they won control of the convention by fairly winning an unbroken string of democratic presidential elections at each annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention from 1979 to the present. He also peppers his memoir with negative comments about Southern Baptist conservatives, describing them in one particular instance as "intolerant, mean-spirited, judgmental and rigid" (160). Unfortunately, these terms are apt to describe Flynt's attitude at points in his memoir. The bulk of his reminiscences, at least as they relate to his adult years, focus not on his career as a teacher and administrator, but rather on his life as an activist – in the church, in academia, and in politics. Regrettably, Flynt, who is a political liberal and a theological moderate, shows little charity towards those who hold other views. For instance, Flynt dismisses Christians who believe the Bible teaches that the office of pastor is limited to men as bigots who denigrate women. Likewise, those who oppose raising taxes are simply assumed to be cold-hearted individuals with no concern for the poor. Those who are anti-abortion, he asserts, have no legitimate claim to the label of "pro-life" because such individuals have no concern for humans after they are born. Conservative Christians who reject the theory of human evolution are accused of perpetuating "silly science-faith conflicts" (77) and trying to force people to chose "between God or gorillas" (157).

While it is normal to expect individuals to believe they are right and others are wrong, and to express as much in their autobiography, this work nonetheless brings up the question of the proper relationship between the historian and politics. No historian will ever be completely unaffected by contemporary events and questions, but one must always be alert to explanations of the past that are geared primarily to political matters of today. While some historians, such as Dan T. Carter and Howard Zinn, blurred the line between political advocacy and the objective study of the past, Flynt has generally avoided committing this same historical sin in his own scholarly works. While some may not agree with all of Flynt's political positions, it appears that he has lived his adult life not as the isolated scholar in his ivory tower, but more as the people's professor who sought to use his knowledge and perspective to make society better. His obvious concern for the poor and historically oppressed are commendable, as is his efforts to improve education both at Auburn and in the state of Alabama. Those who wish to see how a moderate Baptist scholar influenced the writing of American history and sought to shape church and society in the modern South would do well to consider this well-written, opinionated, yet insightful memoir.

Brent J. Aucoin
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Craig S. Keener. *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts.* 2 Volumes. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. xxxviii + 1172 pp. Hardback. ISBN 9780801039522. $59.99 Hardback.

Intended for an academic audience, with a particular focus on the area of New Testament studies, Keener's two-volume work addresses the credibility of New Testament accounts of miracles through a detailed examination of miracle claims found outside the Bible. In taking this approach, Keener is attempting to respond to David Hume's central critique of miracle claims: that such claims contradict human experience, and credible eyewitness testimony for miracles is non-existent. Keener's primary thesis is that there are indeed eyewitness accounts offering miracle claims. His secondary claim is that there is sufficient evidence to consider supernatural explanations as plausible in at least some cases. One of the most surprising features of this work (especially given the subtitle) is that it does not include a significant examination of the credibility of New Testament miracle accounts in particular.

The first six chapters address the philosophical and historical issues present in the topic. Beginning with the New Testament accounts of Jesus's miracles (to which is devoted a scant twelve pages), Keener briefly surveys both Christian and Jewish extra-biblical miracle accounts in the ancient world. From there, the philosophical question of whether miracles are possible is considered. While Keener addresses some related issues, the focus of chapters 4 through 6 is squarely on Hume's argument that miracles are not possible. For instance, in chapter 5 Keener establishes a strong argument that Hume's denial of the possibility of miracles is little more than an anti-supernatural presupposition. This section of Keener's work would make an excellent introduction for readers unfamiliar with Hume's argument on miracles or the broad philosophical debate surrounding it.

One weakness in Keener's treatment of the philosophical issues is that he does not devote enough space responding to Hume's "competing religions" argument: diverse religious systems (each claiming their own miracles for verification) tend to be mutually exclusive. In chapter 6, Keener briefly acknowledges the argument, and then directs his readers to a handful of diverse responses offered by other scholars. Rather than respond directly to Hume, Keener instead concludes, "My goal here is not to favor a specific possible response ... to Hume over the others on this matter, but to point out that, once potential alternatives are factored in, his argument from competing religions is too frail to bear any weight" (p. 197–8). But without a cogent response to this aspect of Hume's argument, Keener risks losing a central focus of his work: to address the credibility of New Testament miracle accounts. Without a clear system of distinguishing the credible from the non-credible, Keener might leave his readers wondering how the biblical accounts can be thought of as *uniquely* credible, over and against miracle claims from competing religions.

Chapters 7 through 12 are focused on presenting various modern miracle accounts from around the world. The purpose of the varied accounts is directed towards Hume's claim that testimony of miracles is so rare that miracles do not occur. Keener says that this perspective is one of ethnocentrism and bias against non-Western cultures. While some of Keener's meticulously documented accounts arise from incidents reported in the West, most come from what he refers to as the "Majority World." Keener asserts that "hundreds of millions of people in the world claim to have witnessed supernatural healings" (p. 212). Thus, *contra* Hume, testimony of miracles is anything but rare. The many stories and accounts that Keener presents in these six chapters are intended to support his primary thesis: "that eyewitnesses do offer miracle claims" (p. 1).

Chapters 13, 14, and 15 (which open the second volume of the set), are devoted to supporting Keener's secondary thesis: "supernatural explanations, while not suitable in every case, should be welcome on the scholarly table along with other explanations often discussed" (p. 1). In chapter 13, Keener addresses the topic of natural causes for miracle claims – including fraud, emotional arousal, and psychosomatic factors. Keener argues that "[t]horoughgoing epistemological skepticism" (p. 607) is impractical and cumbersome, and seldom used in any field. Adopting this perspective with regard to miracles, Keener is saying, is nothing more than closed-minded skepticism; and no data will ever be sufficient to convince the skeptic that a supernatural cause is the explanation for a supposed miraculous event. But, Keener claims, there is data that points to supernatural causes (data that includes medical documentation and testimony from scholars); and the data is sufficient to convince an open-minded non-supernaturalist.

Keener's main thesis is simple, straightforward, and uncontroversial. Through a well-researched and meticulously documented retelling of the stories, Keener establishes that there are abundant eyewitness reports of miracles. His secondary claim—that supernatural causes are plausible in some cases—is more controversial. Keener adequately addresses the philosophical issues that arise when considering this claim (perhaps somewhat overconfidently); and he seems to be correct that the tendency to rule out supernatural causes before the data is examined is nothing more than closed-mindedness and an unwarranted bias against the supernatural. While Keener's work excels in accomplishing these straightforward objectives, readers will find a good defense of miracles in general, but not a defense focused on the credibility New Testament miracle accounts in particular.

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Robin M. Jensen. *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012. xviii + 238 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9780801048326. $24.99 Paperback.

Contemporary Christians who claim to practice the faith of the early church must ask themselves, What did ancient baptism look like? Usually this question is answered by examining the writings of the church fathers, a task at which Robin Jensen's *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity* succeeds. Yet what makes Jensen's book so helpful is how it looks beyond the textual evidence to survey early baptismal iconography. A manifold and complex understanding of this ancient rite soon emerges—which may disturb those for whom baptism is a simple practice with univocal meaning.

Jensen argues that baptism in the ancient period was a sensual as well as spiritual experience. "Wherever, whenever, and however baptism was administered, its purpose and effects were explained or expressed through gestures, pictures, settings, or spoken words." It is the visual and tactile aspects of ancient baptism that Jensen wishes to highlight in her book. She divides the subject into five key motifs.

Cleansing from Sin and Sickness. The primary biblical basis for a penitential understanding of baptism is Jesus's encounter with John the Baptist at the Jordan River. The early Christians viewed John's baptism of repentance as a precursor to what occurred in the church's font. Patristic writings often represented baptism as a turning away from sin, while artistic motifs such as Noah's flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, or various stories of healing at therapeutic pools likewise conveyed a cleansing theme. (However, since most of these images appear in a funerary rather than baptismal context, a certain stretching of the evidence is needed to apply them to baptism.) Ritual renunciation of Satan and parallels with ancient bathing customs also highlight the purification motif.

Incorporation into the Community. Jensen successfully demonstrates a patristic theology of a new communion in Christ, yet she does not offer much exegetical evidence that the entrance actually took place via baptism. Nevertheless, baptism certainly was understood as incorporative by the early Christians. It created a new race, a new family, a new community of priests, athletes, soldiers, or saints. Visual imagery reinforced this idea by portraying believers as fish in the ecclesial net or lambs in the ecclesial flock (although once again, the baptismal connection is not entirely clear here—a pervasive evidentiary problem in the book). Rituals such as enrollment, sponsorship, marking, and kissing also served to emphasize the theme of incorporation.

Sanctification and Illumination. Jensen's theology of baptismal sanctification is grounded in pneumatology. At the inauguration of Jesus's ministry in the Jordan River, at Pentecost, and elsewhere in Acts, the bestowal of the Holy Spirit is linked with baptism, whose sanctifying waters convey the Spirit's presence. Only later in the fourth century did the reception of the Spirit come to be signified by chrismation, a practice that may have its roots in the Gnostic sects, and which bears obvious overtones of enlightenment. Imagery such as a dove, milk and honey, or a burning flame all symbolize the mystic illumination that baptism offers.

Dying and Rising. This theme, grounded in Romans 6 and John 3, encapsulates what many consider to be the central aspect of baptism: identification with Jesus Christ. As the paschal significance of baptism clarified over time, Easter became the appropriate moment for the rite. The Bible was mined for rebirth imagery, with Lazarus, Jonah, and Daniel featuring prominently. Jensen establishes a baptismal connection for these figures by pointing out their nudity, which signifies the childlike innocence and newness that baptism represents. The architecture of paleo-Christian baptisteries is reminiscent of ancient tombs, perhaps even evoking a mother's womb. Triple immersion (= three days in the grave) and the bestowal of a clean white garment also create an association with the Savior's death and resurrection.

Beginning of the New Creation. In her final chapter, Jensen describes the eschatological dimensions of baptism. The rite not only establishes an individual reality but restores the cosmos to an Edenic state. Unashamed nakedness in the font alludes to the original situation in paradise, and may even signify genderlessness (though the orthodox evidence for this concept is limited to one reference from Gregory of Nyssa; cf. Gal. 3:27-28). Other biblical images involving water—the Jordan River, the rock struck by Moses, the Samaritan woman at the well, the wedding at Cana—likewise suggest an eschatological referent. The octagonal structure of many baptisteries points to the awaited rest that follows the seven days of creation, while the ritual actions of re-robing and facing east also envision the dawn of a new age.

Robin Jensen has written an accessible overview of early Christian baptismal imagery. While the book does not have the comprehensive scope of a work like Everett Ferguson's *Baptism in the Early Church* (2009), it nonetheless offers a valuable reminder that baptism was originally a rich and variegated practice. To reduce baptism to a single motif would be to cut against the grain of the ancient church.

Bryan Litfin
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Timothy George (editor). *Evangelicals and Nicene Faith: Reclaiming the Apostolic Witness.* Beeson Divinity Studies. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. xxiv +248 pp. ISBN 9780801039263. $24.99 Paperback.

The collected essays in *Evangelicals and the Nicene Faith* seek to join Nicene faith with contemporary evangelicalism. Most of the essays were originally presented at a conference at Beeson Divinity School in 2009. Editor Timothy George, also Dean of Beeson, notes in his preface that the purpose of the conference and therefore of the volume is to stress "both the confessional and unifying purposes of the creeds as expressions of Christian belief and identity" (ix). Inspired by Jaroslav Pelikan's appreciation for confessional orthodoxy and its relevance for the contemporary church, each of the contributors brings fresh insight to how the Nicene Creed speaks to the church today.

After a brief introduction by Timothy George, the book proceeds in three parts: Identity, History, and Practice. In Part I, the contributors explore how the creeds of the ancient church have relevance for the identity of the modern church. Thomas Oden begins in chapter one by asking how the Nicene Creed can speak to the modern church, and Gerald Bray concludes the section in chapter four with a similar question regarding the Athanasian Creed. In the two intervening chapters, Mark Gignilliat and Frank Thielman examine how the Old and New Testaments and the ancient church's reading of them led to the Nicene Creed.

Part 2, History, investigates the various Protestant traditions and the ways in which the Nicene Creed influenced them. Carl Beckwith discusses the Reformers in chapter 5, Steven Harmon explores the possibility of the Magisterium in Protestant life in chapter 6, and Matthew Pinson and Curtis Freeman argue for the ability of the Nicene creed to speak to a traditionally non-creedal people, the Baptists. In the middle of Part 2, chapter 7, Carl Braaten demonstrates the continuing importance of the four marks of the church – one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

Practice is the topic of the concluding section of the book, and here the authors examine the contemporary application of the Nicene Creed in the life of the church. Elizabeth Newman begins by arguing first that the Creed gives freedom and vitality to the church, and then moves on to show that the Creed also should be practiced and not just recited. David Nelson follows with a chapter on the union of doctrine and worship, and then Kathleen Nielson offers a literary reading of the Nicene phrase, "who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven". Nielson's main point is that this phrase is both literarily beautiful but also engendering of Christological worship. John Rucyahana calls for the continued use of the creeds in the church in order to retain its command and influence, and Mark DeVine both critiques the Emerging Church and offers suggestions for its growth through the Nicene Creed. The book concludes with a sermon on the Nicene Creed's view of heaven by Ralph Wood and a tribute to Jaroslav Pelikan by Timothy George.

Evangelicals and the Nicene Faith is an important contribution to the contemporary conversation about the relationship between doctrine, and especially the doctrine of the ancient church, and ecclesial life. Each of the chapters demonstrates the relevance of orthodoxy and of the Nicene Creed for the church today, and the structure of the book helps the reader to see that relevance for many aspects of the contemporary church. Among the sixteen chapters, Mark Gignilliat's on the Old Testament and the creeds is particularly strong; he not only identifies the ways in which the Trinity is found in the Old Testament, but also manages to argue for a proper method of reading the Old Testament in the process. Matthew Pinson and Curtis Freeman's chapters also stood out for this reader; creeds are often a minimal and many times non-existent part of my own Baptist life, and to hear how the creeds are useful in Baptist thought and practice is refreshing.

There are, however, a few weaknesses. Two of the more glaring ones are the almost total dominance of North American and European authors and the lack of argument on how to actually bring about ecumenical unity through Nicaea. As to the first, John Rucyahana, who hails from Rwanda is the only non-North American or European author among the contributors. Second, there is a serious lack of engagement with the problem of ecumenism and how Nicaea can offer a way forward in that discussion. Thomas Oden and Mark DeVine address it somewhat in their chapters, but there is no continued reflection on it throughout the book. The volume would have greatly benefited from having one additional section devoted to this topic.

Despite these criticisms, this reader highly recommends *Evangelicals and the Nicene Faith*. It accomplishes its goal of demonstrating the relevance of the Nicene Creed for the contemporary church. Each chapter is well worth the read, and rarely is this so in an edited volume.

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Suzanne McDonald. *Re-Imaging Election: Divine Election as Representing God to Others and Others to God.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. xx + 201 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9780802864086. $26.00 Paperback.

Suzanne McDonald, assistant professor of systematic theology and historical theology at Calvin College, presents a reformulation of the traditional Reformed doctrine of election. Rather than the sovereign, loving choice of certain ones to salvation, McDonald argues that election should be understood primarily as a call to engage in the task or role of "representation." Namely, the elect are called to represent God to the world and, conversely, the world to God. Therefore the elect are not merely those whom God has determined to save. They are those whom God has chosen to work in, through, and ultimately beyond to "enact his purpose of blessing for all peoples and all things." (156) All the elect are saved, but she argues that it is possible the elect are not all who will be saved.

McDonald engages with John Owen and Karl Barth as dialogue partners to formulate her position. Owen and Barth had more in common, theologically speaking, than one might first suppose. Both viewed Christ as both the electing God and the elected man. Both held to a relational understanding of the *imago dei*. Both believed that the divine image was completely lost or annihilated in fallen humanity. They held to nearly identical understandings of the inter-Trinitarian nature of election. Both held to a double decree version of supralapsarian predestination (though Barth believed that Christ encompassed both decrees while Owen, of course, did not). McDonald combines Owen's doctrine of the divine image as representation with Barth's hopefulness concerning election.

McDonald builds on Owen's understanding of restored divine image in the elect. As Owen saw it, Christ perfectly represented God to us. In turn,

the Church is called to reflect the image of God to the world as a whole. In so doing the Church represents God to the world. McDonald takes the concept of representation a step further than Owen ever would by incorporating the Barthian notion that the Church, like Christ, represents the non-elect to God.

To make her point, McDonald uses the intriguing illustration of caring for a person afflicted with dementia. One would treat a loved one who has lost his mental faculties with respect, not because of what he has become but because of whom he would be if he were still healthy. Even though the afflicted person has lost his identity, you represent humanity to him and his humanity to the rest of the world. In a similar way, the elect (i.e., the Church) represents God to the lost world and the lost world to God. And this is true even if it is not recognized by either the Church or the world.

What are we to make of McDonald's proposal? A great deal of her argument depends on viewing representation as the key category for understanding election. The book suffers from two weaknesses. First, the elect do seem to have the important function or role of representation, but it is not at all clear that the biblical authors viewed election strictly or even primarily in terms of representation. McDonald provides a good summary of the theology of Owens and Barth, but she gives only the briefest sketch of the biblical materials. Second, a more thorough explanation and unpacking of representation as a concept would have been helpful. Other than tentatively expressing agnosticism about the final fate of the non-elect, she gives little attention to the implications of her proposal. A valiant, yet ultimately unconvincing effort.

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Mark Coppenger, Apologetics for Contemporary Christians: Pushing Back Against Cultural and Religious Critics. B&H Studies in Christian Ethics. Nashville: B & H Academic, 2011. IX + 275 PP. Paperback. ISBN-978-0-8054-6420-7. $24.99 paperback.

Mark Coppenger offers a measured serving of apologetic help to assist Christians in "pushing back" against the critics in general and atheists in particular. The focus according to the title is moral apologetics which begins with the question "what makes something right or wrong in the first place" (p 8). Coppenger elects to approach the subject by giving a series of quotes suggesting that secular views fail. In fact, the "apologetic" dimension of the book appears less about defending the faith and more why Christians should be confident in their faith. Coppenger admits early on (p 7) that his treatment is broad in scope and not intended as a decisive blow to the skeptic (p 6). Accordingly, the content reveals no sustained argument for a Christian position demonstrating why the answer to the moral question should prevail. Although showing the failure of secular or alternate religious moral systems has some benefit, it does not, however, by itself assure the truthfulness of

Christianity's answer to the moral/ethical question. However, he thinks cultural apologetics has not received sufficient attention from apologists. In addition, he believes cultural apologetics has equal weight in the defense of Christianity. In fact, he thinks that "the 'bitter fruit' of rejecting Christianity extends well beyond the intellectual climate to the well-being of society in general" (p 5). While that is true, the question it raises is whether or not cultural apologetics has a sustainable force in the public discourse regarding the truthfulness of Christianity.

Content wise, the author devotes the first three chapters to faulty secular systems of ethics, followed by a chapter on faulty or inadequate religious systems of ethics and then with a chapter on the practical superiority and moral balance of the Christian ethic. Chapters six through nine juxtapose the "immoral ethicists" and their teaching with that of Christian teachers showing by quotes Christianity to be superior. While the quote- laden chapters are informative, they seem to provide little weight for those wishing to push back at the critic with the truthfulness of Christianity. In the four chapters that follow, Coppenger attempts to provide the Christian with apologetic ammunition by showing how the cultural fruit of Christianity outshines that of other religious systems. While the historical review of cultural consequences of different religions is important, its weight in the push-back enterprise seems to lack a sustainable punch. That is to say, what it shows, at least in some degree, is that pragmatically Christianity seems to produce morally superior cultures. Even if that point can be sufficiently established, it would only show Christianity to be morally superior, not necessarily true.

In the next three chapters Coppenger suggests that some of the arguments Christians give prove an embarrassment to Christianity. Rightly, he points out that some arguments short change the Gospel or leave the unbeliever with wanting something more. His comments about what he what he calls "zingers', which are one-liners he defines as "argument from laughter" (p 208), does little for the apologetic cause is spot on. While he is right on this point, it seems he is too dismissive of some of the objections of the atheist. Still, these three chapters serve as very important reminders to apologists of practices to be avoided. In addition, the last two chapters on virtue apologetics, while a little off point of cultural apologetics, is an important word to apologists.

While there is much to commend Coppenger's book, it seems that the real question of apologetics hits on truthfulness of Christianity, not just its moral superiority. It is not just that Christianity produces better cultures, which could be challenged, or that Christians are morally better than non-Christians (at least sometimes). Just because a belief system produces good behavior does not mean it is true. In fact, this is the point Coppenger makes when evaluating the moral force of Islam. He concludes that gains in sobriety, sexual morals, and circumspection in speech" (180) do not prove the validity of Islam. Then could not the same be said of the cultural benefits of Christianity?

In conclusion, Coppenger provides a breadth of information which is helpful to the Christian defending Christianity against some of the charges laid against it. However, a word of caution is in order for Christians who might rely too heavily on this approach. Those who do so may very well find themselves stuck in a quagmire of endless exchanges where one moral claim is countered by another. In spite of some areas of concern, Coppenger's work provides a good supplement to the work of apologetics.

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Darrell L. Bock. *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God's Promised Program, Realized for All Nations.* Biblical Theology of the New Testament Series. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 495 pp. Hardback. ISBN 13: 978-0310270898. $39.99 Hardback

It is hard to imagine a better person to write a theology of Luke-Acts than Darrell Bock. He has written a major commentary on both books (both in the BECNT series) and his doctoral dissertation on a theme in Luke-Acts as well. It is fair to say that he has devoted most of his scholarly life to the message transmitted in the Lucan writings. Readers can be confident that they are under the supervision of an expert.

The book is divided into three parts. Part one considers introductory matters, examining the importance of Luke-Acts, the context and unity of the books, and also provides an outline and survey of their content. Part two is the heart of the book where the major themes of the book are detailed. Here Bock considers among other themes God's plan, promise and fulfillment; Jesus' identity as Messiah, Servant, Prophet, Savior, Lord, Son of Man, and Son of God; the role of the Holy Spirit; the centrality of salvation; the role of Israel and Gentiles; the church; discipleship and ethics; opponents to the Christian faith; Luke's concern for women, the poor, and social issues; the law in Luke-Acts; Lukan eschatology; and the role of scripture. Part three brings the study to a close by considering the canonical status of Luke-Acts and by providing a conclusion to the book as a whole.

The list of topics covered demonstrates the breadth of the material covered, which can scarcely be discussed in detail in a short review. It is obvious that we have here the work of a veteran who is well acquainted with Lukan material and Lukan scholarship. Those familiar with Bock's work will not be surprised to see a robust defense of the historical accuracy of Luke-Acts. The author demonstrates convincingly, following in the footsteps of his eminent doctoral mentor (Howard Marshall) that Luke was both a historian and a theologian. An edifying account which is written from a certain perspective is not thereby unhistorical.

Above all, Bock is guided by the text in setting forth the theology of Luke-Acts, for he usually examines in textual order the verses which inform the topic in question. Hence, his theology of the Luke-Acts is emphatically

grounded in the textual witness. Some chapters synthesize what is studied, and Bock provides conclusions to each chapter as well where he sums up what has been presented. The conclusion of the book is helpful in this regard as well, for Bock reprises the central themes in Luke-Acts. The advantage of examining topics in text after text is that virtually no stone is left unturned. The disadvantage is a less synthetic of the treatment overall. No book can do everything, and readers receive the benefit of Bock's keen exegetical skills.

Certainly a major theme in Luke-Acts is christology, and Bock's work here is insightful and helpful. His work on Son of God was especially deft and careful, showing that the phrase may refer to the messianic king and/or designate a unique relationship with God that surpasses, without contradicting, a messianic referent. The only surprise was the brief amount of space devoted to Son of Man, which is a major christological title and the subject of intense controversy in scholarship. On the other hand, Bock devotes himself to the text instead of engaging alternate theories in detail, and such a stance makes sense since this is a textbook for students and pastors.

Two themes that caught my attention were Bock's discussion of Israel and of the Holy Spirit. What was striking was Bock's contention that Luke has a special interest in the future salvation of Israel, along the lines of what Paul teaches in Romans 11 (cf. Luke 13:35; 21:24; Acts 1:6; 3:19-21). Whatever one thinks of Bock's reading, he makes a good case for his own interpretation of the evidence. He shows quite clearly that the notion that Luke is anti-Semitic does not stand up under scrutiny. Bock also argues that Luke does not emphasize that Jesus was empowered by the Spirit but focuses on the Spirit leading and confirming Jesus. Jesus has a different relationship to the Spirit than the disciples (218), since the Spirit is given to the disciples through Jesus (Acts 2:32-34). Bock makes an important distinction here which is occasionally overlooked.

I was a bit surprised that Bock does not interact with Simon Gathercole's intriguing and provocative monograph on pre-existence in the synoptics. Similarly, David Pao's work on the new exodus in Luke-Acts and his study of the "Way" could be integrated into the work. But these are mere quibbles. No book can do everything, and no one can cover all the secondary literature anymore. Bock is to be thanked for an erudite and edifying study of Luke-Acts.

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Tremper Longman III *Introducing the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2010, 192 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-310-29148-0. $14.99, Paperback.

This text is designed as a short guide to the history and message of the OT and is based upon Longman's previously co-authored (with Raymond Dillard) textbook "*An Introduction to the Old Testament"* (Zondervan, 1994). The

material in the book is laid out in a simple format for each book of the OT consisting of its content/structure, authorship, and date, genre/literary style, and a discussion of how it anticipates the gospel.

In the content section Longman isolates what he considers the chief feature of each book. Thus for the Pentateuch the reader discovers primordial "history" and biographical details in Genesis, Israel's exodus from Egypt together with laws and regulations for the tabernacle (Exodus) and priests (Leviticus), geographical settings (Numbers), and a covenant treaty document (Deuteronomy). Readers of this text will find it of interest that Longman views the Pentateuch as well as Joshua through Esther as "theological history," which he explains in an excursus as that which is intended "to tell about God and his relationship with his people" (p. 85).

Having dealt at length with various views in connection with authorship and date, Longman grants that Moses may have been involved in the composition of the Pentateuch but decides that "the composition of the Pentateuch did not come to a close with the death of Moses" (p. 17). He also discusses in detail matters of genre for each pentateuchal book such as the place of divine providence and covenant. The covenant theme is especially developed in Deuteronomy where he discusses the Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and New Covenants in relation to their fulfillment in the work of Jesus Christ.

Longman carefully analyzes the structure of each of the books from Joshua to Esther, viewing them basically in accordance with their content and emphases. He decides for anonymity of authorship and in most cases. Joshua to Chronicles apparently were compilations that reached final form in the exilic or post-exilic period. Readers will find his discussion of Kings and Chronicles especially interesting, Longman portrays the "theological history" of kings in a negative light, whose purpose was to explain to God's exiled people why they were suffering. Accordingly, Israel's history is surveyed "through the lens of the Deuteronomic law. For this reason, although the author (or authors) is unknown, he (or they) is often referred to as the Deuteronomic historian" (p. 68). The post-exilic Chronicles, however, was written from a less negative perspective and designed to provide information as to how God's people should live in that new era. Because Ezra 1-6 is written in third person narrative, Longman suggests that this is a probable indication of the multiple authorship of Ezra-Nehemiah. Interestingly enough, in discussing the authorship of Haggai he admits that the prophet may have used third person narrative "to enhance the objectivity and historical reality of the report or to authenticate his oracles as the word of God" (p. 176).

Longman's distinctive literary abilities shine through in the poetic books. In each case, prominent literary genres, figures, and imagery are presented. The chief contents and structure of each book are also discussed (although he decides that Psalms has no certain structure except for chapters 1-2 and 146-150, which were designed as bookends). Once again he decides largely for the anonymous authorship of the various books, although admitting that Solo-

mon may have had a hand in the composition of Song of Solomon and Proverbs.

In each of the prophetic books Longman largely views their structure and major content around the twin oracles of judgment and salvation. In the case of the Major Prophets, he provides evidence for the traditional authorship of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Lamentations and Daniel, however, are considered anonymous. His concern for literary matters surfaces as he discusses the many types of prophetic oracles (see, e.g. his discussion of Ezekiel's style, pp. 136-137). Longman's treatment of Daniel is provocative and stimulating both as to his conclusions and literary approach. Throughout his discussion he provides various viewpoints, the exception being chapters 7-12, which are "the only undisputed apocalypses of the Old Testament" (p. 144).

In the content sections of the Minor Prophets Longman gives particular attention to oracles of judgment (including foreign nations) and salvation. In every case, except Jonah, he opts for traditional authorship, even while admitting that in many cases little is known about the author. Although Jonah is known to have prophesied in the days of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:25), Longman decides that the author and date of the book are uncertain. Throughout the Minor Prophets Longman once again displays his literary skill by isolating many distinctive genres, images, motifs, and themes. Of particular note is his well-known devotion to the divine warrior motif (e.g., pp. 42, 46, 100, 130, 144, 168, 172, 175).

His applications of OT material to NT teachings are a major feature of his book. Readers may find some of his examples a bit forced. Nevertheless, they are extremely useful and provide a more holistic approach to the Scriptures.

The average lay person may not communicate well with Longman's broad scope of interaction with ancient Near Eastern cultures as well as expressed doubts as to the certainty of certain details. This book is better suited for students and some pastors or church leaders. In this regard each chapter includes helpful questions for review and discussion that could stimulate further thinking. In addition to his valuable literary insights, Longman often includes at strategic points a discussion concerning the relation of the passage to ancient Near Eastern literature and/or archaeological information (e.g., pp. 11, 20-21, 24, 32, 38, 76, 82, 95, 110, 118, 132, 135).

In sum, although many conservatives may find much that is provocative, the book provides a synopsis of important information concerning each OT book and insights into the current state of OT scholarship.

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Gordon J. Wenham. *Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012. xv + 233 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9780801031687. $22.99. Paperback.

Gordon J. Wenham is tutor in Old Testament at Trinity College, Bristol, and professor emeritus of Old Testament at the University of Gloucestershire. Given his publication record in the field of Old Testament studies, as well as his reputation as a biblical scholar *par excellence*, Wenham is well qualified to pen a study on the Book of Psalms entitled *Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically*. Note that this book is part of Baker's ongoing "Studies in Theological Interpretation" series.

While readers need not be familiar with the earlier volume, *Psalms as Torah* is actually a sequel to Wenham's previously published *Story as Torah*. As with his earlier work, in this present book Wenham is addressing what he perceives to be a neglected area of study. This scholarly blind spot is identified by Wenham as he states that his purpose in writing is "to demonstrate the important of the psalms particularly in molding Christian ethics and to offer an initial exploration of the ethics of the psalms" (p. xi). Indeed, a perusal of any academic library catalog will confirm the scarcity of scholarly materials at the intersection of the Psalms and Christian ethics.

Structurally speaking, *Psalms as Torah* contains two main sections. Chapters 1–4 comprise the foundational part of this book. Major areas of exploration in these chapters include: the widespread use of the Psalms in worship in Judeo-Christian history, differences between Jewish and Christian approaches to the Psalms, a review of critical approaches to the Psalms, the importance of memorization of the Psalms, and the unique claims of the Psalms as prayed ethics. Chapters 5–10 constitute the heart of this book, as it is here Wenham explores and explains the concept of *Psalms as Torah*. Major areas of discussion in these chapters include: the concept of law in the Psalms, narrative law in the Psalter, various virtues and vices that appear in the Psalms, as well as an interesting study of the ethics of the Psalms in the New Testament. This book concludes with a very helpful, selected bibliography, as well as thorough Scripture, author, and subject indices.

There are many favorable aspects of this book that could be highlighted in a review. As with all of Wenham's publications, *Psalms as Torah* is well-written and clearly structured. Although Wenham is addressing an area of study that has been largely neglected by contemporary believers (in both the academy and the church), he explores the ethics of the Psalms in a manner that could easily be digested by an educated layperson. College and seminary students will find this book especially helpful in their ministry preparation. Two areas of Wenham's study deserve special attention. First, his material on memorizing the Psalms is indispensable reading (chapter 3). Here Wenham highlights the importance of memorizing Scripture, the historical prevalence of the practice, and the structural design of the Psalter that betrays the authorial intent of memorization. A second area of Wenham's study that deserves special attention is his tracing of the content of the Decalogue within the Psalter (chapter 6). Wenham's conclusion to this section communicates his perspective clearly, "There is plenty of evidence that the psalmists know the

Ten Commandments and place them at the heart of their ethical thinking" (p. 109). This is a large part of what Wenham means by *Psalms as Torah*.

As with any volume, there are minor details of this book about which one could quibble. Yet, in *Psalms as Torah* such things are mostly not what Wenham says, but strings he pulls and leaves unexplored. This is understandable, though, for as Wenham explains in his introduction, *Psalms as Torah* is not designed to be comprehensive or technical in nature. This book is a fine study on the ethics of the Psalms that ought to find its way onto the bookshelf of scholars, pastors, and laypeople alike.

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BibleWorks 9.0

In essentially all forms of human endeavor the computer in its myriad of forms and presentations (mainframe, network, desktop, laptop, tablet, iAnything, phones) has become a necessary and indispensable tool. Those involved in the industry are in a daily struggle and quest to best utilize the resources and provide products (hardware and software) that are better able to serve humanity and do so that bit better than others. This review will observe one product and evaluate its effort to keep up with technology and surpass others who are doing so in the same field.

BibleWorks 9.0 is out attempting to supply Bible students and scholars with the tools necessary in today's environment to "rightly divide the Word of God" in a manner better than Logos and Accordance. Their web page notes that their ". . . goal is to provide a complete package containing the tools most essential for the task of interpreting the Scriptures in the original Greek and Hebrew, and to do it at a price that poor pastors and students can afford." As such, their product comes in one fairly priced ($359, $159 for an upgrade) package and for the most part restricts itself to those tools needed to evaluate the Biblical texts. It is a Windows specific program (XP, Vista, 7, and 8) but it is reported by Mac users that it will work on Macs under VirtualBox, Parallels, Fusion, or BootCamp.

Logos is a Library—BibleWorks is a Scripture Study Tool. If you want to know what the Bible says then BibleWorks is the program. If you want to know what EVERYBODY has said, then Logos is the program. One is a fast Bible research tool with some additional resources, the other is a library with a Bible research tool attached.

For research Bible Works 9 has added the BibleWorks Manuscript Project (ongoing) which contains graphic images of the major manuscripts (Sinaiaticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, etc.) for close textual research. These include Full New Testament transcriptions, over 7.5 gigabytes of images, verse hyperlinks, and a Manuscript comparison tool. Ongoing is the morphological tagging for the manuscripts which will be updated regularly. Related to manuscript research, BibleWorks now includes the New Testament Critical

Apparatus from the Center for New Testament Textual Studies which covers the entire New Testament.

For comparison studies it is easy to open a window to display several versions in a window. A powerful similar feature is the LXX-Hebrew comparison window. This allows a researcher to have the two texts next to each other with full morphological features on and operating. This is an extremely valuable and indispensible tool, most closely related to what a researcher would do with the Hatch-Redpath Greek LXX concordance. For language studies and in particular NT usage of OT passages this a valuable tool in that will find wide spread use in the field.

To aid in Bible research BibleWorks includes the full Moody Atlas with 118 high resolution maps and very many photos of the regions as an unlocked standard portion of the package. Additionally, for a small fee ($20) the ESV Study Bible is available with its articles, maps and images, all of which can be displayed in a window next to the searched text.

I have not done a speed comparison but my personal experience is that BibleWorks is fast—for searches it even presents a timer to tell you have fast the search took! Others have noted that this is a major strength against its competition. Mouse overs are instantaneous and complex searches are nearly so. The complexity of the searches may be extensive, depending on the users skill, level of language ability, and inquisitiveness. The most complex searches are handled by the graphic search engine and may be mindboggling intricate. BibleWorks has included several sample searches to aid any researcher's quest.

For using any of the features of the program there are over six hours of 'how to' videos included and BibleWorks has an excellent updating feature and the crew is updating the program and databases on a frequent basis.

As a student of the Bible and a teacher of Scripture, I have found BibleWorks to be an indispensible tool, kept always close to hand and employed often. I look forward to the future releases as they move to more and newer platforms. BibleWorks has committed itself to ever improving their product and has always included items my previous reviews have called for (Josephus, Unicode) and I suspect that could see it on my smartphone before too much time goes by.

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Jon C. Laansma, Grant Osborne, and Ray Van Neste (eds.). *New Testament Theology in Light of the Church's Mission: Essays in Honor of I. Howard Marshall* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011). xx + 395 pp. ISBN 13:978-1-61097-530-8. Paperback. $37.68.

This volume of essays is a deserved celebration of the Scottish evangelical scholar I. Howard Marshall, who taught for many years at Aberdeen University. Marshall is in many ways a British successor to the renowned F.F. Bruce. The opening "Appreciation" by Ray Van Neste does a good job of

showing why Marshall's evangelical scholarship, mentoring of younger scholars, and commitment to the church makes him worthy of a second festschrift. These essays focus on the theme of NT Theology and mission, topics which Marshall has spent much time writing and speaking on.

James Dunn examines the "Methodology of Evangelism in the New Testament," noting that no NT document provides a guide on methods. He concludes that evangelism was an everyday affair in the home and workplace and the gospel is both constant and adaptable. Craig Blomberg writes on law-keeping and the New Testament with "Freedom From the Law Only for Gentiles? A Non-Supersessionist Alternative to Mark Kinzer's 'Postmissionary Messianic Judaism.'" Blomberg lauds Kinzer's good intentions, but exposes the exegetical and theological errors in his thinking that Jewish Christ-believers *must* obey the law and that Jews need not convert to a messianic faith.

Philip H. Tower writes about translation theory with respect to 2 Corinthians in "Hearing Voices: The Foreign Voice of Paul under the Stress of Contemporary English Localization," where he suggests that translation does not merely carry words but impacts the receiving culture in various ways too. The late Dick France examines gender neutrality and Bible translation in "The Son of Man in Hebrews 2:6." France notes the problem posed to Bible translators in rendering Heb 2:6-9, with its "Son of Man" and "him", into modern English, especially when it is based on a Hebrew collection idiom and an wooden Greek translation in the Septuagint. He prefers the option of retaining the idiom for "son of man" as opposed to generic references like "mere mortal," but using the resumptive plural pronouns "them" and "their" to highlight the corporate nature of the idiom.

Darrell Bock has an essay on "Gospel before the Gospels," where he discusses the narrative framework of the gospel in the apostolic preaching in Acts. Luke does not summarize the gospel as an atonement theology, but principally as the story of Jesus with the promise of forgiveness and life in the Spirit for those who trust in him. Esther Yue L. Ng provides a robust critique of the two-missions view of Michael Goulder in her piece "Matthew 5:17-20 and 'A Tale of Two Missions'?" She argues that Matt 5:17-20 does not imply any kind of anti-Paulinism. Rather, Matthew is mainly focused on the religious inadequacies of the Pharisees and Scribes who are not a cipher for Paul. Gary Burge examines the recent archaeological explorations of the Pool of Siloam in conjunction with the Fourth Gospels' interest in water and ritual cleansing. Burge concurs with many researchers that the Pool of Siloam was a public *miqveh* for ritual cleansing and the public healing stories in John 5 and 9, which involve water, seem to hint at Jesus as a "replacement" for Jewish devices for ritual purity.

Mark Strauss' subject is "The Purpose of Luke-Acts: Reaching a Consensus," where he argues that Lukan prologue, genre, and main theological themes support the consensus view that Luke–Acts was written to legitimize the church as the true people of God. Joel Green looks at Acts 6 concerning

"Neglecting Widows and Serving the Word?" Green believes that Luke recounts a theological problem in the early church – failing to reproduce the *koinonia* of Jesus – and it was resolved with a transfer of leadership from the twelve to the seven deacons. Gene L. Green in "Luke: Historian, Rhetor, and Theologian" follows Howard Marshall's approach in arguing that Luke is a historian who has not fabricated the speeches in Acts.

Brian Rosner's contribution is the "Missionary Character of 1 Corinthians," engaging various aspects of mission-commitment and the major missional themes of the letter. Andrew Clarke looks at debates between social historians and social theorists about group boundaries in his study of "Church Membership and the *idiōtēs* in the Early Corinthian community," where Paul defines insiders and outsiders, but also accommodates differences for insiders within the body. The "Old Testament Paradoxes in Galatians: Rethinking the Theology of Galatians," is taken up by Maureen Yeung, where she examines three areas of Abraham's seed, the Law of Christ, and Israel of God, as instances of how Paul's paradoxes are really inherited from Jewish tradition, and resolved in light of his missionary theology. Roy Ciampa engages in a study of "Missio Dei and Imitatio Dei in Ephesians," focusing on how the church carries forth the mission of God by imitating God. Alistair Wilson surveys Philippians in "An Ideal Missionary Prayer Letter" to discern what Paul contributes to a theology of mission. Anthony Thiselton surveys the topic of "Paul's Missionary Preaching in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 with an Apocalyptic Addition from 2 Thessalonians," suggesting that Paul's gospel preaching can be likened to a speech-act. Greg Cousar discusses "'Prayer' and the Public Square: 1 Timothy 2:1-7 and Christian Political Engagement," concluding that Christian political engagement is not about gaining power in politics, but about asking God to let his saving priorities affect their interaction with civil authorities. Robert Yarbrough presents a study on Adolf Schlatter's approach to the Pastoral Epistles in "Schlatter on the Pastorals: Mission in the Academy," and rehearses Adolf Schlatter's argument for their authenticity. In "'Nobody Knows De Trouble I've Seen': Hardship Lists in Paul and Elsewhere," Paul Ellingworth maintains that Paul's accounts of his hardships exhibit a human tendency to recount one's travails, rather than stem from a Cynic-Stoic literary device.

Jon C. Laansma's piece "Hebrews and the Mission of the Earliest Church," exposits the missionary ethos of Hebrews in the writer's exhortation for the audience to continue to strive and struggle for the gospel. Grant Osborne engages the subject of "The Mission to the Nations in the Book of Revelation," where he surmises that Revelation is missional insofar that it warns Christians against false teachers and urges non-believers to turn to God. Mission is a corollary of God's Lordship over history. Also on Revelation, Eckhard Schnabel looks at the interface of "Early Christian Mission and Christian Identity in the Context of the Ethnic, Social and Political Affiliations in Revelation," by examining the phrase "every tribe and language and

people and nation," concluding that it emphasizes how believers are drawn from every imaginable human grouping.

All in all, a diverse but superb collection of essays in honor of a truly great evangelical scholar.

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T. Desmond Alexander. *From Paradise to Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012. xxii + 360 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9780801039980. $29.99 Paperback.

This book is a third edition of Alexander's popular introduction to the Pentateuch. This edition, as the editions before it, consists of two parts: 1) an introduction to the research regarding the Pentateuch, especially as it relates to the origin and development of the Pentateuch and 2) an exposition of the basic plot and prominent themes that bind the various parts of the Pentateuch into a unified literary work.

When introducing research regarding the Pentateuch, Alexander sets out to describe and explain how the Pentateuch has been studied through various methods, particularly source criticism, form criticism, traditio–historical criticism, and literary criticism. He describes the development of the Documentary Hypothesis, the rise of form and traditio–historical criticism, and the challenges to both the Documentary Hypothesis and the methods of inquiry themselves. After describing these developments, he uses the Sinai narrative of Exodus 19–24 as a concrete example for the way in which scholars have appropriated the methods of study while also providing his argument for the unity of that text. He finishes this part of the book with reflections on the limitations of describing the origin and development of the Pentateuch according to these methods. Alexander also addresses the question of why the Pentateuch was written, arguing that it provides the appropriate starting point for a messianic ideology developed through the Old Testament. In the third edition he also adds material addressing the question of when the Pentateuch was written. He argues that much of the Pentateuch bears the marks of pre-Mosaic and Mosaic writing, but that the final editing of the Pentateuch likely took place in the exilic period in connection with Joshua–Kings.

In the second half of the book, he describes the prominent themes of the Pentateuch and how they fit into its unity. For the most part he addresses each of these themes as one encounters them reading from the beginning of the Pentateuch to its end. A sampling of the themes are as follows: royal genealogies, blessing, fall, Abrahamic covenant, exodus, Passover, Sinai covenant, tabernacle, holiness, sacrifices, cleanness, murmurings in the wilderness, love of God, and election. For each of these themes, Alexander provides an exposition as it relates to the entire Pentateuch, a summary for how it relates to the Old Testament, and finally the ways in which it relates to the New Testament. In this third edition, he adds a chapter at the beginning of this part

concerning the theme of creation as a temple-city. Alexander picks up on recent suggestions that the account of creation in Gen 1 is designed to present the world as a temple-city in which God rests and in which its inhabitants serve as priests to worship Him. The chapter strengthens the work because more than the second edition, it clearly highlights the importance of Gen 1-2 for the Pentateuch and the Bible as a whole. In this third edition, the conclusion focuses on the way in which the Pentateuch relates to the story of the entire Bible. He emphasizes three aspects: 1) the movement from creation to re-creation, that is, from Eden to New Jerusalem, which happens to be the title of his 2009 volume introducing biblical theology, 2) the role of Jesus as the royal priest whose death, burial, and resurrection allow those who follow him to regain their roles as royal priests, and 3) the privileges and responsibilities that those who are now royal priests have because of their role.

The second and third editions of this work are largely the same. Beyond the differences already mentioned, the biggest difference is that the third edition has been thoroughly edited according to American English. Even those sections of the book that are nearly identical in content have been updated for greater clarity and greater conformity to American English style. Second, a new chapter regarding the theme of the temple-city has been added. Third, the conclusion to each part of the book has been largely rewritten. Fourth, nearly every chapter has been updated or expanded in some way. This updating appears especially true for the sections dealing with the New Testament.

The greatest strength of this book is that by dealing with research both about the Pentateuch (its origin and development) and in the Pentateuch (its content and themes), the book is able to offer readers a solid foundation for reading other academic research concerning the Pentateuch and a framework for reading the Pentateuch with understanding towards its unity and place in the whole Bible. The third edition will help readers see the Pentateuch's role in the Bible even better.

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Richard Marsden, E. Ann Matter (eds.). ***The New Cambridge History of the Bible: The Bible from 600 to 1450*** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Xxii +1045 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0-521860062. £125 GBP

For several decades the three volume *Cambridge History of the Bible*, published between 1963 and 1970, has been the standard English language reference tool and a rich source of information; see P. R. Ackroyd, C. F. Evans (eds.), *From the Beginning to Jerome*, The Cambridge History of the Bible I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); G. W. H. Lampe (ed.); *Vol. II: The West from the Fathers to the Reformation* (1969) and S. L. Greenslade (ed.); *Vol. III*: *The West From the Reformation to the Present Day* (1963). Now these vol-

umes are being revised and expanded in focus. This revision is also due to the change of climate in the humanities in general and in theology and biblical studies in particular. Some scholars have referred to recent shifts in interest as a "cultural turn": while the focus used to be on the Bible itself, now the focus is on its long history of reception and influence not only in scholarship and believing community, but also on the arts, literature, other religions and so forth. The present volume is the first to appear of a four-volume *New Cambridge History of the Bible*. It aims to trace "its geographical and intellectual journey from its Middle Eastern homelands to all parts of the Mediterranean and into northern Europe"; it provides "a balanced treatment of eastern and western biblical traditions, highlighting processes of transmission and modes of exegesis among Roman and Orthodox Christians, Jews and Muslims, and illuminating the role of the Bible in medieval interreligious dialogue" (i). The editors note that "Pervading this volume is a further overriding theme: how the evolution and use of the Bible not only reflect the intellectual concerns and institutional and social structures of the medieval world, but also decisively shape them (the Bible, we are reminded more than once, represents power) and leave their mark on the reception of the sacred text in modern times" (xvi). The forty-four essays of this volume further aim to take the study of the medieval Bible history beyond the concerns of the monastic cloister and ecclesiastical school to consider the influence of biblical texts on vernacular poetry, prose, drama, law and the visual arts of East and West.

In the "Introduction" (1–16), R. Marsden briefly sketches the characteristics and developments of the period and then introduces the five parts of this volume and the individual essays. *Part one,* "Texts and versions", addresses the linguistic plurality characteristic of the medieval period, during which the enduring primacy of the established scriptural languages was continually tested by the newer vernaculars of both East and West (xvi). It contains: J. Olszowy-Schlanger, "The Hebrew Bible" (19–40); B. Crostini, "The Greek Christian Bible" (41–55); N. de Lange, "Jewish Greek Bible versions" (56–68; cf. the Cambridge based project *Greek Scriptures and the Rabbis*); P.- M. Bogaert, "The Latin Bible, c. 600 to c. 900" (69–92) and F. Van Liere, "The Latin Bible, c. 900 to the Council of Trent, 1546" (93–109).

E. Isaac writes on "The Bible in Ethiopic" (110–122). On the Ethiopic tradition, the editor notes:

> Among the older vernaculars of the East, Ethiopic (or Ge'ez) was one of the earliest to have the Bible, probably by the middle of the fourth century; the Old Testament was probably translated from the Greek Septuagint used in Alexandria, possibly by Jewish Christians. Bible translation is of unusual importance in Ethiopian history and is invaluable for understanding the transmission of the biblical text, as well as the study of several of the major religions of the world: Judaism, Islam and traditional African religions. Crucially, too, Ethiopic preserves intact many ancient writings that have been lost in the original languages, including the book of Enoch and the book of Jubilees (4f).

Isaac surveys how the Bible came to the horn of Africa, its translation into classical Ethiopic, its textual basis, various editions (to date there is no complete critical edition of the Ethiopic holy scriptures) and the particular significance of Enoch and Jubilees, the Bible in modern Ethiopian languages (perhaps not what one would expect in a volume on the Middle Ages) and a summary of the overall centrality of the Holy Bible ("foundational to Ethiopia's cultural, social and political structures", 118), in particular of the Old Testament Torah. The Ethiopic tradition is not addressed again in the other parts of this comprehensive volume (the same applies to the history of the Coptic translation in Egypt; the Coptic translation should be covered in volume 1). There is a rich heritage of the Bible in Coptic and Ethiopian languages that African church historians and biblical scholars might attend to and make available to African Christians. The Bible had a long history in Africa (if "Africa" is not limited to sub-Saharan black Africa in the strict sense) before it came back to the African continent through Europe.

Further essays on texts and versions are contributed by S. H. Griffith, "The Bible in Arabic" (123–142); S. P. Cowe, "The Bible in Armenian" (143–161); J. W. Childers, "The Bible in Georgian" (162–178); H. R. Cooper, "The Bible in Slavonic" (179–197); A. C. Gow, "The Bible in Germanic" (198–216); R. Marsden, "The Bible in English" (217–238); B. Ejrnaes, "The Bible in the languages of Scandinavia" (239–250); C. R: Sneddon, "The Bible in French" (251–267); L. Leonardi, "The Bible in Italian" (268–287) and G. Avenoza, "The Bible in Spanish and Catalan" (288–306).

Part two is devoted to the format and the transmission of the medieval Bible and "surveys the evolution of production techniques and changing fashions in the presentation of the sacred text, with the great luxury pandect only the most obvious of many manifestations" (xvi). It consists of nine essays: G. R. Parpulov, "The Bibles of the Christian East" (309–324); D. Ganz, "Carolingian Bibles" (325–337); D. Shepard, "The Latin gospelbook, c. 600-1200" (338–362); L. Smith, "The Glossed Bible" (363–379); L. Light, "The thirteenth century and the Paris Bible" (380–391); D. Shepard, "Romanesque display Bibles" (392–403); N. Morgan, "Latin and vernacular Apocalypses" (404–426); T. Gross-Diaz, "The Latin psalter" (427–445) and J. Lowden, "Illustration in biblical manuscripts" (446–482).

The ways in which the Bible was interpreted in the Middle Ages is the focus of *part three*. It "examines the exegetical legacy of the fathers and the challenge to this from a new sort of interpretation, fostered by monastic and cathedral schools and based on grammar and dialectic; it explores, too, the vigorous dialogues which developed between Christians and Jews and Muslims, all of whom had different and sometimes competing interests in the Bible" (xvi). The contributions are T. M. Kolbaba, "Byzantine Orthodox exegesis" (485–504); J. J. Contreni, "The patristic legacy to c. 1000" (505–535); G. Lobrichon, "The early schools, c. 900-1100" (536–554); W. J. Courtenay, "The Bible in medieval universities" (555–578); M. Dove, "Scripture and reform" (579–595); R. A. Harris, "Jewish biblical exegesis from its begin-

nings to the twelfth century" (596–615); A. Sapir Abulafia, "The Bible in Jewish-Christian dialogue" (616–637) and D. Waines, "The Bible in Muslim-Christian encounters" (638–655).

Part four, "The Bible in use", "addresses the most important of the liturgical, devotional and secular roles of the Bible in the medieval practice of Christianity, as well as its contribution to the formation of the Qur'ān" (xvi). To achieve this J. Dyer writes on "The Bible in the medieval liturgy, c. 600-1300" (659–679), S. Wenzel on "The use of the Bible in preaching" (680–692), E. A. Matter on "The Bible in the spiritual literature of the medieval West" (693–703), M. - L. Ehrenschwendtner on "Literacy and the Bible" (704–721), G. Bray on "The Bible and canon law" (722–734; Bray is the author of the excellent one volume survey *Biblical Interpretation Past and Present*; Leicester: IVP, 1996) and A. Neuwirth on "The Qu'rān and the Bible" (735–752).

The last five essays, subsumed in *part five* under "The Bible transformed" explore "the mission to communicate the Bible to the less educated, which so characterised our period and was accomplished by an increasing diversity of visual and dramatic means" (xvi). They are: J. Mitchell, "The Bible in public art, 600–1050" (755–784); C. M. Kauffmann, "The Bible in public art, 1050–1450" (785–820); R. Cormack, "Icons of the eastern church" (821–834); E. Birge Vitz, "Medieval verse paraphrases of the Bible" (835–859) and L. R. Muir, "Staging the Bible" (860–873). A detailed bibliography (primary sources, 874–898; secondary sources, 899–983), indexes of biblical manuscripts (984–994) and scriptural sources (995–999) and a detailed general index (1000–1045) round off the well-produced volume. *The Bible from 600 to 1450* is an excellent collection and a mine of information. Like its predecessor volume in the old *Cambridge History of the Bible*, it has all the potential to become the standard for years to come.

The present volume was the first to appear of this four volume project. The other volumes of *The New Cambridge History of the Bible* are volume 1: *From the Beginnings to 600* (eds. J. C. Paget, J. Schaper); volume 3: *From 1450 to 1750* (ed. E. Cameron) and volume 4: *From 1750 to the Present* (ed. J. Riches).

With a more narrow focus on interpretation, Alan Hauser and Duane F. Watson (eds.) have started with a *A History of Biblical Interpretation I: The Ancient Period* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003). Volume 2 is devoted to *The Medieval Through the Reformation Periods* (2009). Other related multi-volume studies on the history of Bible interpretation are M. Saebo's (ed.), *Hebrew Bible – Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation: Volume I. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300): Part 1 Antiquity* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); *Part 2 The Middle Ages* (2000); volume II: *From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (2008) and volume III: *From Modernism to Postmodernism: 19th and 20th centuries* (2012) and H. O. Old's seven volume survey *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans); I: *The Biblical Period* (1998); II: *The Patristic Age* (1998); III: *The Medieval Church* (1999); IV: *The Reformation* (2002); V: *Modera-*

tism, Pietism and Awakening (2004); VI: *The Modern Age* (2007) and VII: *Our Own Age* (2010).

A convenient summary of readings from the history of Bible interpretation is provided by William Yarchin, *History of Biblical Interpretation: A Reader* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004; see my review in Religion & Theology 11, 2004, 358–363). Particularly devoted to medieval Bible interpretation is the new series *The Bible in Medieval Tradition* (BMT) (Grand Rapids; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans; Edinburgh: Albans). The volume in Galatians has recently appeared (I. C. Levy, *The Letter to the Galatians*, 2011).

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G. K. Beale. *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. xxiv + 1048 pp. Hardcover. ISBN 9780801026973. $54.99 Hardcover.

G. K. Beale has produced a masterful work on the biblical theology of the New Testament in his latest book, one that must be critically engaged, humbly learned from, and practically applied by any serious biblical or theological scholar. Much of the book is a re-articulation of material Beale has previously published in monographs or articles, but it has been repackaged and synthesized in a very effective manner.

Beale's purpose is to produce a New Testament *biblical* theology rather than simply a New Testament theology. Beale lists a number of distinctions between these in his opening chapter, but the difference is essentially that a NT biblical theology focuses on the "*exhibition of the organic progress of supernatural revelation in its historic continuity and multiformity*" (9, quoting GerhardusVos; emphasis original), while NT theologies tend to be a corpus-by-corpus survey of the NT and focus on historical questions like the relation of Jesus to Paul. Another distinction between the two is that Beale's current project seeks to tie the NT to the OT through a storyline approach, whereas many NT theologies search for themes in each book or corpus of the NT. Beale likewise wants to distinguish his biblical theological methodology, which focuses on the organic progress of the biblical storyline, from more thematically oriented biblical theologies. Beale helpfully summarizes these distinctions by saying ". . . this project is not an attempt to focus directly and discretely on how each book of the NT contributes to the theology of the NT but rather concentrates on those parts of the NT that most develop the storyline that I have formulated, which I believe is the essential thread of the NT" (14).

Concerning method, Beale categorizes his approach as "canonical, genetic-progressive (or organically developmental, as a flower develops from a seed and bud), exegetical, and intertextual. This approach could be summarized as a 'biblical-theological-oriented exegesis" (15). Throughout the book he studies with a careful eye particular passages, how they relate to other pas-

sages, and most importantly how they relate to the biblical storyline. In chapters 2 and 3, he articulates and exegetically demonstrates the Old Testament storyline, which he summarizes as follows:

> The Old Testament is the story of God, who progressively reestablishes his new-creational kingdom out of chaos over a sinful people by his word and Spirit through promise, covenant, and redemption, resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this kingdom and judgment (defeat or exile) for the unfaithful, unto his glory (16, italics original).

Chapter four demonstrates how this storyline was expressed in ancient Judaism, and the rest of the book (chapters 5-28) are an exegetical-theological articulation of how the New Testament continues this Old Testament storyline. Beale summarizes the New Testament story thusly:

> Jesus' life, trials, death for sinners, and especially resurrection by the Spirit have launched the fulfillment of the eschatological already-not yet new-creational reign, bestowed by grace through faith and resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this new-creational reign and resulting in judgment for the unbelieving, unto the triune God's glory" (16, italics original).

Beale exegetically supports his thesis through approaching various aspects of the New Testament storyline in each subsequent chapter (or section in some cases). Part 2, which consists only of chapter 7, discusses the Great Tribulation's commencement with Christ and the Church. Part 3 is the heart of the book, and in it Beale seeks to demonstrate that the resurrection is the beginning of Christ's new creation reign in the Gospels (chapter 8), Paul (chapters 9 and 10), and the General Epistles and Revelation (chapter 11). Every subsequent Part of the book is an attempt to show how Christ's new creation reign affects particular aspects of biblical theology. Part 4 (chapters 12-14) focuses on the renewal of the image of God; Part 5 (chapters 15-16) discusses justification and reconciliation; Part 6 (chapters 17-19) is concerned with pneumatology and specifically with the Spirit's role of creating new creational image bearers who function as the new temple; Part 7 (chapters 20-22) seeks to articulate how the church is the transformed eschatological Israel both as God's people and in relation to the land promises; Part 8 (chapters 23-24) contains Beale's reflection on the marks of the church as the transformed eschatological marks of spiritual Israel; and Part 9 (chapters 25-26) discusses the practical implications of the church living as new creations in Christ. The book concludes in Part 10 with summaries of the already/not yet realties discussed in previous chapters (chapter 27) and of the implications for Christian living (chapter 28).

Although it is difficult to summarize a 1,000+ page book in a phrase, one could say that Beale's primary point is that Christ, in his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and gift of the Spirit, has inaugurated the "last days" promised by the Old Testament and will consummate them at his return. He has a thoroughgoing already/not yet eschatological perspective, and seeks to

demonstrate the exegetical and biblical-theological evidence for it throughout the NT.

Beale is, in this reviewer's opinion, a superb exegete and theologian. He has a grasp of both the biblical text and also of the importance and right use of a theological framework through which to view that text. He handles the text deftly and reverently, perceiving it rightly both as an unfathomable well of information and knowledge and also as God's authoritative and transformative word. His ability to not only see but also demonstrate to the reader the interconnected web of scriptural texts and theological concepts is unparalleled in contemporary evangelical theology. One ought to have a Bible handy as they read, and expect to take innumerable breaks to go and look up the many passages that Beale cites. In addition to his ability to cite Scripture and show its interconnectedness, Beale also shows scholarly awareness of his field and of the relevant Second Temple literature. Although he is prone to cite theologians from his own tradition, he frequently throughout the book pulls from a wide variety of authors. He also carefully and repeatedly shows how ancient Jews may have perceived the same texts or ideas.

As with any book, though, there are a number of areas where this reviewer had questions and sometimes concerns. First, although I am appreciative of Beale's fairly unique approach of using a storyline as the organizing method for his work, the second half of the book seems to move more towards a thematic approach than I think Beale would like to admit. After focusing on the story in chapters 1-11 (Parts 1-3), Beale then essentially moves into a presentation that seems to be organized around systematic outlines. Part 4 is about man, Part 5 is about salvation, Part 6 is about pneumatology, Parts 7 and 8 are about ecclesiology, and Part 9 concludes with the Christian life. Even Part 3 could simply be called Christology. Admittedly, Beale in these sections does not attempt to discuss these doctrines as a systematic theologian would, but it is interesting that his outline at least seems to eventually fall back into systematic categories.

More importantly, in Part 3 Beale's approach focuses on Christ's firstresurrection (not a bad thing!) and where it is seen in each section of the NT. Sometimes this approach, though, leads to the exclusion of the other major component of the NT storyline, Christ's second coming and the resurrection of the dead. For instance, Beale notes that Christ's first resurrection is not a prominent theme in the Pastoral epistles or 2 Peter, but these books do fit into the biblical storyline, and primarily through either their canonical placement in between eschatologically charged books (the Pastorals between Thessalonians and Hebrews) or thematic emphasis on Christ's second coming (2 Peter). Revelation is also minimalized to some degree, which is interesting since Beale has written a very extensive commentary on it and a monograph on John's use of the Old Testament in Revelation. Because Revelation, though, does not explicitly use some of the terms or concepts that Beale is looking for (Christ's first resurrection in Part 3; the image of God in Part 4), it receives a relatively short shrift in these sections. In other words, Beale

seems to focus almost exclusively on the "already" part of the storyline and not so much on the "not yet".

One other notable curiosity is Beale's refusal to include John's Gospel in his discussion of the Gospels' view of Christ as the new Adam in chapter 12 due to space limitations. Although Beale's analysis of this theme in the Synoptics is quite helpful, one wonders why the Synoptics are the focus when arguably John supports that current theme much more explicitly. Christ is the creator and the new creation, the new Adam, in 1:1-18 and is explicitly identified as a new Adam and a maker of new Adams (John 20:22) in John 18-20.

A final note for Baptist readers is that Beale attempts to make a case for paedobaptism in his chapter on the marks of the church. There is obviously not space here to adequately respond, but a good question for Beale is how he can argue for the removal of physical boundary markers such as circumcision to incorporate the full spiritual people of God (e.g. Jews and Gentiles; 424-425) and then argue for total transference from the physical marker for physical Israel (circumcision) to the spiritual marker for spiritual Israel (baptism).

These questions and concerns aside, this book is a must read for those who desire to understand God and his Word more. The book is not for the faint of heart – at 1,048 pages, fortitude is required, along with an abundant supply of coffee. A lay audience is certainly not Beale's aim, although the undergraduate theology student, if diligent, can get a leg up on his studies by tackling this volume. Graduate students and biblical scholars, on the other hand, must engage with this work not only if they want to be considered as current in the field but also if they desire to learn more about what God has said in his Word. I could not recommend it more to any serious student of the Scriptures.

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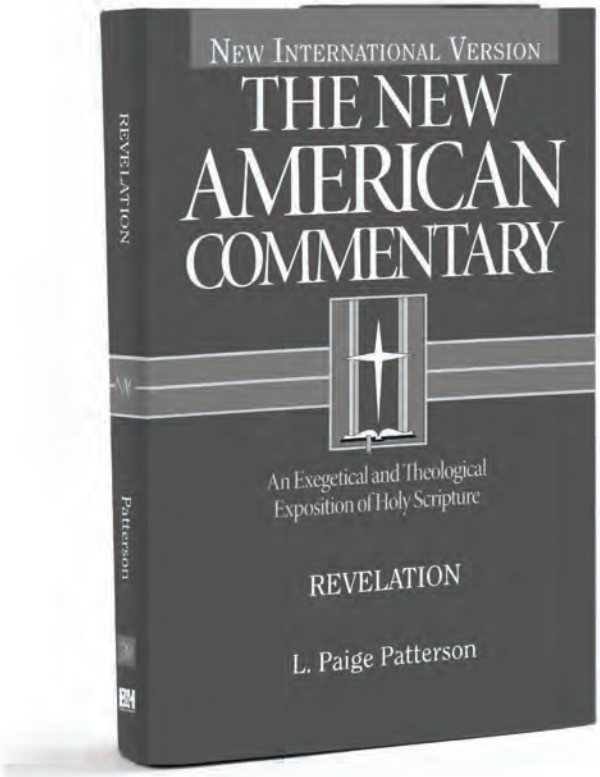

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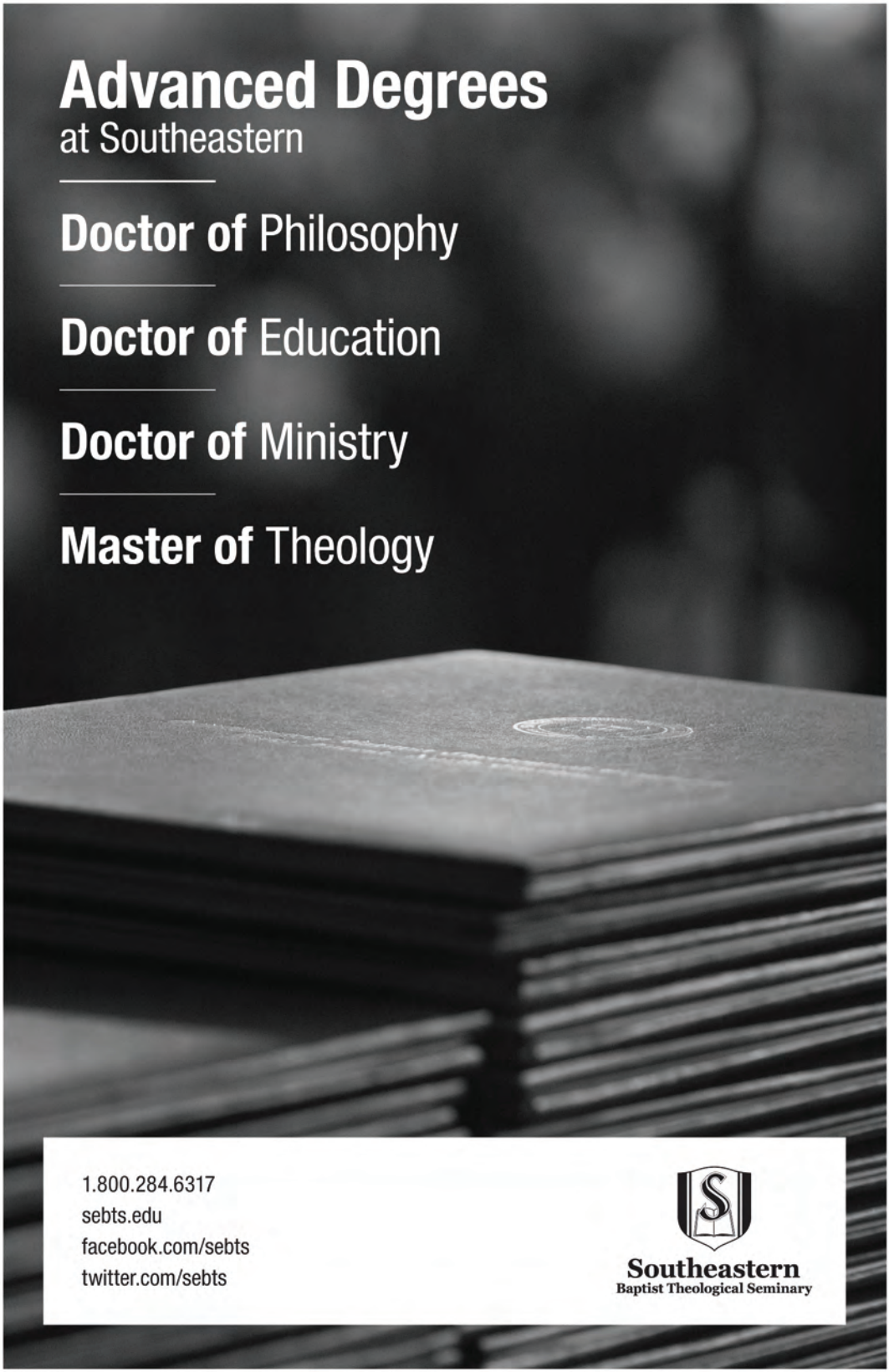
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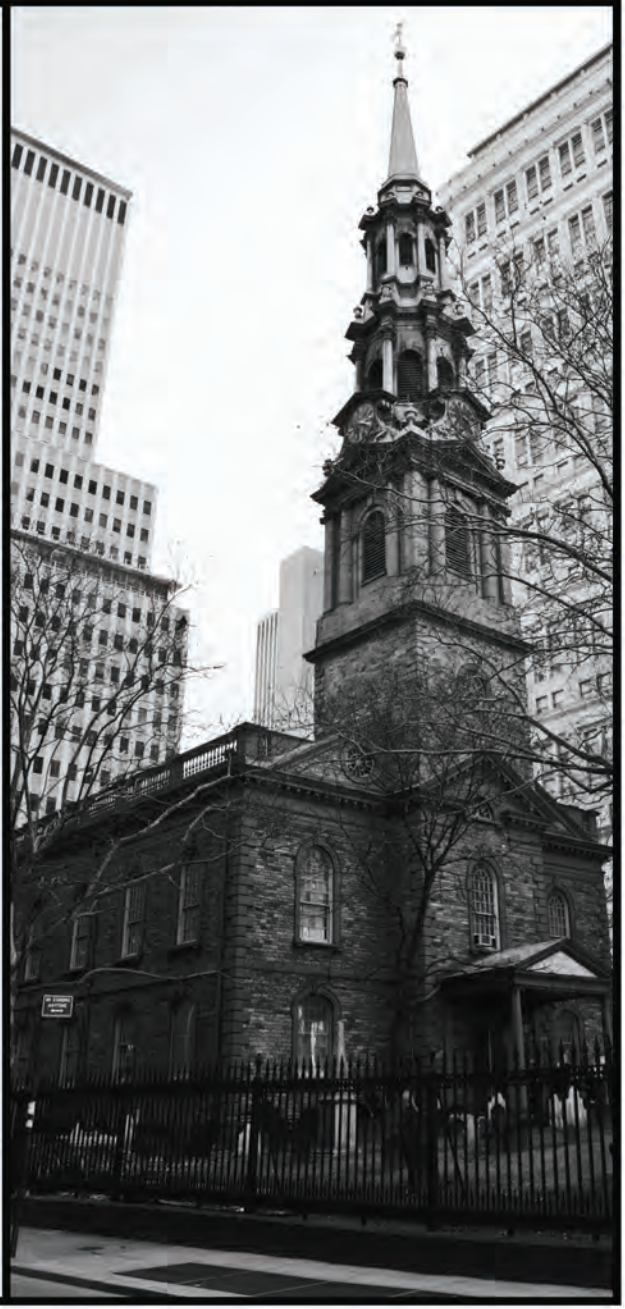

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