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From the Editor's Desk

Dear Reader,

Welcome to our fall edition of the *JMAT*.

This fall issue we are pleased to highlight Terry Perrine's article on infant salvation. Terry, one of Baptist Bible Seminary MDiv students, won the **2018 Zondervan Theology Award at BBS** for her **What Happens to Infants Who Die?** The BBS faculty is proud of Terry's accomplishment. This issue also highlights A. W. Morris, a current BBS PhD student in OT, who challenges the current view that the creation account of Genesis should be understood "functionally" and not materially in his, **The Lost Truth of Genesis**.

Also, in this issue we are introducing an occasional column entitled **Ἐν ἀρχῇ**. In this piece I will sit down and discuss the genesis of the article with the author. For our inaugural column David Mappes and I sat down to discuss his review of Andy Stanley's, *Irresistible*. This book is unsettling at best and needs a theologian's insight and critique to help the church navigate Stanley's incorrect view of the Old Testament.

Rounding out our fall edition Jared August discusses the **Hope of an Eschatological Mediator** in Genesis and Deuteronomy. The folks at Teleios Research Center share their findings concerning **The Influence of Church on Wellbeing in Adolescents and Millennials**. Scott Aniol looks back in Church History in his, **Worship as Divider and Unifier: A Comparison of the Reformation with Contemporary Evangelicalism**. Wayne Slusser completes our articles with his part two: **(Re)Defining the Gospels: Mark as a Test Case**.

Since you share our passion for biblical truth, I invite you to enjoy this edition of the *JMAT*. At the *JMAT* we seek to serve our Savior, and you, our reader. I look forward to hearing from you.



Mark McGinniss, PhD
Lead Editor

Ἐν ἀρχῇ with David Mappes, PhD. “What Should Christian do with Andy Stanley’s, Irresistible?”

Mark McGinniss

Because of the popularity of Andy Stanley’s new book, *Irresistible*, I have asked my good friend and colleague, David Mappes to write a review of this book. As a biblical scholar steeped in theological method, I wanted David not only to point out the book’s obvious errors (which many reviews have already accomplished) but to show how his incorrect theological method leads to careless theological practices such as jettisoning the OT.

As the editor of the JMAT it was my pleasure to sit down with David to discuss the book.

MARK: David, thanks for writing the review and taking time to discuss the book. What motivated you to write the article critiquing Stanley’s *Irresistible* in the first place? There are countless books being written, so why this one?

DAVID: I am deeply troubled by the impact Stanley’s book is having on students and ministry leaders. His book is filled with humorous rhetorical wit that can mask his deficient hermeneutical and anemic Theological Method making analysis difficult. He often advances his thesis through a kind of rhetorical fire-side-chat kind of discussion that appeals to some readers. His incorrect thesis of detaching the church from the Old Testament can appear as a legitimate option only because of his communication style. I was also concerned regarding Stanley’s response to his critics. Stanley repeatedly deflects and depreciates his critics unless they have personally met with him as he cites Matthew 18. As a mega-church pastor with a reported personal net worth of over 40 million dollars serving in a church network that reaches over 100,000 people weekly, Stanley knows that few detractors can simply email or call him for a visit. I

found his book and his comments regarding his detractors to be very troubling so I wrote the critique.

MARK: I agree. My concern as an OT prof is that, while Stanley is correct that some churches have misused the OT, instead of rebuking those churches, he jettisons the entire OT! Stanley states that the reason the church is resistible is due to the fact that “the mixing, blending, and integration of the old with the new that makes the modern church so resistible. It’s the mixing, blending, and integration of the old (Old Testament) with the new (New Testament) that makes our faith indefensible in this misinformation age” (25). Thus, because the church still believes, clings to, defends and sometimes incorrectly applies the OT, the church is resistible to the unbelieving world. This is Stanley’s main premise. While he is certainly correct, that at times some churches have been guilty at times of appealing to some OT laws and not others, it is wrong to say a misuse of the Law invalidates the entire OT canon.

What concerns you most about the Stanley’s methodology?

DAVID: Like many of the sociological-church growth movement leaders, Stanley is looking for that one single, silver bullet solution to offset the demise of Christianity in West. Ministry is a robust and spiritual endeavor that simply defies any one single-solution approach. I am also deeply troubled that Stanley promotes a method to contextualize Christianity apart from the full revelation of God; he is confusing contextualization with cultural accommodation to gain a listening ear. He believes that by detaching the Christianity from the Old Testament (and even some New Testament truth), he will free the church from some of the embarrassing questions posited by skeptics. Thus, according to Stanley the church will have a more credible voice to re-contextualize itself into the 21st century once the Old Testament with these embarrassing questions are unmixed from Christianity. He is promoting very similar errors to the former Emerging Church and those who seek to “de-foundationalize” Christian doctrine to foster contextualization.

MARK: David, you would agree that it needs to be stated at the fore that Stanley is to be commended for his heart for the lost. It would be wonderful if the church would be faithful in presenting the gospel clearly and those who hear would respond in faith. However, after this agreement is where many of the issues lie with his book. Stanley believes that Jesus was “irresistible” (15). However, is this statement even biblically true? Even after Jesus’ resurrection there were only “about hundred and twenty people” in the opening chapter of Acts (1:15). If one adds the “more than 500” that Jesus appeared to after the resurrection (1 Cor 15:6) the sum is under a 1000 people. If Jesus was so irresistible in his life and resurrection, where were the crowds to show his irresistibility and Stanley correct? Even the soldiers who had reported Jesus’ resurrection to the chief priests resisted believing when they were bribed to keep their mouths shut (Matt 28:11-15). Jesus himself knew he would be resistible to many when he declared to the disciples the world’s response to him and the church would be one of hatred (John 15:18-25).

What are some of the greatest theological problems that Stanley promotes?

DAVID: Stanley’s text is filled with so many theological and methodological errors it is difficult to pick just a few. He mischaracterizes the God of the Old Testament as a God of anger and wrath who accommodated himself to the Canaanite pantheon of gods while contrasting the God of the New Testament as a God of love. This is a fundamental error. He also promotes a flawed view of Biblical Inspiration that depreciates the authority of Scripture by arguing the Scriptural authors were inspired but not the actual text of Scripture. This egregious error then leads him to separate God’s authority from the authority of Scripture. He consequently diminishes the nature and role of Scripture in the Church.

He also ignores how Christian leaders use (or should use) a robust theological method to weight doctrinal truth and categorize varying interpretative positions (doctrinal taxonomy). Pastoral theology and apologetics should be the apex of an

exegetical process with biblical & systematic theology. Stanley seems to promote a kind apologetic apart from any kind of quality exegesis and theological method. He creates unnecessary proof-texting errors and contradictions to promote his own thesis.

MARK: I agree that there are certainly a number of issues in this book. A major error that Stanley makes is that he continually confuses the OT canon and the Old Covenant. We both agree that Stanley is certainly correct that we are not under the Old Covenant either by sacrifice (the book of Hebrews) or Law (Acts 15 and Galatians). However, this does not justify his “we are dragging along a litany of old covenant concepts and assumptions that slow us down, divide us up, and confuse those standing on the outside peering in” (92). The Apostle Paul had no qualms about appealing to the Law in his command to children in Eph 6:1-3 or using the OT as examples for Christian living today (1 Cor 10:1-11).

Do you have any suggestions for pastors and the American church?

DAVID: I have two. First, rather than simply detach the Old Testament from Christianity, pastors should foster a culture of biblical exposition with correct application in churches. Biblical exposition means to draw the human author’s meaning out from the Scripture by showing how each part of the text relates to the entire book being preached. Once the *meaning* is known then wrestle with how that meaning is *meaningful* to the congregation. This allows the meaning to determine the application and relevancy. Second, I suggest we *re-establish ourselves in the simple-gospel*. We need to relearn the art of redirecting a conversation back to the gospel rather than broadening the gospel (or any truth) for cultural relevancy. And third, rather than accommodating truth for the sake of cultural relevancy, pastors should encourage each believer and each local church to incarnate Christ and truth through the power of the Spirit. Both the body and temple metaphors are used in the New Testament to describe individual believers and local churches manifesting the very presence of God. As believers and churches allow the Spirit

to manifest Himself through our conformity to truth, the *Fruit of the Spirit* will be manifested both individually and corporately- this is the greatest apologetic.

MARK: Thanks, David, for taking the time to sit down and discuss the book. I know our readers will profit from reading your review.

A Biblical and Theological Critique of Stanley's *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed from the World*

David Mappes

Abstract: This article critically interacts and refutes the thesis of Andy Stanley's *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed from the World*. The article demonstrates the biblical-theological, hermeneutical, and methodological errors in Stanley's thesis and argument. The article interacts and critiques Stanley's incorrect thesis that the church in America is impotent due to integrating Old Testament truth into the New Testament Church as he proposes that the church needs to be "unhitched" and "unmixed" from the Old Testament thereby eliminating the need to defend the historical reliability of the Old Testament.

Key Words: Old Testament, apologetics, inerrancy, inspiration, unhitched

Andy Stanley is a master communicator, popular author, and prominent pastor who has achieved a celebrity status. His Atlanta-based North Point Ministries consists of six churches with a network of over 70 churches that serve 118,000

¹ This article is partially revised from an earlier publication by Mappes that appeared as "Stanley's 'Irresistible' Is a Dangerous Disappointment" published in *Baptist Bulletin* Digital Edition May/June 2019 (<https://www.garbc.org/commentary/stanleys-irresistible-is-a-dangerous-disappointment/>)

² David Mappes (PhD, Dallas Theological Seminary) teaches courses in New Testament and theology at Liberty University, Clarks Summit University, Baptist Bible Seminary, and Temple Baptist Seminary, and is director of Noble & Knowable Truth Ministries. © Dr. David Mappes (all rights reserved). Dr. Mappes can be reached at dmappes@clarkssummitu.edu.

people weekly, according to the flyleaf of *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed from the World*.

In this book, Stanley argues that the church with its modern version of faith is ineffective and too easily resisted. Stanley conjectures that the modern church and Christianity are resistible because the Old Testament is mixed into Christianity and that believers sense the need to defend the Old Testament's historicity and accuracy, which leads to alienating "post-Christians."

Irresistible is filled with clever phrases, including chapter titles such as "Temple Tantrum," "Splittin' Up," "Homebodies," "The Apoplectic Apostle," "Trending Horizontal," "Obsolete-r Than Ever." The book combines previous sermons and podcasts with seminars from recent years. Stanley uses wit, humor, satire, anecdotal comments, wordplay, and wordsmithing. He combines these with a few semitechnical discussions and ties it all together through storytelling and aphorisms to advance his belief that the church must become "unhitched" and "unmixed" from the OT. He uses his rhetorical skills to urge believers against integrating OT truth into Christianity, dissuading believers from defending the historical reliability and believability of the Old Testament.

Unfortunately *Irresistible* is constructed on flawed missiology, as Stanley confuses contextualization with accommodation and errant methodology while confusing progressive revelation and the fulfillment motif with a kind of all-or-nothing authoritative application of the entire Old Testament. Stanley creates a false dichotomy as he presupposes that if the OT is authoritative, all of the OT must be equally authoritatively applied to all Christians regardless of any OT context. *Irresistible* exemplifies logical errors; simplistic exegesis, which is often eisegesis; errant theology; reductionism; and very serious hermeneutical errors.

Stanley's Contributions are Marred by His Thesis

Pastor Stanley's wordsmithing and rhetorical wit complicate a substantive review and analysis of his book. At times he speaks highly of the OT as Israel's history, while at other times he misrepresents and disparages the OT, its historicity, truthfulness, and inspiration. One wonders if Stanley's hermeneutical incoherency and forced contradictions illustrate his own

misunderstanding between theologizing and communicating theology. Theological method (the practice of literal interpretation and proper application and defense of Scripture) is far different from contextualizing theology. Messengers, teachers, and preachers are called to faithfully dispense the word of God as a steward. This trust entails speaking clearly, consistently, and accurately about the word of truth. Stanley's book falls far short in this regard. While the book does present some positive insights and contributions in respect to post-Christians and contemporary ministry challenges, these contributions are unfortunately marred by Stanley's thesis.

As can be imagined, Stanley's book has generated both fierce controversy and vigorous support. Al Mohler writes that Stanley

represents a new face of theological liberalism. . . . [So Stanley] is playing the role that was played by Harry Emerson Fosdick in the early twentieth century. . . . [Just as Fosdick] sought to rescue Christianity from itself, from its doctrines and truth claims [by citing] his own deconversion stories for the remaking of Christianity [so also does Stanley]³

Others such as Piper provide guarded comments of support in suggesting that Stanley is concerned about winning post-Christians and that the church should

join him in moving beyond simplistic and naïve-sounding shibboleths [and follow him] in cultural awareness and insight into your audience [and] in the excellence of his teaching and communication skills . . . and then spend eight years blowing your people's post-Christian circuits by connecting the voltage of every line in the book of Romans with their brains⁴

³ R. Albert Mohler Jr., "Getting 'Unhitched' from the Old Testament? Andy Stanley Aims at Heresy," August 10, 2018, <https://albertmohler.com/2018/08/10/getting-unhitched-old-testament-andy-stanley-aims-heresy/>.

⁴ John Piper, "Open Bibles, Burning Hearts: A Response to Andy Stanley," October 25, 2016, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/open-bibles-burning-hearts>.

Any book has a thesis, and any thesis contains two literary components: a subject and a complement (the complement is what the author says about the subject or how the author proves the subject). Few can disagree with Pastor Stanley's general subject. The church needs to be more irresistible so that the "nones" (unchurched nonbelievers) and the "deconverted" (those who left Christianity) will have fewer reasons to discredit Christianity. He summarizes his subject by writing, "So why doesn't everybody in America go to church? Perhaps it's because our modern version of faith is easy to resist and thus easy to dismiss" (322).

The problem with *Irresistible* is not so much the general subject but rather the complement to the subject. Stanley argues that since Christianity is completely new, being built upon the new covenant, and since the old covenant and OT are completely fulfilled, Christianity therefore must be detached or unmixed from the OT. Hence Christians should, he says, simply dismiss the OT challenges that many post-Christians find objectionable. Stanley downgrades the OT for apologetic purposes and for ministry contextualization.

Imbalance in Contextualization Leads to Cultural Accommodation

The pursuit of *knowing biblical truth* in American evangelicalism is being replaced with pursuing the immediate *value or relevance or practicality of truth*. This transition has created an imbalance in contextualization that oftentimes leads to cultural accommodation. Unfortunately, Stanley seems to be pursuing this end. One popular trend in American evangelicalism is to view some OT events as fictitious or as literary, nonhistorical episodes that simply have a broader narrative purpose. This trend is driven by a view of critical-cultural-historical-scientific primacy that denies *sola Scriptura* and shifts the interpretative context from Scripture to the critical-cultural-historical-scientific context as an interpretive lens. A number of self-identified evangelical scholars and certainly many post-conservative scholars today reject the historicity of Adam and Eve being progenitors of the human race, God's justice in Noah's flood, the Red Sea judgment, the Canaanite genocide, elements

of prophecy, and so forth. Stanley argues that the historicity or even believability of some OT events is simply unimportant since the OT is an obsolete record of the Hebrews and Israel. He also minimizes and/or rejects the importance of infallibility and inerrancy. Contextualization must consider both the message of truth and the medium that communicates the message. Stanley actually accommodates the truth of Scripture to enhance the medium and receptivity.

Stanley is indeed positing a novel version of apologetics to promote Christianity, albeit an anemic and unbiblical one. Biblical apologetics is to explain and defend Scriptural truth claims to provide justification for the truthfulness of theistic belief and Christianity, which hopefully will lead to personal faith in Christ and his work. Stanley simply makes the Old Testament obsolete, alleging it is all fulfilled and thereby dismissing any skeptical challenges. He believes that by unhitching and removing the OT from the Christian faith, the church will not be sidetracked to answer many of the tough and even embarrassing questions presented in the OT.

Stanley's Method Promotes a Non-Orthodox Theological Method

Stanley is not simply promoting a new apologetic. He surmises that his thesis needs to be integrated into every aspect of faith and practice so Christians themselves do not stumble over skepticism. His approach requires a different and nonorthodox method in how to theologize (applying theological method). To unhitch the OT from Christianity, thereby removing 39 canonical books from Christian theologizing, is indeed dangerous and leaves incredible gaps in one's theological system. This approach will eventually lead to a kind of Christian critical-cultural-historical-scientific syncretism.

Stanley's theological method evidences additional and very serious concerns. He correctly speaks of the resurrection as the determinative event of Christianity. Indeed both Christ and his atoning work are the supreme revelatory work of God. However, Stanley continually contrasts this revelatory event of the Resurrection with the record of the event in the NT Scriptures. He consistently downgrades the NT as a record of the

resurrection (293–300). The NT is not simply a record of the resurrection event; but, rather, the NT is itself revelatory and carries the authority of God. Stanley prefers to say the writers of Scripture were inspired (not the Scriptures, 302), and he does not treat the NT as God's authoritative revelation.

Stanley confuses prescriptive normative truths that have direct, immediate application and relevance to the new covenant believer with descriptive truths that may not directly apply to believers today. There are truths that do not have immediate application though these truths still play a critical part of a Biblical-theological foundational system. Many OT passages may not directly and immediately apply to new covenant believers. However, if these truth assertions are not true, or are not historical, or are unhitched from Christianity, then Christianity will cease to be fully Christian. Stanley does not interact in any manner with the negative consequences to the Christian faith (or with constriction to the epistemic structures of knowledge) if such truths as the creation account, the fall of mankind, or the Psalter, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, or the prophetic literature, etc. are excluded. One important component of Christian apologetics is to appeal to the entire metanarrative of Scripture in presenting a consistent, coherent worldview. Stanley's method disallows this important apologetic tool.

While Stanley correctly affirms that people need not know or fully understand all the Scripture to become a Christian, he seems to reject the notion that OT Scriptures must be historically accurate and true if anyone is to become a Christian. Jesus himself repeatedly authenticated the veracity and knowability of the OT. If the OT is not true or is not historical, Jesus—who repeatedly claimed the OT was indeed true and historical—would be a false prophet. Additionally, NT writers repeatedly cited the OT as inspired and as true as they integrated OT into the new covenant. If Christianity ever needed to compromise OT truth to accommodate hostile cultural views for purposes of contextualization, it would be at the inception of Christianity. But the NT writers did exactly opposite of Stanley's suggestions.

Many of the current Old Testament challenges that Stanley probably hopes to dissuade the church from defending are also

present in the New Testament. Just a few examples include the persons of Adam and Eve as the progenitors of the entire human race (Luke 3:38; Act 17:26), marriage as a one man—one woman lifelong union (Matt 19:4–6), Cain (Jude 11), Abel (Heb 11:4), God’s retributive justice including eternal judgment and exclusivism of faith alone in the Messiah (Christ) alone (Matt 25:46), Noah’s flood judgment (Luke 17:26–27), Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:29), and Balaam’s transgression (Jude 11). Additionally, many moral laws in the NT are rooted in the OT.

Stanley correctly focuses on Christ’s resurrection as the key apologetic event and as a key component of the gospel, though he does so at the exclusion of all other Biblical evidences for theistic belief. In the Luke 16:19–31 account of Lazarus, when the unbelieving rich man in eternal torment begs for the Lord to send a messenger to warn his unbelieving family of impending judgment, Jesus says, “If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead” (Luke 16: 31). Stanley is simply naïve to suggest that accommodating the historicity of the OT will gain a credible hearing for evangelism.

In the section on reordering, Stanley posits that the “folks in the fourth century made a mistake front-loading *the Holy Bible* with the Law and the Prophets” (284). Stanley suggests that the “Christian Bible should precede the Hebrew Bible since if “it weren’t for the New Testament, there wouldn’t be an Old Testament” (284). He repeatedly and mistakenly implies that all of the OT is synonymous with old covenant law or is simply stories. He then mistakenly argues that all aspects of the old covenant and the entire OT were fulfilled and thus brought to completion.

He further errs when stating that the fourth-century church leaders gave the Hebrew Scriptures the “same authority as the Gospels and epistles” when “the Hebrew Scriptures were bound together with the Christian Scriptures” (155). The NT writers always viewed the OT just as inspired and just as authoritative as the NT; not to do so was considered heresy. Stanley confuses authority and inspiration of all Scripture with covenant application to a particular reader. The writer’s meaning in Scripture always governs the application or meaningfulness to

the reader. As Paul stood before the Roman governor Felix, he said, "According to the Way, which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets" (Acts 24:14).⁵

Stanley Incorrectly Posits the Old Testament is Completely Fulfilled

Stanley is correct that the twenty-first century church and the church throughout history has at times incorrectly understood the Old Testament and in some cases has used the Old Testament to subjugate and coerce others. Rather than discussing the hermeneutical mistakes and complexities that led to abuses, he simply posits that the entire Old Testament is now fulfilled and should be detached from the New Testament.

He incorrectly argues that the mere appearance of fulfillment formula in the New Testament refers to complete, exhaustive fulfillment of all Old Testament promises and prophecies. He repeatedly cites the Abrahamic promises as being completely fulfilled, since Abraham was blessed by God and since Christ came through Abraham's lineage. Stanley writes that Jesus uses the fulfillment formula as his way of saying "God's conditional, temporary covenant with Israel was coming to an end, the intended-from-the-beginning end" (109). Stanley ignores the

⁵ For further critique of these kind of theological and hermeneutical issues see the following articles by Mappes: "Navigating the Theological Fog," *Israel My Glory*, March/April 2018, 24-27; "Literal Interpretation and Theological Method: What Is It and How to Do It?" *Ariel Ministries*, December 2017, 18-23; "How to Think about and Practice Theology," *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* (Spring 2014): 65-85; "Biblical Apologetics and Ministry Today," *Paraklesis* (Spring 2013), 1, 4; "Love Wins by Rob Bell: A Biblical and Theological Critique," *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* (Spring 2012): 87-121; "What Is Faith in Luke 18:1-8," *BibSac* (July-September 2010): 292-306; "Nobility and Knowability of Scripture: Part Two," *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* (Fall 2009): 1-23; "Nobility and Knowability of Truth: Part One," *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* (Spring 2009): 64-105; "A New Kind of Christian: A Review," *BibSac* (July-September 2004): 289-303.

unconditional land promises given to Abram and his descendants (Israel) that have not yet been fulfilled; he ignores all the future unfulfilled promises in the prophetic literature; and he disreputes the Song of Solomon as well, since the writer had over 300 wives.

Sometimes Scriptural writers use the New Testament–fulfillment formula to confirm that a NT incident agrees with the OT, while at other times they use it to explain a point given in the OT or to draw a parallel between a NT event and an OT incident. Sometimes the NT writers indicate complete exhaustive fulfillment, while at other times they point out that only one aspect of a prophecy was satisfied. Stanley fails to acknowledge any of these NT uses of the OT complexities. The immediate NT–context use of the OT passage must always be compared to the OT–historical text to validate its type of usage and fulfillment.⁶

Furthermore, Stanley incorrectly avers that Jesus’ prediction of Daniel’s future “abomination of desolation” in Matthew 24 (and the other Gospels) does not refer to the end time, or last days, but rather was fully fulfilled in the destruction of the Jewish temple in AD 70 (62–65). Stanley develops this incorrect interpretation to support his view that Judaism and thus the OT authority ended in AD 70. This promotion of preterist eschatology ignores the actual context of Matthew 24. Jesus qualifies his prediction through universal, global, cosmic language. He described this future abomination of desolation as the worst tribulation from “the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt 24:21) and links the termination of this Great Tribulation to his own second coming (Matt 24:27–31). Stanley simply decontextualizes the “abomination of desolation” description, a common practice by evangelical preterists in their attempts to answer liberal and skeptical critics who oppose predictive prophecy.

Stanley also uses replacement nomenclature, suggesting some agreement with reformed theology that the church has permanently replaced Israel. Additionally, he incorrectly argues

⁶ See my “Literal Interpretation and Theological Method: What Is It and How to Do It?” *Ariel Ministries*, December 2017, 18–23.

that Deuteronomy's genre alone (being in the ancient treaty Suzerain vassal form) proves its complete conditionality.⁷

Stanley's View of Objectors and Skeptics is Flawed

Stanley is correct that some apologetic methods successfully used throughout the modern era are less effective in this postmodern era and that the church should be open to rebranding some of its apologetic methodologies and ministries. He is also correct that many children raised in the church leave "the faith" during their college and young adult years. He avers that evangelicals sense the apologetic need to "defend the entire Bible, including God's temporary covenant with Israel, in order to defend Christianity [because of] our time-honored tradition of mixing, matching, and equating what God clearly separated" (110). He further argues that "the majority of people I've talked to who've abandoned their faith have lost faith in Jesus because they lost confidence in the Bible. . . . the Old Testament" (110). Stanley is to be commended for dialoguing with those who have rejected their faith; however, most pastoral-apologists point to a lack of Christian charity and church integrity that leads to stumbling and rejection. Stanley fails to acknowledge that most of the OT truths people find objectionable are also repeated or affirmed in the NT. Furthermore, skeptics who deny OT events often also deny miraculous NT events. Stanley provides no examples of NT writers suggesting that the OT is less than historically accurate, nor does he provide any examples of NT writers depreciating the OT.

The skepticism of objectors is never only an intellectual issue but always has a spiritual component. Authentic living, dialogue, and removing embarrassing, difficult challenges do not create a neutral affinity with a nonbeliever. A far better method entails authentic, Spirit-empowered living while continually pivoting to

⁷ For an extensive critique and rebuttal of some of these views, see David A. Mappes and H. Wayne House, "A Biblical and Theological Discussion of Traditional Dispensational Premillennialism," *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 5–56.

the gospel message and respectfully explaining biblical-theological doctrine within a reasonable taxonomy of belief.

Stanley is creating an apologetic that actually accommodates the Scripture to the views of the “nones” and the “deconverted” that he is attempting to reach. He recasts biblical inspiration and the authority of Scripture. He also excludes the OT as a viable apologetic and theological source. Additionally and sadly, he hints at the classic liberal view of differentiating and distinguishing the angry God of the OT and the loving God of the NT.

Stanley’s Characterization of God is Irresponsible

Incredibly Stanley asserts that God’s loving nature is unique to the New Testament, as he writes, “*God is love* is a uniquely Christian idea” (223). Stanley indicates that God loved only his covenant people in the Old Testament. He contrasts this inadequate statement of God’s OT love while writing that the OT God was nonetheless separate and unapproachable, living behind a curtain. Elsewhere Stanley describes the God of the OT as angry, judgmental, and mad, “putting everybody in time-out” (251). Then he asserts that “righteous anger is a thing, as long as we hover over the Old Testament anyway” (251).

To caricaturize the Great “I AM” through this kind of rhetorical wit is simply irresponsible in any setting and for any reason. Consider what Stanley says when describing the ancient world warfare: “The gods of the ancient world were human rights violators. . . . This was standard fare . . . [so that if] the God of [the] Jews was going to establish a nation for himself, he would have to wade into the fray and play by the rules of the day” (163). Stanley is implying an insidious notion that God necessarily had to accommodate himself to the horrific actions and lies of the ancient Near Eastern world and pantheon of gods. Then he implies that God did not, in the NT, accommodate himself to the vile notions of the Greco-Roman worldview. This kind of cherry picking denigrates the uniqueness of the Scripture as God’s Word and distorts God’s nature. The Great “I AM” of the OT is the same Lord of lords that was revealed in the NT. To suggest otherwise is not orthodox.

Furthermore, Stanley fails to interject that the NT is replete with references to both the love and the wrath of God. Interestingly, when discussing hell, Stanley says that “judgmental Christians are glad there is a hell” (251). He simply discusses the vice of being judgmental and does not address the reality of hell, leaving the reader wondering what Stanley really believes. Certainly the wrath of God is seen throughout the NT in references to eternal damnation and the substitutionary atonement.

Stanley's Thesis Promotes a Flawed Understanding of Biblical Inspiration

Stanley also undermines biblical inspiration and the authority of Scripture, including the New Testament. First, he insists that the Scriptures are not inspired but that, rather, the writers of Scripture were inspired (this is a grave error). Second, he argues that the foundation of one's faith is not the Scriptures but rather God (300–304), thus separating God from his Scriptural self-expression. These false conjectures are very similar to the nonfoundationalists of the emergent church era (now referred to as progressive Christians or postconservatives). Once Biblical inspiration is denied or diminished, the authority of Scripture is skewed by differentiating God's authority from the Scripture.

Stanley incorrectly argues that since the term *Bible* did not exist during the writing of Scripture and since new covenant believers are no longer under the authority of the Old Testament, people must not say “the Bible says” or say “the Word of God says” to appeal to the full force of God's word: believers must not appeal to the authority of the Bible or the Scriptures. Stanley further bolsters his case by clever wordsmithing as he promotes an errant view of canonicity, writing, “The Bible did not create Christianity. It's the other way around” (111), thus promoting a liberal view of canonicity.

In the strictest sense, the term *Bible* may have not been used until the canon was fully discovered and put into the collected codex form; however, the apostles repeatedly referred to both their writings and the OT as Scripture. Before the canon was fully recognized, church fathers also spoke of both Testaments as comprising Scripture. When Tertullian (AD 155–230) rebutted

the heresy of the gnostic Marcion (AD 85–160), who denied the authority of the OT, he used the nomenclature of the “Old Testament” and “New Testament” as supporting Christ because they were both equally Scripture.⁸ Long before the full canon was put into codex form, both works-righteous legalism and Gnosticism were fully rejected on the basis of the Old Testament as authoritative Scripture.

Stanley’s comments are alarming. For example, he refers to “a group of *textless* Jesus followers” (306) to deemphasize canonicity and inspiration, writing that the “credibility of our faith is not contingent upon our text being infallible or inerrant.” It rests securely in an “event” (the resurrection, 306). He ignores the fact that the Scriptures, which he says need not be inerrant, both teach and theologize the resurrection.

Stanley argues that when “skeptics point out the violence, the misogyny, the scientific and historically unverifiable claims of the Hebrew Bible, instead of trying to defend those things, we can shrug, give ’em our best confused look . . . [and simply say] ‘My Christian faith isn’t based on any of that’” (290). Astonishingly he opines that our faith does not “teeter on the brink of extinction” or collapse based on the archaeology, history, historicity, credibility, or “even the believability of the Old Testament” (290). Stanley does not adequately address that approximately 10 percent of the NT is composed of OT quotations, with some scholars asserting that up to 28 percent of the NT is composed of allusions to the OT. Stanley’s position is illogical. The resurrection of Christ authenticated Jesus’ person, work, and words, including Jesus’ belief in the historicity of the OT. Every NT writer appeals to the historicity and accuracy of

⁸ See Tertullian, *The Five Books Against Marcion Book Four*, chapter 6 (I appreciate this observation by Dr. Mark McGinniss). John Bright’s classic text *The Authority of the Old Testament* provides in-depth assessment of various theories that downplay or even de-canonicalize the Old Testament. The text *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith?: A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture*, ed. James K Hoffmeier and Dennis R. Magary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2012) is also very helpful.

the OT. In fact, Peter devotes the entire second chapter of 2 Peter to using the OT as proof positive of the promise of future judgment at the return of Christ.

Stanley's kind of truth denial, accommodation, and double-speak is not just limited to his view of the OT. Stanley preached a Christmas sermon on Dec. 4, 2016, in which he muses that some people view the miraculous virgin birth of Christ as a form of mythology. He then says, "If somebody could predict their own death and their own resurrection, I'm not all that concerned about how they got into the world, because the whole resurrection thing is so amazing and . . . Christianity doesn't hinge on the truth or even the stories around the birth of Jesus. It really hinges on the resurrection of Jesus."⁹ In this instance Stanley goes beyond the OT and dismisses the doctrinal importance of the historical virgin birth. Stanley also completely distorts Paul's teaching of the husband-wife marital roles through superficial exegesis that minimizes, if not rejects, Paul's marital instruction regarding husband and wife marital roles (213). These examples demonstrate that Stanley is also willing to accommodate NT truth in his apologetic.

Stanley is correct that churches add unnecessary components to the gospel so that the gospel is at times too enculturated. He also correctly reveals the importance of engaging those who are doubting or are outright skeptics. Believers do need to learn the art of recrafting conversation and debate, thereby leading people back to the heart of the gospel rather than being sidetracked. Recrafting a conversation does not, however, entail recrafting, dismissing, or accommodating truth. Ministry leaders are called to equip the church to understand, practice, and defend the historical, Scriptural truthfulness of Christianity and the Bible. Stanley's clever wordsmithing and methodology serve to undermine legitimate apologetics.

⁹ <http://northpoint.org/messages/who-needs-christmas/> accessed February 14, 2019. Stanley later affirmed that he stands in the orthodox Christian traditions regarding the incarnation of Jesus as presented in Matthew and Luke.

Apologetics and pastoral theology are the *result* and *not a replacement* of a robust theological method. Literal interpretation entails *discerning the intention of the Scriptural human writer by examining what that writer affirms in the historical context of his own writing*. Careful exegesis is followed by formulating a biblical theology of that text or writer. Then a systematic theology is formulated through integrating truth from biblical theology. The pinnacle of one's theological method is pastoral theology and apologetics.

Conclusion

Stanley's call for this novel apologetic reveals an anemic theological method that has resulted in denying what the Scriptures teach about themselves. This denial then leads to confusing contextualization of the faith with cultural accommodation. Christian truth cannot be adequately contextualized or defended unless there is clear understanding at the exegetical and theological level. Unfortunately Stanley is making the Bible resistible to make his faith dialogue and ministry appear irresistible.

What Happens to Infants Who Die

Terry Leigh Perrine

Abstract: This paper demonstrates that despite the Bible's lack of direct teaching on the outcome of infant mortality, studying the Scriptures can provide the answer that loved ones so desperately seek when an infant dies; that is, all infants who die go to heaven. This paper defends this position and provides Christians with the knowledge to be able to answer this question confidently. To accomplish this purpose, this paper addresses a series of topics in anthropology, hamartiology, soteriology, theology proper, and personal eschatology in a manner that builds one biblical truth upon the next as the research progresses. The paper addresses some erroneous beliefs about infant salvation and reviews specific biblical examples demonstrating throughout history God's dealings with and regard for children, including 2 Samuel 12:23.

Key Words: Infants, salvation, elect, original sin, regeneration, accountability

Over the course of one's ministry and life, it is likely that one might be asked the sensitive and challenging question, "What happens to infants who die?" Whether this question comes through a personal relationship or in the course of one's profession, a Christian should be prepared to answer confidently and gracefully with the goal of putting the grieving loved one's mind at ease with the truth. As there is no direct biblical instruction or answer to this question, the problem requires a Christian to seek the Scriptures prayerfully and to consider insights from trusted theologians. The result of that effort lies herein. As such, the purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that, despite the Bible's lack of direct teaching on

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the outcome of infant mortality, studying the Scriptures can provide the answer that loved ones so desperately seek when an infant dies; that is, all infants who die go to heaven.²

To accomplish this purpose, this paper first addresses a series of topics in anthropology, hamartiology, soteriology, theology proper, and personal eschatology, in a manner that builds one biblical truth upon the next as the research progresses. The paper addresses some erroneous beliefs about infant salvation and then provides a review of specific biblical examples demonstrating, throughout history, God's dealings with and regard for children. Lastly, the paper presents the one biblical example of infant death (2 Sam 12:23) that provides some insight into the heavenly destination of the child. The paper closes with recognition of some of the remaining unknowns on the matter of infant salvation.

The Life of a Child

Consideration of God's relationship with man is essential in laying a foundation for questions on infant mortality. Scripture is abundantly clear that God knows every detail about a child from the moment of conception. David recognized God's involvement in every part of his creation and being in Psalm 139:1–4, 13–16. God told the prophet Jeremiah that he knew Jeremiah intimately before he was born (Jer 1:5). John MacArthur writes, "Indeed He knew all about *you* before you even had words in your mouth or thoughts in your mind, even before you could walk or act on your own."³ Further, God is responsible for the very birth of a child (Ps 22:9). David wrote that God numbered man's days before even one day of his life

² Throughout this paper, the term "infant," "child," or "baby" is intended to include any child, born or unborn, that dies prior to attaining an age of accountability or ability to understand his or her position as a sinner and the need for a Savior, as well as a knowledge of good and evil. This paper will address the theological issues thoroughly, but the need here is to establish *who* is included in the terms "infant," "child," etc. Additionally, it is this writer's intent to include the mentally handicapped of any age in this category of "child."

³ John MacArthur, *Safe in the Arms of God* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 15. Emphasis original.

came into being (Ps 139:16). Addressing parents, MacArthur explains the importance of this truth as it relates to the life of a child: “God knew precisely how long your child would live and for what purpose your child would live. Your child’s destiny was and is in His hands.”⁴

Original Sin

Critical to the discussion of infant salvation is the concept of original sin. From Adam’s first sin in the garden, mankind is plagued with an inherent sin nature. R. C. Sproul explains, “Original sin does not refer to the first sin that was committed, but rather to the result of that—entrance of sin into the world so that all of us as human beings are born in a fallen state.”⁵ This curse of original sin is present at birth (Gen 8:21; Ps 51:5; 58:3). It is a condition for which there is no cure (Prov 20:9; Eccl 7:20) and is deserving only of God’s wrath (Eph 2:3), apart from the saving work of Christ (Rom 5:6–11; 6:23; 8:1–8). Kenneth M. Gardoski observes that “this is why even infants die in the first place: they are born with the guilt of Adam’s sin engraved upon their hearts and fused into their very nature. The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23).”⁶ It is important to note that while man’s heart is inherently sinful (Jer 17:9; Rom 3:10–12), the idea that infants could commit sins is not supported by Scripture. “Though fallen creatures like all Adam’s offspring, infants are not culpable in the same sense as those whose sins are willful and premeditated.”⁷ The distinction of original sin versus willful sin is critical to the forthcoming discussion on the consequence of the original sin of infants.

Knowledge of Good and Evil

When the Israelites rebelled and refused to enter the promised land, the Lord penalized them by keeping the entire

⁴ MacArthur, *Safe*, 20.

⁵ R. C. Sproul, *Now, That’s a Good Question!* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1996), 295.

⁶ Kenneth M. Gardoski, “The Salvation of Infants” (paper, Baptist Bible Seminary, April 2011), 4, accessed January 24, 2018, <https://butbyhisgrace.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/salvationinfants.pdf>.

⁷ MacArthur, *Safe*, 35.

generation out of the land he had promised. However, the Lord also said that the children of the generation of rebels, “who today have no knowledge of good or evil, they shall go in there. And to them I will give it, and they shall possess it” (Deut 1:39).⁸ This passage contributes to developing the answer to the question at hand because it establishes that God recognizes that infants are unaware of the difference between right and wrong. As discussed in the first section of this paper, God knows everything there is to know about children, including their unspoken words and their thoughts. Scripture has evidenced that God uses his intimate knowledge of young children to their benefit, treats them differently than mature children and adults, and recognizes their relative innocence (Jer 2:34; 19:4–7). The concept of the knowledge of good and evil contributes to the lack of culpability of children for anything more than their original sin.

Several other Scriptures illustrate this position. Gardoski explains God’s view of the innocence of young children, using Jonah 4:11 and Romans 9:11 as examples. He writes,

The Scriptures do teach that small children possess a relative innocence before God. God does not hold them accountable for personal transgressions, since they are not yet capable of knowing good and evil. They do not even have the intellectual ability to choose between their right and left hand, saying nothing of the moral ability to choose between good and evil.⁹

John Piper uses John 9:41 to reach a similar conclusion that “if a person lacks the natural capacity to see the revelation of God’s will or God’s glory then that person’s sin would not remain—God would not bring the person into final judgment for not believing what he had no natural capacity to see.”¹⁰ Piper also relies on Romans 1:20 for his assertion that “if a person did not

⁸ All Scripture quotations are taken from the ESV, unless otherwise noted.

⁹ Gardoski, “Salvation,” 3.

¹⁰ Quoted in Matt Perman, “What Happens to Infants Who Die?” *desiringGod*, January 23, 2006, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-happens-to-infants-who-die>.

have access to the revelation of God's glory—did not have the natural capacity to see it and understand it, then Paul implies they would have an excuse at the judgment.”¹¹ It seems, therefore, that the issue of God's recognition of a child's relative innocence ultimately plays a significant part in establishing the answer that all infants go to heaven.

Every infant or child who dies before reaching a condition of moral culpability goes instantly to heaven at death. A child who has not reached moral culpability is a child who has not reached sufficient mature understanding to comprehend convincingly the issues of law and grace, sin and salvation.¹²

Willful Sin and Hell

In contrast to the original sin that all of mankind carries around—infants included—willful sins are voluntary and intentional (Rom 1:29–32; Gal 5:19–21). Sam Storms writes, “There is consistent testimony of Scripture that people are judged on the basis of sins committed voluntary [sic] and consciously in the body (2 Cor 5:20; 1 Cor 6:9–10; Rev 20:11–12).”¹³ Scripture is also clear that a rejection of Jesus Christ results in judgment (Luke 10:16; John 12:48; 1 Thess 4:8; Rev 21:8). There is an altogether different outcome for the unrepentant, willful sinner and the adult who is without excuse (Rom 1:19–20), versus the child who only possesses original sin and lacks knowledge of good and evil. MacArthur explains that “nothing ever suggests anyone will be sent to hell merely because of the guilt we inherit from Adam (Ezekiel 18:20).”¹⁴ Storms agrees that “eternal judgment is always based on conscious rejection of divine revelation (whether in creation, conscience, or Christ) and willful disobedience.”¹⁵ Infants and children lacking knowledge of good

¹¹ Quoted in Perman, “What Happens.”

¹² MacArthur, *Safe*, 37.

¹³ Sam Storms, “Do All Infants Go to Heaven?” The Gospel Coalition, August 20, 2015, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/do-all-infants-go-to-heaven/>.

¹⁴ John MacArthur, “When Infants Die, Do They Go to Heaven?” *Today's Christian Woman*, March-April 2004, <http://bit.ly/2YTXiiX>

¹⁵ Storms, “Do All Infants.”

and evil are simply not capable of committing willful sin. Their judgment will be based only on what they are capable of knowing and doing knowingly (Ps 62:12; Prov 24:12; Matt 16:27; Rom 2:6). Storms continues, “Those dying in infancy are saved because they do not (indeed cannot) satisfy the conditions for divine judgment.”¹⁶

God’s Character

As demonstrated in the previous section, the perfect justice of God is displayed in his judgment (Zeph 3:5; Rom 2:6). However, justice is not the only attribute of God that is relevant to the topic of infant salvation. All of God’s attributes should be held in balance with one another because “it is all the attributes of God taken together that provide an understanding of the nature and Person of God.”¹⁷ Additionally, Robert P. Lightner explains, “God’s attributes are not so many qualities that are attached to His Person. Neither are they simply acts which He does. He actually is each of these things. They are His essence. They describe His person, not merely His behavior.”¹⁸ With this in mind, Psalm 145:9 says, “The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.” Psalm 86:15 reads, “But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.” These psalms remind the Christian that it is God, with his mercy and grace, who is at work in the process of infant salvation. God is always merciful, and his grace extends to all of his creation, including infants.

Christians can also find comfort in God’s love (1 John 4:16), his goodness (Nah 1:7), and his wisdom (Job 12:13) when a child passes away.

We can trust the character of God—the one who loves us so much that he came and gave himself for us. We can be confident that his

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, Rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 194.

¹⁸ Robert P. Lightner, *Heaven for Those Who Can’t Believe* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist P, 1973), 19.

judgments are always right, his nature is always good, his mercy is always wide, and his desire for people to be saved is greater still than ours.¹⁹

God not only knows what is best for an infant who has died (Rom 8:28) but he also always carries out his will for that infant, in life and in death (Rom 8:38–39).

We can be assured that God will do what is right and loving because He is the standard of rightness and love. Those considerations alone seem to be evidence enough of God's particular, electing love shown to the unborn and those who die young.²⁰

On What Basis Could Infants Be Saved?

As each of these scriptural truths continues to build on and develop one another, a Christian is left to consider one question. That is, “On what basis could individuals who die in infancy possibly be saved?”²¹ The answer in a word is grace—just like everyone else. To develop this further, one might turn to the basic foundations of the Christian faith. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph 2:8–9). Infants are saved by grace and the power of Christ's shed blood atonement, just as anyone else experiences salvation. B. B. Warfield said,

Their destiny is determined irrespective of their choice, by an unconditional decree of God, suspended for its execution on no act

¹⁹ Andrew Wilson, “Do Babies Go to Heaven?” *Christianity Today*, November 1, 2015, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.clarksummitu.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=4d041810-450d-40c1-bf04-37975e8e84ee%40sessionmgr103>.

²⁰ John MacArthur, “Do Babies and Others Incapable of Professing Faith in Christ Automatically Go to Heaven?” *Grace To You*, accessed January 24, 2018, <https://www.gty.org/library/questions/QA101/do-babies-and-others-incapable-of-professing-faith-in-christ-automatically-go-to-heaven>.

²¹ Gardoski, “Salvation,” 4.

of their own; and their salvation is wrought by an unconditional application of the grace of Christ to their souls, through the immediate and irresistible operation of the Holy Spirit prior to and apart from any action of their own proper wills. And if death in infancy does depend on God's providence, it is assuredly God in His providence who selects this vast multitude to be made participants of His unconditional salvation. This is but to say that they are unconditionally predestined to salvation from the foundation of the world.²²

However, one cannot help but realize that there is also an aspect of salvation by grace that infants are unable to accomplish, and that is faith (Rom 10:17; Gal 2:16). Therefore, there is an aspect of infant salvation by grace that is different from that of a believer. Sproul writes that "infants who die are given a special dispensation of the grace of God."²³ MacArthur contends that this saving grace is the simplest expression of the gospel. "Salvation has nothing to do with our initiative or accomplishment. Salvation is all by grace. There is no clearer manifestation of this truth than the gift of eternal life given to a helpless, lost infant."²⁴

Are there aspects of the method God uses for infant salvation that are beyond comprehension and even beyond disclosure by the Scriptures? Yes, certainly. Storms affirms that infant salvation is "neither because they are innocent nor because they have merited forgiveness, but solely because God has sovereignly chosen them for eternal life, regenerated their souls, and applied the saving benefits of the blood of Christ to them apart from conscious faith."²⁵ It is here, at this point, that each of the aforementioned truths—God's intimate knowledge of each child and his or her purpose, original sin, knowledge of good and

²² B. B. Warfield, *Two Studies in the History of Doctrine: Augustine and the Pelagian Controversy: The Development of the Doctrine of Infant Salvation* (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1897), 230.

²³ R. C. Sproul, "What Happens to Children Who Die Before They Can Accept the Gospel?" *Ligonier*, 1996, accessed January 24, 2018, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/qas/what-happens-children-who-die-they-can-accept-gosp/>.

²⁴ MacArthur, *Safe*, 77.

²⁵ Storms, "Do All Infants."

evil, a child's relative innocence, willful sin as a primary component of judgment, and God's merciful grace—all come together. Piper summarizes,

The point for us is that even though we human beings are under the penalty of everlasting judgment and death because of the fall of our race into sin and the sinful nature that we all have, nevertheless God only executes this judgment on those who have the natural capacity to see his glory and understand his will, and refuse to embrace him as their treasure. Infants, I believe do not yet have that capacity, and therefore in God's inscrutable way, he brings them under the forgiving blood of his Son.²⁶

Erroneous Beliefs About Infant Salvation

There are many widespread erroneous beliefs about infant salvation that are worth noting at this point.²⁷ The first of these is the belief that infants and children can be saved by the sacrament of baptism, also known as baptismal regeneration. This belief is traditionally held by those in the Roman Catholic Church. They affirm that “baptism is the source of that new life in Christ from which the entire Christian life springs forth.”²⁸ Furthermore, their Catechism states, “The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude.”²⁹ Foundational to this false notion is the belief that “baptism is a means by which God imparts saving grace; it results in the remission of sins. By either awakening or strengthening faith, baptism effects the washing of regeneration.”³⁰ One problem with this view is that it allows no provision for the

²⁶ Quoted in Perman, “What Happens.”

²⁷ There are numerous erroneous theories within the concept of infant salvation, many of which are not covered by this paper, due to its intentionally limited scope. They were omitted in an effort to maintain a focus on the basis upon which infants can be saved, and not the myriad ways they cannot. Only a few of the most prominently held are presented.

²⁸ “Catechism of the Catholic Church,” *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, accessed May 30, 2018, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P3K.HTM. This direct quote is taken from paragraph 1254.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, par. 1257.

³⁰ Enns, *Moody Handbook*, 379.

unborn. Further, MacArthur explains that “baptism cannot save any person. It is an ordinance clearly presented in the Scriptures as an act of obedient testimony of those who willfully believe the gospel—impossible for infants to do.”³¹

Another erroneous belief is that some infants can be saved by being a child of an elect parent, also known as the elect-infant view or presumptive regeneration. Those with beliefs in covenant theology often hold this view. This view was held by the writers of the *Canons of Dort* which states,

Since we must make judgments about God’s will from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but by virtue of the gracious covenant in which they together with their parents are included, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in infancy.³²

A similar view is presented in the *Westminster Confession* although the covenant aspect is not mentioned.³³

Additionally, the elect-infant view offers no hope for infants of unbelievers. Norman Geisler writes, “The elect-infant view presents an indescribably severe conceptualization of God’s justice and mercy.”³⁴ Undeniably, this argument addresses some touchpoints in the Calvinist-Arminian debate that are beyond the scope of this discussion. However, it is worth noting for purposes of this paper that the elect-infant view is problematic in the sense that it calls into question God’s omnibenevolent character (John 3:16; Rom 5:6–8).

A third erroneous view is the belief that infants will have an after-death opportunity to profess their faith in Christ, so that they may accomplish the same requirements for salvation as

³¹ MacArthur, *Safe*, 74.

³² Quoted in Tim Challies, “Original Sin & the Death of Infants (2),” *Challies* (blog). July 20, 2006, <https://www.challies.com/articles/original-sin-the-death-of-infants-2/>

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, Sin, Salvation (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2004), 440.

adults. Proponents of this view believe that infants will be allowed to mature in heaven, at which time they will “decide for themselves where they will spend eternity.”³⁵ In addition to what seems to be a complete lack of scriptural evidence for this view, there is significant support for the belief that there exists no opportunity for salvation after death (Luke 16:26–31; John 8:24; Heb 9:27). Having reviewed several erroneous views on infant salvation, this paper now turns back to Scripture and reviews God’s dealings with children as written in his Word.

God’s Dealings with and Regard for Children in Scripture

Once the foundational knowledge presented thus far is established, Christians can seek scriptural examples of God’s dealings with and regard for children for further guidance, comfort, and encouragement. These examples will provide confidence in the knowledge that all infants who die are saved. However, before addressing the one example in Scripture that best illustrates the outcome of infant death (2 Sam 12:23), this paper will review other examples that lend indirectly to the question of infant salvation.

Scripture illustrates in 2 Samuel 7 as well as in 2 Samuel 12:24–25 that “God *predicted* His love for Solomon before Solomon’s birth, He *confirmed* that love at Solomon’s birth, and He *never withdrew* His lovingkindness from Solomon.”³⁶ While this does not demonstrate infant salvation, it does demonstrate God’s knowledge of his love for Solomon before he was born. This is the type of knowledge that only the Creator can have (Psalm 139), as illustrated in an earlier section of this paper.

Two other Scriptures that demonstrate God’s knowledge and election of infants before birth are Jeremiah 1:5 and Galatians 1:15. Of Jeremiah 1:5, Warren W. Wiersbe explains, “God *sanctified* Jeremiah even before he was born. This means Jeremiah was set apart by the Lord and for the Lord even before

³⁵ Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, 452.

³⁶ Gardoski, “Salvation,” 6. Emphasis original.

he knew the Lord in a personal way.”³⁷ Paul’s statement in Galatians 1:15 is particularly helpful, as it illustrates the work of grace involved in God’s election. “But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace” (Gal 1:15). A similar calling is found with the prophet Isaiah as described in Isaiah 49:1–6. While one might argue that these are isolated, particular arrangements, the Scriptures still illustrate that such election is possible.

Romans 9:11–13 is of significant use in the discussion of infant salvation. Here Paul reveals that before Jacob and Esau were born, God had elected Jacob for God’s purpose “though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad” (Rom 9:11). Gardoski explains, “God chose to love Jacob and have mercy and compassion on him before he was even born.”³⁸ Douglas J. Moo, referencing this same passage, explains the certainty one can have in the power of God’s grace involved in Jacob’s election saying,

Surely, if Paul had assumed that faith was the basis for God’s election, he would have pointed this out when he raised the question in v. 14 about the fairness of God’s election. All he would have needed to say at that point was ‘of course God is not unjust in choosing Jacob and rejecting Esau, for his choosing took into account the faith of one and the unbelief of the other.’³⁹

The New Testament teaches of God’s election of John the Baptist while he was still in his mother’s womb (Luke 1:15). Even more profound, however, is Luke’s record of John possessing salvation *before he was born*, as the passage states that he was filled with the Holy Spirit while still in the womb. Gardoski illustrates the importance of this verse in that “here, then, we have a true biblical example of the salvation of an infant,

³⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament Prophets* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2002), 77. Emphasis original.

³⁸ Gardoski, “Salvation,” 6.

³⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 583.

and what God did in the case of John the Baptist He is surely capable of doing for others.”⁴⁰ Understandably, this is not a normative example of how God saves his people.

Perhaps the quintessential passage of Scripture demonstrating God’s regard for children is Matthew 19:14: “But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven’” (cf. Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16). MacArthur makes an important comparison using this verse. “I don’t know of any place in the New Testament in which Jesus blesses ‘nonbelievers.’ There’s no place in which Jesus blesses the ‘cursed’ or the ‘damned.’”⁴¹ Additionally, MacArthur writes, “I cannot imagine that the same Savior who blessed little babies and said, ‘of such is the kingdom of heaven’ secretly intended to deny them that mercy.”⁴² MacArthur’s argument is sound, and the Scriptures are clear that Jesus regarded these little children with the utmost love and compassion. R. Albert Mohler provides guidance on how this passage translates to infant salvation, and writes, “We believe that our Lord graciously and freely received all those who die in infancy—not on the basis of their innocence or worthiness—but by his grace, made theirs through the atonement He purchased on the cross.”⁴³

A Review of 2 Samuel 12:23

Consideration will now be given to the single instance of Scripture that provides insight into the salvation of an infant who has died. The entire pericope containing the death of David’s infant son (2 Sam 12:15–23) is perhaps the most commonly referenced passage on the issue of infant death because of David’s statement as recorded in 2 Samuel 12:23—“But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.” MacArthur explains that

⁴⁰ Gardoski, “Salvation,” 6.

⁴¹ MacArthur, *Safe*, 59.

⁴² MacArthur, “When Infants Die.”

⁴³ R. Albert Mohler, Jr., “The Salvation of the ‘Little Ones’: Do Infants Who Die Go to Heaven?” *Albert Mohler*, July 16, 2009, <https://albertmohler.com/2009/07/16/the-salvation-of-the-little-ones-do-infants-who-die-go-to-heaven/>.

David's expression is "an expression of great hope and confidence, not a groan of futility."⁴⁴ Beyond David's words in verse 23, however, the reader can learn from David's actions in the earlier verses (vv. 19–20). "David's behavior indicates that he had assurance that his infant son was with the Lord in heaven."⁴⁵ Indeed, David calmly arose and prepared himself, through washing and anointing, and worshipped the Lord (v. 20). Afterward, he returned home, ate, and resumed normal behaviors (v. 24). This is, of course, a marked change from David's earlier behavior when his son was sick (vv. 16–17).

These are the actions of a parent soothed by the assurance of his child's salvation. A host of theologians agree, and their commentaries on this critical passage of Scripture are worthy of review. MacArthur explains, "Here's the key to the change in David. He ceased his mourning after the baby died. He felt no further reason to fast and pray because his sorrow was instantly and completely replaced by hope."⁴⁶ Gardoski writes, "David's answer [vv. 22–23] indicates a calm assurance that even though he had lost his son, the child was safe with the Lord."⁴⁷ Lightner writes,

That he would in the future again be with his son was his firm belief. The Psalmist never doubted that for a moment. David was rightly related to Jehovah, and he had no doubt that he would spend eternity with Him. Neither did he have any doubt that his infant son, taken in death before he could decide for or against his father's God would be there also.⁴⁸

Sproul writes, "David is given the confidence that he will see that child again in heaven. That story of David and his dying child gives a tremendous consolation to parents who have lost infants to death."⁴⁹ The evidence for the salvation of David's infant son

⁴⁴ MacArthur, "When Infants Die."

⁴⁵ Gardoski, "Salvation," 7.

⁴⁶ MacArthur, *Safe*, 93.

⁴⁷ Gardoski, "Salvation," 7.

⁴⁸ Lightner, *Heaven*, 32–33.

⁴⁹ Sproul, *Now*, 295.

is seemingly insurmountable.⁵⁰ Though evidence for David's hope is clear, Wiersbe explains where David's hope was focused. "David expected to see and recognize his son in the future life. Where was David eventually going? 'I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever' (Ps 23:6 NKJV)."⁵¹

Unknowns

While this paper has served to review the relevant scriptural and theological considerations involved in answering the question at hand, and while the goal has been to enable and encourage a confident belief in the knowledge that all infants who die go to heaven, it is not to say that all possible questions have been answered. Most assuredly, and as with any complex theological issue, there are certainly still some unknowns. Will infants grow up in heaven? How old will they be when their saved parents arrive in heaven? Will parents recognize their infants if they have grown? If so, how? There are many more questions than there are answers.

MacArthur, however, believes that "the Bible leaves enough in the realm of mystery. . . while reassuring us God is gracious and compassionate, and his tender mercies are over all his works (Psalm 145:9)."⁵² Lightner is confident that everyone in heaven will be the same age and maturity, though he admitted that exactly what that age is, is unknown.⁵³ Piper recognizes the limitations of the scriptural evidence as well. "God in his justice will find a way to absolve infants who die of their depravity. It will surely be through Christ. But beyond that, we would be guessing."⁵⁴ He continues by proposing, "It seems to me that the most natural guess would be that babies will grow up in the kingdom (either immediately, or over time) and will by God's grace come to faith so that their justification is by faith alone just

⁵⁰ Though some argue that David's statement, "I shall go to him" is merely David's acknowledgment that he, too, will die and thereby will go with his son into death.

⁵¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament History* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2002), 339.

⁵² MacArthur, "When Infants Die."

⁵³ Lightner, *Heaven*, 46.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Perman, "What Happens."

like ours.”⁵⁵ Additionally, although each of the theological issues addressed throughout this paper are important in the development of a solid argument for infant salvation, some Christians might suggest that one should first begin with the goodness and mercy of God and see everything else through that perspective. Perman writes, “The bottom line is the goodness of God—that is the hope for us all, and the only hope.”⁵⁶

Conclusion

R. Albert Mohler writes,

When we look into the grave of one of these little ones, we do not place our hope and trust in the false promises of an unbiblical theology, in the instability of sentimentalism, in the cold analysis of human logic, nor in the cowardly refuge of ambiguity. We place our faith in Christ, and trust Him to be faithful to his Word. . . . We know that heaven will be filled with those who never grew to maturity on earth, but in heaven will greet us completed in Christ.⁵⁷

The desire is that this paper has demonstrated that there is, indeed, no need to rely on sentimentalism when seeking an answer to the question, “What happens to infants who die?” Despite the Bible’s lack of direct teaching on the outcome of infant mortality, studying the biblical teaching about the life of a child, original sin, knowledge of good and evil, willful sin and hell, God’s character, God’s dealings with and regard for children, as well as relevant scriptural examples, enables Christians to be confident in providing the answer that loved ones so desperately seek when an infant dies; that is, all infants who die go to heaven. This writer desires that more Christians will prepare themselves to answer this question confidently, gracefully, and affirmatively, putting grieving loved ones’ minds at ease with the truth that all infants experience salvation.

⁵⁵ Ibid. It is unclear from Piper’s comments here as to how close his views are to the after-death view presented above.

⁵⁶ Perman, “What Happens.”

⁵⁷ Mohler, “Salvation.”

The Lost Truth of Genesis

A.W. Morris

Abstract: Scholars such as John Walton have correctly identified the need for modern interpreters to understand the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) context in which the Bible was written. What they have failed to do is follow their own reasoning to its theological conclusion by analyzing the context in which the ANE worldview developed. This study will demonstrate that the idolatrous ANE conflation of false gods with the material universe is fundamentally incompatible with the ontological distinction between the one true God and his material universe as revealed in the Bible. Even if ANE people did hold to a purely functional rather than material ontology, their ontological conflationism cannot form the interpretive basis for understanding the truth of the book of Genesis.

Key Words: John Walton, Ancient Near East, functional ontology, *Lost World*, conflationism

There is an ancient Sumerian proverb—not unlike many found in the biblical book of Proverbs—which says,

(He) who builds like a lord, lives like a slave.

(He) who builds like a slave, lives like a lord.²

Is this a theologically *neutral* statement? It certainly does not appear to take any position on the existence of God(s) or any moral or ethical implications that might follow. On its face this is nothing more than a tidbit of practical life wisdom, presumably gleaned from countless attempts to sort out what later generations

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² Qtd. in Samuel Noah Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer:Thirty-Nine Firsts in Man's Record History*, 3rd. ed. (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1981), 122.

would call a “standard of living.” In this world of limited resources, if a person spends all his money building the largest possible house (or, in contemporary society, buying the largest possible house), then that person won’t have anything left to live on. But if a person builds or purchases a more modest house, then that person will actually have some money left over to enjoy it. The proverb does not say anything about where houses come from or whether there should be different socio-economic classes or what people should and should not be doing inside their houses. It’s simply a pithy nugget of economic wisdom with which any reasonable atheist and any reasonable Christian would most likely agree because, as far as it goes, the statement is theologically *neutral*.

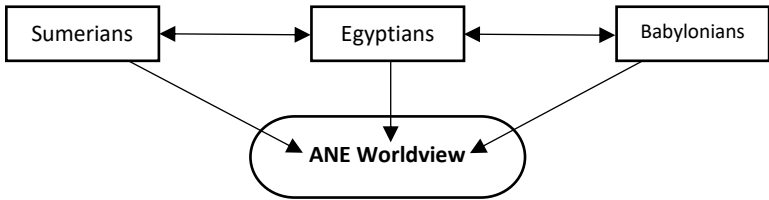
In recent years, much has been written on the issue of how to interpret the early chapters of Genesis. Authors such as Walton,³ Collins,⁴ and others have correctly identified the need for modern Western interpreters to understand the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) context in which the book of Genesis was written.

However, this raises an additional question: What was the context in which the ANE culture and worldview developed? If it is necessary to understand the ANE context in which Genesis was written, then is it not also necessary, in order to interpret ANE writings correctly, to understand the context in which *they* were written? Of particular interest to this study is the question: Was the ANE context theologically *neutral*?

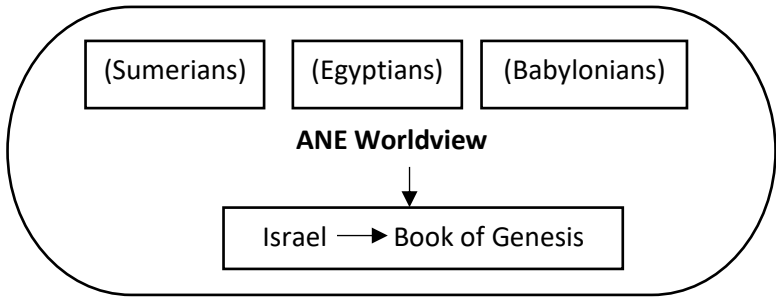
Walton, in his *Lost World* books, has analyzed numerous ANE writings in order to ascertain the most relevant features of the ANE context. His conclusion can be visually represented thus: the peoples of the ANE, in particular the Sumerians, Egyptians, and Babylonians, each had their own culture and belief system; and these systems had certain beliefs in common. The “sum total” of the commonalities among these cultures formed what will be termed the ANE Worldview:

³ John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2010), 9-15.

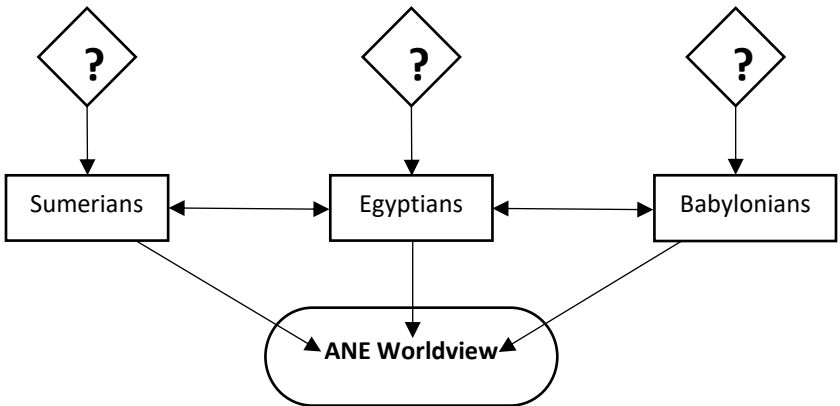
⁴ John C. Collins, *Reading Genesis Well* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 169ff.



Since the nation of Israel developed within this ANE worldview, their understanding of reality, including their understanding of God and descriptions of what they believed God did, was expressed from within the perspective of this worldview:



The foundational question to be addressed in the present study is "What was the context in which the ANE Worldview developed?" To put it another way, where did the ideas that formed the ANE Worldview come from?



In particular, to what extent were these ideas theologically *neutral*, like the aforementioned Sumerian proverb, and to what extent were they theologically *incompatible* with the biblical perspective about the nature of the one true God? To the extent that they were theologically *neutral*, they would certainly provide valuable and necessary insights into the meaning of the book of Genesis; but to the extent that they were theologically *incompatible*, they *cannot* form the interpretive basis for understanding the book of Genesis.

The Spiritual Context of the Ancient World

If the only way to determine what the earliest people groups believed is to analyze what they wrote, how would it even be possible to evaluate the context of the *earliest* known human writings? How would it be possible to determine where their ideas came from without some written record of the development of those ideas?

In the absence of first-hand accounts of early human pre-history, the most reliable source not squarely in the realm of mythology would most likely be the New Testament. What little the NT does say about early humanity is treated as historically factual and theologically relevant to its immediate audience; and to avoid any appearance of circular reasoning by using ANE writings (the OT) to analyze other ANE writings, this study will examine how the NT views the spiritual condition of the ancient world.

The worldview of the NT authors was primarily a composite of Second Temple Judaism and Greco-Roman influences. The apostle Paul, for example, was a foreign-born Jew (Acts 22:3) who was also a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37) conversant in Greek poets and philosophers (Acts 17:28). Peter and John were Jewish fisherman (Luke 5:1-11), also conversant in Greek religious/philosophical terminology (John 1:1-5, 2 Pet 1:3). Therefore, whatever the NT authors wrote about the ancient world would not have been directly influenced by the worldview they were analyzing. Although they knew and at times quoted the book of Genesis (Eph 5:31, 1 Pet 3:6, 1 John 3:12, Heb 7:1-3), their knowledge of it as a finished product put them more in the

position of post-game commentators able to analyze the entire game rather than players on the field in the middle of the game.

According to Romans 5:12-14, sin was present from the beginning of humanity, and the earliest sin of Adam affected all of humanity until the time of Moses:

(Rom 5:12) Διὰ τοῦτο ὥσπερ δι' ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθεν καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος, καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διῆλθεν, ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον·	For this reason, just as through one man sin came into the world, and through sin death, and therefore to all men death spread, because all sinned, ⁵
(5:13) ἄχρι γὰρ νόμου ἁμαρτία ἦν ἐν κόσμῳ, ἁμαρτία δὲ οὐκ ἐλλογεῖται μὴ ὄντος νόμου,	for until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not accounted where there is no law,
(5:14) ἀλλ' ἐβασίλευσεν ὁ θάνατος ἀπὸ Ἀδὰμ μέχρι Μωϋσέως καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς μὴ ἁμαρτήσαντας ἐπὶ τῷ ὁμοιώματι τῆς παραβάσεως Ἀδὰμ ὅς ἐστιν τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος.	but death reigned from Adam until Moses even over those not sinning in the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the future one.

As a result of the first sin of Adam, death spread to the ancient Sumerians, Egyptians, and Babylonians, because the Sumerians, Egyptians, and Babylonians all sinned. Also, death reigned over the Sumerians, Egyptians, and Babylonians even though they did not sin in exactly the same manner that Adam did.

According to 2 Peter 2:5-6, God sent the flood upon the ἀρχαίου κόσμου (“ancient world”) as a judgment against the ἀσεβῶν (“ungodly / impious”⁶):

⁵ All Scriptural translations are the author’s unless otherwise noted.
⁶ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000), 141.

(2 Pet 2:5) καὶ ἀρχαίου κόσμου οὐκ ἐφείσατο ἀλλ’ ὄγδοον Νῶε δικαιοσύνης κήρυκα ἐφύλαξεν κατακλυσμὸν κόσμῳ ἀσεβῶν ἐπάξας	...and if he did not spare the ancient world but preserved the eight of Noah the herald of righteousness from the world flood brought on the ungodly,
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Although this event occurred before the ancient Sumerian, Egyptian, and Babylonian civilizations developed, the text is clear about the cause of the κατακλυσμὸν (“cataclysm [flood]”)—the ἀσέβεια (“ungodliness”) that had spread to the entire world.

The next verse likewise confirms that God leveled the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes for the same reason:

(2 Pet 2:6) καὶ πόλεις Σοδόμων καὶ Γομόρρας τεφρώσας καταστροφῇ κατέκρινεν ὑπόδειγμα μελλόντων ἀσεβεῖν τεθεικῶς	...and turned to ashes the cities Sodom and Gomorrah, condemning them to ruin as an example of what future ungodly ones will be consigned to...
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From the time of the flood until the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, which occurred during the lifetime of Abraham, ἀσέβεια (“ungodliness”) again multiplied to the point that it warranted a catastrophic divine judgment. Although this particular event happened after the ANE creation stories had been written, this is still clear evidence of deeply entrenched sinfulness in these ANE cities between the time of the flood and the establishment of the Sumerian, Egyptian, and Babylonian civilizations.

In Luke 17:26-29, Jesus drew comparisons between his second coming and both of the cataclysmic judgments mentioned in 2 Peter 2 (cf. Matt 24:37-39):

(Luke 17:26) καὶ καθὼς ἐγένετο ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Νῶε, οὕτως ἔσται καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου·	...and just as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be in the days of the Son of Man:
(17:27) ἤσθιον, ἔπινον, ἐγάμουν, ἐγαμίζοντο, ἄχρι ἧς ἡμέρας εἰσῆλθεν Νῶε εἰς τὴν κιβωτὸν καὶ ἦλθεν ὁ κατακλυσμὸς καὶ ἀπώλεσεν πάντας.	they were eating, drinking, marrying, giving in marriage, until the day Noah went into the ark and the flood came and destroyed everything.
(17:28) Ὅμοίως καθὼς ἐγένετο ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Λῶτ· ἤσθιον, ἔπινον, ἡγόραζον, ἐπώλουν, ἐφύτευον, ὠκοδόμουν·	In the same way, just as in the days of Lot they were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building;
(17:29) ἥ δὲ ἡμέρᾳ ἐξῆλθεν Λῶτ ἀπὸ Σοδόμων, ἔβρεξεν πῦρ καὶ θεῖον ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἀπώλεσεν πάντας.	but on the day Lot went out from Sodom, fire and brimstone rained from heaven and destroyed everything.

In both instances Jesus highlighted the fact that people in the ancient world were going about the ordinary business of living, completely unaware that cataclysmic judgment was just around the corner.

More to the point of the present study, Romans 1:18-25 goes into greater detail about specific sins of humanity since the beginning of the world, again using the term ἀσέβεια (“ungodliness”). This spiritual condition that was identified as the cause of the cataclysmic judgments against the ancient world was also identified as a defining characteristic, along with the related term ἀδικία (“unrighteousness”), of those who actively suppress truth about God:

<p>(1:18) Ἀποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν καὶ ἀδικίαν ἀνθρώπων τῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων,</p>	<p>For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who in unrighteousness suppress the truth,</p>
<p>(1:19) διότι τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φανερόν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς· ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἐφανερώσεν.</p>	<p>because what can be known of God is manifest among them, because God has manifested it to them.</p>

Knowledge of God has been accessible to humankind since the beginning of the world because God has made it accessible. Humankind is not ungodly and unrighteous because they are *unaware* of God but rather because they have chosen to *suppress* the knowledge of God that God himself has revealed to them.

<p>(1:20) τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται, ἢ τε αἶδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θειότης, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους,</p>	<p>For his invisible attributes from the creation of the world have been clearly discerned in what has been made, both his eternal power and deity, so that they are without defense,</p>
<p>(1:21) διότι γνόντες τὸν θεὸν οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν ἢ ἡυχαρίστησαν, ἀλλ’ ἐμταιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδιά.</p>	<p>because although they knew God, they neither glorified nor gave thanks to him as God, but rather became futile in their reasoning and their senseless heart became darkened.</p>

The expression ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου (“from the creation of the world”) is similar to Jesus’ appeal to the marriage of Adam and Eve as God’s original plan ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως (“from the beginning of creation” [Mark 10:6, citing Gen 1:27, 2:24]). In Romans 1, Paul is clarifying the universality of human sinfulness—ever since the original creation God has made known

his θειότης (“deity / divineness,”⁷ “the fact that he is God”⁸) in clear enough fashion that humankind has no possible claim of ignorance. In fact, Paul makes exactly the *opposite* claim concerning humankind: they *did* know God yet refused to acknowledge and glorify Him as God.

(1:22) φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν	Claiming to be wise, they were shown to be foolish
(1:23) καὶ ἥλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνης φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πετεινῶν καὶ τετραπόδων καὶ ἑρπετῶν.	and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for images in the likeness of corruptible men and birds and quadrupeds and reptiles.

Although the ancients may have had some claim to wisdom about theologically peripheral matters like economic practicality, the foolishness of their theological foundation was revealed in their exchange of the glory of the unseen God for man-made objects of worship. Verse 23 sounds strikingly similar to Psalm 106:20, in which Israel, in the course of repenting of her many sins, includes Aaron leading the nation to worship the golden bull:

(Ps 106:20) And they exchanged their glory for a similitude of a bull that eats plants.	וַיִּמְרֹוּ אֶת־כְּבוֹדָם בְּתַבְכִּיֹּת שׁוֹר אֹכֵל עֵשֶׂב
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The nation of Israel was guilty of what humanity in general had been guilty of all along—exchanging the glory of the transcendent and incorruptible God for images in the likeness of just about any component of God’s creation.

⁷ Ibid., 446.

⁸ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 139.

(1:24) Διὸ παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν τοῦ ἀτιμάζεσθαι τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς.	Therefore, God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to the uncleanness of dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,
(1:25) οἵτινες μετήλλαξαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ψεύδει καὶ ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα, ὅς ἐστιν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.	who exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creation rather than the creator, who is blessed forever, amen.

Verse 25 elaborates further on verse 23 using an additional set of opposites. In verse 23 the contrast was between the ἀφάρτου (“incorruptible”) God and φθαρτοῦ (“corruptible”) creation. Here the contrast is between the ἀλήθειαν (“truth”) about God and the ψεύδει (“lie”) of worshiping the κτίσει (“creation”) rather than the κτίσαντα (“creator”).

Though relatively few in number, these NT passages dealing with the ancient world paint a fairly clear picture. From Adam onward, humanity has been guilty of ungodliness and unrighteousness characterized by the active suppression of the truth God has revealed about himself. From its earliest generations, humanity has been exchanging the truth of God’s transcendence for the lie that God’s creation is somehow worthy of worship; and the consequences of this idolatrous exchange have worked themselves out not only in Sodom and Gomorrah but even at times among God’s people (Judg 17-21).

Ancient Near Eastern Creation Stories

The NT paints a fairly grim picture of ancient humanity in general, but to what extent do any of these passages apply specifically to the ancient Sumerians, Egyptians, and Babylonians? The aforementioned Sumerian proverb proves that the ancients were certainly capable of speaking (and writing) truth, so how can the overall truthfulness of the ANE Worldview be evaluated?

One of the most revealing windows into any people's worldview is its cosmology. A people's beliefs about how and why the universe came to be the way it is are essentially the cornerstone upon which its entire worldview is built. Walton's analysis of ANE creation stories has led him to a number of propositions that he believes form the foundation of the ANE worldview. The most basic and foundational of these propositions is that the ANE creation stories offer accounts of *functional* origins rather than accounts of *material* origins:

If we follow the sense of the literature and its ideas of creation, we find that people in the ancient Near East did not think of creation in terms of making material things—instead, everything is function oriented.... Creation thus constituted bringing order to the cosmos from an originally nonfunctional condition. It is from this reading of the literature that we may deduce a functional ontology in the ancient world—that is, that they offer accounts of functional origins rather than accounts of material origins.⁹

A number of authors have attempted to refute this proposition,¹⁰ but in the present study such attempted refutations are unnecessary. This study will assume that Walton's proposition is correct but then raise an additional question: Where did this “functional ontology” originate? How did the people of the ANE arrive at this exclusive interest in functional origins and non-interest in material origins?

The relevant features of ancient Egyptian cosmology are well summarized by Egyptologist James P. Allen:

... the Egyptians lived in a universe composed not of *things* but of *beings*. Each element is not merely a physical component, but a distinct individual with a unique personality and will. The sky is

⁹ Walton, *Lost World of Genesis One*, 35.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Lydia McGrew, “Review of John H. Walton's *The Lost World of Genesis One*,” http://whatswrongwiththeworld.net/2015/03/review_of_john_h_waltonsthe_l.html; Dominic Statham, “Dubious and Dangerous Exposition,” <https://creation.com/review-walton-the-lost-world-of-genesis-one>.

not an inanimate vault, but a goddess who conceives the sun each night and gives birth to him in the morning. The atmosphere that separates sky from earth is not an empty void, but a god. The Duat is not merely a mysterious region through which the sun passes at night, but the god Osiris. Even the vast and lifeless outer waters have an identity, as the god Nu.¹¹

In the minds of the ancient Egyptians, there was no distinction between the gods and the universe. As Allen explains, it's not that the sky goddess created the sky, but rather that the sky *was* a goddess. This appears to be different from the later Western philosophies of pantheism¹² and panentheism.¹³ Perhaps a more accurate term would be "conflationism." The ancient Egyptians conflated the gods and the universe to the point that there was no distinction between them. Walton comes to a similar conclusion:

...it is important to note that in the Egyptian descriptions of cosmic geography, all of those elements that we might consider cosmic structures (firmament, sun, moon, air, earth, etc.) are depicted as gods. This is strong evidence that the Egyptians were more

¹¹ James P. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1988), 8 (emphasis original).

¹² "Pantheism may be understood positively as the view that God is identical with the cosmos, the view that there exists nothing which is outside of God, or else negatively as the rejection of any view that considers God as distinct from the universe" (William Mander, "Pantheism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, rev. July 7, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pantheism/>).

¹³ "Panentheism considers God and the world to be inter-related with the world being in God and God being in the world. Panentheism seeks to avoid either isolating God from the world as traditional theism often does or identifying God with the world as pantheism does. Traditional theistic systems emphasize the difference between God and the world while panentheism stresses God's active presence in the world and the world's influence upon God. Pantheism emphasizes God's presence in the world but panentheism maintains the identity and significance of the non-divine." John Culp, "Panentheism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, rev. June 3, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/panentheism/>.

interested in the functions of these gods than in the actual material structures. The gods represented authority and jurisdiction. The attributes of the deities were manifested in the cosmic elements. The cosmos functioned as an extension of the gods, and the gods functioned within the cosmos.¹⁴

This last statement is particularly telling. In the minds of the Egyptians, the gods functioned *within* the cosmos, which was itself an extension of the gods and a manifestation of their attributes. Although this sounds similar to both pantheism and panentheism, it sounds more like the “conflationism” of which Allen speaks—the cosmic structures were depicted as gods, thereby blurring, if not completely eliminating, any distinction between the gods and the cosmos.

The pioneering Sumerologist Samuel Noah Kramer analyzed a number of Mesopotamian creation texts and reached the following conclusions about the cosmology of ancient Sumer:

1. First was the primeval sea. Nothing is said of its origin or birth, and it is not unlikely that the Sumerians conceived it as having existed eternally.
2. The primeval sea engendered the cosmic mountain consisting of heaven and earth united.
3. Conceived as gods in human form, An (i.e., heaven) was the male and Ki (i.e., earth) was the female. From their union was begotten the air-god Enlil.
4. Enlil, the air-god, separated heaven from earth, and while his father An carried off heaven, Enlil himself carried off the earth, his mother. The union of Enlil and his mother earth set the stage for the organization of the universe – the creation of man, animals, and plants, and the establishment of civilization.¹⁵

Kramer identified the Sumerian goddess of the primeval sea as Nimmu, who was described in a list of Sumerian gods as “the

¹⁴ Walton, *Lost World of Genesis One*, 30.

¹⁵ Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 82-83.

mother, who gave birth to heaven and earth.”¹⁶ As with the ancient Egyptians, the Sumerians did not appear to draw any distinction between the gods and the material universe—they conceived of heaven and earth as gods in human form.

The cosmology of ancient Babylon is similar to that of ancient Sumer. Jastrow identifies Apsu and Tiamat as essentially the god and goddess of the primeval waters:

Apsu and Tiamat are, accordingly, synonymous. The combination of the two may be regarded as due to the introduction of the theological doctrine which we have seen plays so prominent a part in the systematized pantheon, namely, the association of the male and female principle in everything connected with activity or with the life of the universe. Apsu represents the male and Tiamat the female principle of the primeval universe.¹⁷

Jastrow also notes that the Babylonians did not appear to conceive of any point in time before the primeval waters. Rather, they conceived of Apsu and Tiamat as the earliest gods who sexually procreated all subsequent gods in order to bring the primeval chaos into order.¹⁸

If these ANE scholars are correct, then the most reasonable explanation for this alleged ANE non-interest in the material origin of the universe is that they did not believe the universe *had* a material origin. Since the Egyptians believed that all the major components of the universe (e.g., sun, earth, sky) were gods and the gods had no material origin, therefore the universe had no material origin. Since the Sumerians and Babylonians traced all of their gods back to the gods and goddesses of the primeval waters, they would not have had any concept of what came “before” the primeval waters since the gods and goddesses have always existed.

These ANE creation stories provide the clearest possible examples of exactly what Romans 1:18-25 is talking about. The

¹⁶ Ibid., 81-82.

¹⁷ Morris Jastrow, *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1898), 411.

¹⁸ Ibid., 412-13.

fact that they deified certain elements of the creation is clear proof that they had exchanged the truth about the God for a lie and were worshiping the creation rather than the Creator (Rom 1:25). By conceiving of the waters, sky, and earth as gods who engage in human activities like procreation, they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for images in the form of corruptible men (Rom 1:23). These ANE creation stories are not the uninformed observations of people who once thought the earth was flat—they are an idolatrous usurpation of the glory of God (Rom 1:21-23).

Is the One True God Concerned with Material Origins?

Although the ANE cosmology / ontology has been shown to be inherently idolatrous, there is still the question of whether or not the material origin of the universe was of any concern to the biblical authors. It is possible that the inspired writings of the one true God have a functional rather than material cosmology for reasons other than idolatry; and if God did not intend for his people to be unnecessarily interested in the material origin of the universe, then there is no reason to expect that he would have revealed anything about it to his people. Deuteronomy 29:29 teaches that God has not revealed *everything* he possibly *could* have to his people and that he is under no *obligation* to reveal anything *beyond* what he already has.

The question is this: Is the one true God concerned with material origins? Perhaps more to the point, is God concerned that his people know at least something about the material origin of the universe, or is this not a topic that is even worth mentioning in his special revelation? God's revelation to humanity is never based on what *humanity* is or is not interested in—it is based on what God decides that humanity *needs* to know. Does the Bible give any reason to think that humanity needs to hear about its material origin?

The answer from Scripture is a clear and unequivocal yes. God is unquestionably concerned that his people know about the material origins of the universe in order to understand and maintain the *ontological distinction* between God the transcendent Creator and his creation. The first two of the Ten Commandments deal specifically with this distinction:

(Exod 20:3) You shall not have for yourself other gods in my presence.	לֹא יִהְיֶה-לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל- פְּנֵי
(20:4) You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of what is in the heavens above or what is on the earth below or what is in the waters under the earth.	לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה-לְךָ פֶסֶל וְכָל-תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם מִתַּחַת לָאָרֶץ

The term אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים (“other gods”) appears more than sixty times in OT passages ranging from Moses’ initial reception of the command to prophetic passages and historical accounts all the way up to the Babylonian exile (e.g., Jer 44, 2 Chr 34). Beyond the simple command to uphold a monotheistic belief in the one true God is the theological corollary that anyone or anything other than God is by definition a *created* thing. A number of OT passages clearly teach that in reality there is only one God and no others. In the first part of Isaiah 45:5 God declares:

(Isa 45:5) I am YHWH and there is no other; besides me there is no God.	אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאֵין עוֹד זוֹלָתִי אֵין אֱלֹהִים
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The declaration אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאֵין עוֹד (“I am YHWH and there is no other”) is repeated in Isaiah 45:18, and the similar declaration אֲנִי-אֵל וְאֵין עוֹד (“I am God and there is no other”) occurs in Isaiah 45:22 and 46:9. Similarly phrased declarations occur in Deuteronomy 4:35-39, 1 Kings 8:60, Isaiah 45:14, and Isaiah 45:21. Since there is only one actual God, any אֲחֵר (“other god”) is not an actual transcendent deity, but nothing more than part of the creation—either an angelic being (Col 2:18), a component of the material universe (Exod 20:4), or an immaterial concept within the creation such as science or materialism. Therefore, to create and worship any kind of false god rather than believe in and worship the one true God is to deify the creation.

The second commandment (Exod 20:4) prohibits idolatry in the opposite direction. Whereas Exodus 20:3 prohibits *elevating* creation to the level of deity; the second commandment prohibits *lowering* the one true God to the level of creation. The most glaring violations of this were the golden bulls built at different times by Aaron (Exod 32) and Jeroboam (1 Kgs 12:25-33).

In Deuteronomy 4:15-19, God expands on the prohibition of the second commandment using terminology nearly identical to that of Genesis 1:

(Deut 4:15) You shall watch yourselves diligently, for you did not see any form on the day YHWH spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire,	וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם מְאֹד לִנְפֹשְׁתֵיכֶם כִּי לֹא רִאִיתֶם כָּל־תְּמוּנָה בַּיּוֹם דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֲלֵיכֶם בְּחָרֵב מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ
(4:16) lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves an image in the form of any figure, in the similitude of male or female,	פֶּן־תִּשְׁחָתוּן וַעֲשִׂיתֶם לָכֶם פֶּסֶל תְּמוּנַת כָּל־סִמָּל תְּבִנִית זָכָר אוֹ נְקֵבָה
(4:17) in the similitude of any animal that is on the earth, in the similitude of any winged bird that flies in the air,	תְּבִנִית כָּל־בְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ תְּבִנִית כָּל־צִפּוֹר כָּנָף אֲשֶׁר תָּעוֹף בַּשָּׁמַיִם
(4:18) in the similitude of any creeping thing on the ground, in the similitude of any fish that is in the water under the earth,	תְּבִנִית כָּל־רֶמֶשׂ בָּאֲדָמָה תְּבִנִית כָּל־דָּגָה אֲשֶׁר־ בַּמַּיִם מִתַּחַת לָאָרֶץ
(4:19) and lest your eyes be lifted up to the heavens and you look at the sun and the moon and the stars, all the hosts of the heavens, and you are seduced and bow down to them and serve them which YHWH your God has apportioned as signs to all the peoples under all the heavens.	וּפֶן־תִּשָּׂא עֵינֶיךָ הַשָּׁמַיִמָה וְרִאִיתָ אֶת־הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְאֶת־ הַיָּרֵחַ וְאֶת־הַכּוֹכָבִים כֹּל צָבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנִדְחָתָה וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתָ לָהֶם וַעֲבַדְתָּם אֲשֶׁר חָלַק יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֹתָם לְכָל הָעַמִּים תַּחַת כָּל־ הַשָּׁמַיִם

Israel was forbidden from rendering YHWH in the image of any זָכָר (“male”) or נְקֵבָה (“female”) person (Gen 1:27), בְּהֵמָה (“animal / livestock” [Gen 1:24-25]), כָּנָף (“bird” [Gen 1:20-22]), רֶמֶשׂ (“creeping thing” [Gen 1:24-25]), or דָּגָה (“fish” [Gen 1:26]). Israel was likewise forbidden from allowing themselves to be seduced into thinking that the וְאֵת־הַיָּרֵחַ וְאֵת־כּוֹכְבֵּים (“sun and moon and stars”), which God had created for the benefit of people on earth (Gen 1:14-18), were to be considered objects of worship. By covering every “creation category” from Genesis 1, the author is clarifying beyond any possible exception that no part of the creation is to be thought of as any kind of deity.

The Creation Event

Walton consistently emphasizes that he does believe in creation *ex nihilo* and that the Bible does teach creation *ex nihilo*, although not in the early chapters of Genesis.¹⁹ He affirms Christological creation texts such as John 1 and Colossians 1 as well as the theological principle of the non-contingency of God.²⁰ However, if Walton and the NT texts are correct that God created the material universe *ex nihilo*, then that event would have occurred before any humans were created and therefore before any human worldviews were formed, ANE or otherwise.

Since the creation event occurred before any human worldviews developed, any description of it is by definition not bound within any human worldview. If someone wished to describe an historical event such as the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, some knowledge of 19th century American history and culture is necessary in order to communicate meaningfully about the event. Without at least a basic knowledge of the United States of America, the office of the presidency, and the American Civil War, it is not possible to even speak about the event in any meaningful way. The creation event, on the other hand, did not

¹⁹ Walton, *Lost World of Genesis One*, 44.

²⁰ John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2015), 33.

occur within any human country or culture and is therefore not bound by any particular worldview.

Since the conflationism of the ANE worldview cannot have any bearing on the intent of the divine and human A/authors of inspired Scripture, is there any reason to *exclude* the material origin of the universe from the text of Genesis 1? Walton addresses this question in his tenth proposition (“The Seven Days of Genesis 1 Do Not Concern Material Origins”):

In a last effort to cling to a material perspective, they ask, why can’t it be both? It is easy to see the functional orientation of the account, but does the material aspect have to be eliminated altogether?²¹

Notwithstanding the unnecessary rhetorical flourish (since when is raising a perfectly logical question some sort of desperate “last effort to cling” to something?), Walton’s reasons for answering his own question in the affirmative do not withstand serious examination. The first problem with Walton’s reasoning is a simple logical fallacy: a functional ontology does not by definition *exclude* a material ontology. Even if Walton is completely correct that ANE people were interested in functional rather than material existence (which they may not have been), and even if this view were not inherently idolatrous (which it is), functional existence *presupposes* material existence. A material object cannot have a function unless it materially exists. To say that the ancients were concerned primarily with functional origins does not by definition *exclude* the possibility of them being equally concerned with material origins, and to argue that the reason the ancients were *not* interested in material origins is because they were *only* interested in functional origins is illogical on its face. Walton is trying to prove a negative which is not logically excluded.

Walton lists four evidences for his proposed “exclusively functional” ontology in the first chapter of Genesis²²:

²¹ Walton, *Lost World of Genesis One*, 92-93.

²² *Ibid.*, 93.

1. The nature of the governing verb (*bārā'*, “to create”) is functional.
2. The context is functional (it starts with a nonfunctional world in Gen 1:2 and comes back to a functional description of creation after the flood in Gen 8:22).
3. The cultural context is functional (ancient Near Eastern literature).
4. The theology is functional (cosmic temple).

In response to point 1, it is not entirely clear that **ברא** is the “governing verb” of Genesis 1. Most of the individual “creation events” in Genesis 1 use the verbs **אמר** (“to say”) and **היה** (“to be / become”). The “formula” was **וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים... וַיְהיֶה־כֵּן** (“And God said.... And it was so” [Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 14-15, 24]). As far as the verb **ברא**, even Walton concedes that in many of its OT uses there is some ambiguity about whether its focus is on functional or material creation.²³ But even if the ambiguous uses *suggested* a functional focus, this would not by definition *exclude* a material focus.

In response to point 2, even if Genesis 1:2 describes the initially created world as non-functional, this does not exclude the fact that God did create it *ex nihilo*, nor does it exclude the possibility of God subsequently creating the celestial bodies, plants, animals, and initial humans *ex nihilo* with functionality in order to bring order to the cosmos.

In response to point 3, the ANE cultural context was idolatrous at its foundation and therefore not relevant as an interpretive basis for inspired Scripture. The falsehood of conflating the Creator and his creation cannot serve as an interpretive basis for divinely inspired truth.

In response to point 4, the idea of the creation as a cosmic temple is also a product of the “conflationist” ANE context in which the gods and the cosmos were ontologically indistinguishable. The idolaters of the ANE may have believed that the cosmos was the grand temple in which their false gods dwelled, but the Bible is clear about the fact that the one true God

²³ Ibid., 43.

does not dwell within the cosmos (1 Kgs 8:27). God's earthly temple was a post-fall institution necessitated by the fall; and even though God caused his name to dwell there (1 Kgs 8:29) and manifested his presence there (1 Kgs 8:10-11), reading a post-fall institution back into the pre-fall creation is the very definition of eisegesis.

Walton correctly states that those who believe Genesis 1 *does* concern the material origin of the cosmos need to provide an *affirmative* argument for this belief rather than just assume that it is true because that is what they have always believed.²⁴ Is there an affirmative argument in favor of a material as well as functional interpretation of Genesis 1?

The answer is yes, although the argument is more theological than textual. As was argued in the previous section, the consistent and repeated OT prohibitions against idolatry reveal a compelling theological reason for the one true God to make clear from the very beginning that he is not to be conflated with his creation. At the time of writing of the book of Genesis, every other ANE people group had a deeply rooted conflation of their false gods and the cosmos woven into the very fabric of their worldview. What more strategic place would there be than the very beginning of God's inspired Scripture to clarify in writing, once and for all, that the one true God is neither a material object nor any other kind of human creation, material or immaterial?

As far as the text, the connections between Genesis 1 and the NT creation *ex nihilo* texts that Walton affirms are fairly straightforward. John 1:1 and Genesis 1:1 (LXX) both begin with the phrase Ἐν ἀρχῇ ("In the beginning").

(Gen 1:1 LXX) Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν.	In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth.
(John 1:1) Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.	In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

²⁴ Ibid., 93.

Verses such as Genesis 1:6 describe God (the Father) *speaking* the creation into existence; John 1:1 identifies God the Son as the *Word* who was with God and who was God.

Colossians 1:16 and Genesis 1:1 both use “the heavens and the earth” to refer to the entirety of creation:

(Gen 1:1 LXX) Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν.	In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth.
(Col 1:16) ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς	By him all things were created in the heavens and on the earth.

John 1, Hebrews 11, and Genesis 1 (LXX) all use forms of the verb γίνομαι (“to be / become / come into being²⁵”) to describe how the creation “came to be”:

(Gen 1:3 LXX) καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Γενηθήτω φῶς. καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς.	And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.
(John 1:3) πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν	Through him all things came into being, and without him nothing came into being that has come into being.
(Heb 11:3) Πίστει νοοῦμεν κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι θεοῦ, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων τὸ βλεπόμενον γεγονέναι.	By faith we understand that the universe was prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen did not come into being from what is visible.

The statement in Hebrews 11:3 speaks specifically against the idea that Genesis 1 is referring to pre-existing material that God brought into order and function—the φαινομένων (“visible things,” i.e., the material universe), the text tells us, did *not* come into being from what was already there.

The Greek verb γίνομαι and the Hebrew verb הָיָה that it translates in Genesis 1 both refer to “existence” or “being” or

²⁵ Arndt, et al., 196-197.

“coming into being²⁶”; but Walton argues in his second proposition that in the ANE, even existence itself was viewed in functional rather than material terms:

In this book I propose that people in the ancient world believed that something existed not by virtue of its material properties, *but by virtue of its having a function in an ordered system* Unless something is integrated into a working, ordered system, it does not exist. Consequently, the actual creative act is to assign something its functioning role in the ordered system. That is what brings it into existence.²⁷

By this reasoning, the Hebrew and Greek verbs used in the text and translation of Genesis 1 would be limited to the assignment of function rather than (material) creation *ex nihilo*; but, again, the question is not what ANE people thought it meant to “exist” but what God thinks it means to “exist.”

God’s concept of existence as he has revealed it in the Scriptures does not appear to be so limited. God defines “being” or “existence” first and foremost in terms of himself and his own existence. When Moses asked God’s name, God’s reply was:

(Exod 3:14) And God said to Moses, “I AM who I AM.”	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־ מֹשֶׁה אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה
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God’s use of the verb **היה** to refer to his completely non-contingent and self-referential existence does not appear to be limited to his “function” (whatever that may be). Since God “existed” before his creation of anything that could be considered to have “function,” God’s conception of what it means to “exist” does not appear to be *limited* to function *only*. Certainly, the contingent and derivative “existence” of the creation *includes*

²⁶ Ibid.; Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 243-44.

²⁷ Walton, *Lost World of Genesis One*, 26-27 (emphasis original).

whatever function God intended; but the alleged non-interest of ANE idolaters is not sufficient reason to *exclude* creation *ex nihilo* from the biblical accounts.

Although Walton does acknowledge that interest in material origins had begun to increase by the time the NT was written (meaning, therefore, that NT texts such as Colossians 1:16-17 might include both the material and functional²⁸), he does not appear willing to acknowledge the similarities of terminology and usage between these texts and Genesis 1 (LXX). If the authors of the inspired texts of John, Colossians, and Hebrews were referring to creation *ex nihilo* using nearly identical terminology to the text that formed their entire theological foundation (Gen 1-3 [LXX]), then there appears to be even less reason to exclude creation *ex nihilo* from Genesis 1.

Which Came First, the Distortion or the Truth?

Scholars such as John Currid have identified and analyzed the polemical nature of much of the OT. Currid applies the idea of polemical theology to the OT in this way:

The primary purpose of polemical theology is to demonstrate emphatically and graphically the distinctions between the worldview of the Hebrews and the beliefs and practices of the rest of the ancient Near East. It helps to show that Hebrew thought is not a mere mouthpiece of other ancient Near Eastern cultures.²⁹

As Currid explains, the manner in which Genesis 1 in particular was put into writing strongly suggests a corrective against competing ANE religions. He cites three examples in which Genesis 1 appears to speak against ANE creation myths: the תַּנִּינִים (“great sea creatures”), which are rebellious deities in ANE mythology but mere creations of YHWH, the celestial bodies (Gen 1:14-18) that have divine significance in ANE mythology but are material objects created by YHWH for mankind’s benefit, and the מַיִם (“[primeval] waters”) which

²⁸ Walton, *Lost World of Genesis One*, 96-97.

²⁹ John D. Currid, *Against the Gods: The Polemical Theology of the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 25.

represent primordial chaos in ANE mythology but are nothing more than the starting point of YHWH's creation.³⁰

Although Currid's argument about the polemical force of Genesis 1 is well-reasoned, the question still remains of how the Sumerian, Egyptian, and Babylonian creation stories originated. With all the similarities between each other and the early chapters of Genesis, it appears highly unlikely that the ancients could have all made up the same story independently of each other. But how could they have all borrowed from a text that would not be written for at least another thousand years?

Any proposed answer to this question would be mostly in the realm of speculation, but Genesis 9 does provide a possible clue. Once the flood waters had subsided and Noah's family had left the ark, God made a covenant with Noah and the rest of humanity using terminology nearly identical to Genesis 1. In addition to God's repetition of humanity's creation in his image (Gen 9:6, 1:27), God also reiterated the (pro)creation mandate:

(Gen 9:1) And God blessed Noah and his sons, and he said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."	וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־ נֹחַ וְאֶת־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ
(Gen 1:28) And God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it."	וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְכִבְשֶׁהָ

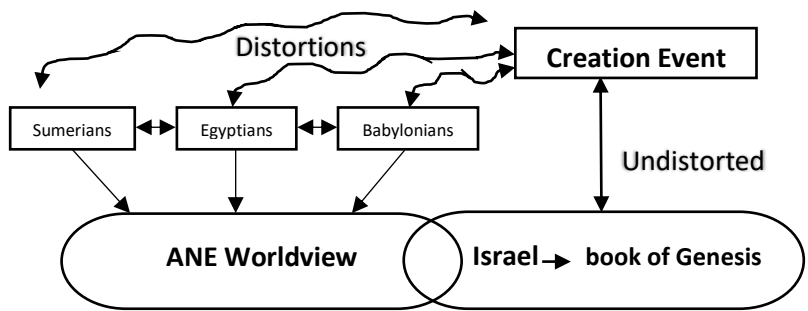
God's ongoing provision of food for man and beast is similarly echoed with some slight modifications:

³⁰ Ibid., 44-45.

(Gen 9:3) Every moving thing that is itself alive will be for you as food; As I gave to you the green plant, I give all.	כָּל־רֶמֶשׂ אֲשֶׁר הוּא־חַי לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ כִּי־רָק עֵשָׂב נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת־כָּל
(Gen 1:29) And God said, “Behold, I give to you every plant bearing seeds that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of the tree bearing seeds; it will be for you as food.”	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת־ כָּל־עֵשָׂב זֶרַע זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת־כָּל־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר־בוֹ פֶּרִי־עֵץ זֶרַע זֶרַע לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ

One reasonable (though speculative) possibility is that YHWH communicated to Noah and his sons the *entire* creation story during the course of his post-flood communication with them in which he established his covenant (Gen 9:1-17). Noah’s sons then began the oral transmission of what would become Genesis 1-9, and somewhere along the way it began to get distorted by idolatrous humanity (Rom 1:18-23) until these distortions were eventually written down in the form of the various ANE creation stories. Then, once YHWH had chosen and established a nation for himself (Gen 12:1-3; Exod 19:4-6), he then revealed to his people the actual un-distorted creation story that had been twisted along the way.

In that case, the relationship between the ANE worldview and the book of Genesis would be more accurately depicted thus:



Since all truth ultimately originates in the one true God, the truth of the creation event would by definition have to precede any

subsequent distortions of it. Impossible though it may be to determine exactly how much the ancients knew about the actual creation event (or at what point the distortions began), both the event itself and the truth about it that eventually became Genesis 1 have both *theological* and *chronological* priority over the ANE distortions of it. Without truth there can be no suppression of truth (Rom 1:18), and without possession of truth there can be no exchange of truth for a lie (Rom 1:25).

Conclusion

Walton correctly warns against reading modern cultural perspectives back into ANE texts. In particular, he consistently claims that the modern Western preoccupation with materialism and the material world has *a priori* ruled out any option other than a material ontology:

Most interpreters have generally thought that Genesis 1 contains an account of material origins because that was the only sort of origins that our material culture was interested in. It wasn't that scholars examined all the possible levels at which origins could be discussed; they presupposed the material aspect.³¹

Walton may be correct that modern Westerners are far more concerned with material origins than ANE peoples were, but materialism is not the only kind of eisegesis. There is also a modern Western cultural value called *pluralism* that tends to treat all religions as morally and theologically equivalent and therefore all possessing an equal claim to truth:

...the views of deity in the ancient world served as the context for Israel's understanding of deity. It is true that the God of the Bible is far different from the gods of the ancient cultures. But Israel understood its God in reference to what others around them believed.³²

³¹ Ibid., 44.

³² Ibid., 13.

By evaluating the God of the Bible and the deities of the Ancient Near East in terms of *similarities* and *differences* rather than *truth* and *falsehood*, Walton is reading modern Western pluralism back into the text of Scripture; the God of Israel may have been different from ANE deities, but ANE concepts about deity formed the basis of Israel's conception of who God is. By this reasoning, the ANE was nothing more than a marketplace of religious opinion, and the Israelites just wanted to be different from everyone else.

This is exactly the opposite of what the Bible teaches. The one true God is not understood in reference to anyone or anything other than himself (Exod 3:14), and any competing claim of deity is false by definition since there is only one actual God (Isa 45:5). The point that has consistently been lost in discussions about the book of Genesis and ANE literature is not where the similarities and differences are *located* but where the similarities and differences *came from*.

The lost truth of Genesis is simply this: the ANE worldview was *not* theologically neutral. Even if it is correct to say that ANE people were interested only in functional origins and not in material origins, this corresponding interest/non-interest was the result of the most fundamental rejection of God: worshiping the creation rather than the Creator and thereby blurring, if not completely obliterating, the ontological distinction between the two. Any worldview that rejects such a foundational truth of Scripture is by definition incapable of forming its interpretive foundation. There is no middle ground between light and darkness. There is no "third way." Either the one true God is transcendent and ontologically distinct from his creation, or some number of false gods are ontologically conflated with the creation.

While the Bible is certainly clear that the one true God wants his people to understand how the universe functions in all of its various types of created order, the Bible is equally clear that the one true God also wants his people to understand and uphold the ontological distinction between the material universe and its transcendent Creator. Regardless of whether ANE people (or even God's people) were interested in material origins or not, God *is* interested in his people understanding the material origins

of his creation so that his people do not fall into the same kind of idolatry that darkened the Ancient Near East.

Worship as Divider and Unifier: A Comparison of the Reformation with Contemporary Evangelism

Scott Aniol

Abstract: Differences over worship philosophy and practice were central in preventing full unity among sixteenth-century Reformers, even while they were united in many central theological convictions. Traditional psalmody, hymnody, and liturgy, however, helped promote appropriate unity across denominational lines. Contemporary evangelical practice blurs important denominational distinctives through the Praise and Worship movement and the Church Growth movement. Praise and Worship theology and seeker-sensitive worship theology contribute toward minimizing important doctrinal matters, partly because they elevate musical style as being central to church identity.

Key Words: Evangelicalism, Reformed, Praise and Worship, Church Growth, liturgy, denominationalism, psalmody, hymnody

Differences in Worship Theology as Key Denominational Distinctives

Church historians have suggested different ways of understanding denominations that emerged in the wake of the Reformation. I will suggest here that one plausible way to understand them is, in the words of David Dockery,

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“through the window of liturgy and worship.”² Indeed, a brief examination of how denominations developed during the Reformation reveals that worship theology and practice played a much more significant role in denominational divisions among emerging Protestant groups than other core theological beliefs. Although the Reformers generally agreed concerning central doctrines of justification and biblical authority, their disagreements about worship issues such as the Lord’s Table, baptism, and how Scripture regulated worship practice were what ultimately led to irreconcilable divisions.

The Lord’s Table

This tendency to division is perhaps no more true than with understanding and practice of baptism and the Lord’s Table. In the early years of the Reformation, differences over the Lord’s Table presented one of the most divisive issues. For example, although the Reformers agreed in their repudiation of transubstantiation, Luther and Zwingli could not come to a consensus on the meaning of “this is my body” (Luke 22:19), the only one of fifteen articles at the 1529 Marburg Colloquy the Zwinglians could not sign. Zwingli insisted that Christ was present only at the Father’s right hand and that the elements of the Lord’s Supper were a memorial only, while Luther argued that Christ could also be literally present in sacramental union with the elements.³ Calvin maintained his own unique understanding of the presence of Christ in the Supper, asserting that Christ was not actually present in the elements but that “all that Christ himself is and has is conveyed” to believers through

² David S. Dockery, “So Many Denominations: The Rise, Decline, and Future of Denominationalism,” in *Southern Baptists, Evangelicals, and the Future of Denominationalism*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 10–11.

³ Details of the Marburg Colloquy between Luther and Zwingli are described in Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works, Vol. 38: Word and Sacrament IV*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 38 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999), 15–89.

the Spirit of Christ at the Supper,⁴ a view that prevented him from fully unifying with the others as well.

Baptism

Luther and Zwingli agreed on the matter of baptism at Marburg, but this ordinance has created denominational division with others. Tom Wells cites four separate categories of disagreement on the matter of baptism: mode (immersion, affusion, and aspersion), proper candidates (paedobaptism vs. credobaptism), proper administration (an issue for groups like Landmark Baptists and Churches of Christ), and effect.⁵ Each of these categories became significant matters over which various groups coalesced into denominations. Most of the early Reformers agreed with Rome on candidates for baptism (infants) but disagreed over its effects. Rome taught that a baptized infant was forgiven for both original and actual sin. According to a Papal Bull of 1439,

The effect of this sacrament is the remission of all sin, original and actual; likewise of all punishment which is due for sin. As a consequence, no satisfaction for past sins is enjoined upon those who are baptized; and if they die before they commit any sin, they attain immediately to the kingdom of heaven and the vision of God.⁶

Lutherans believed that faith was a prerequisite for baptism but insisted that infants could exercise faith. He claimed,

[The infant] comes to Christ in baptism, as John came to him, and as the children were brought to him, that his word and work might be effective in them, move them, and make them holy, because his

⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 4.14.12.

⁵ Tom Wells, "Baptism and the Unity of Christians," *Reformation and Revival* 8, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 100-08.

⁶ Pope Eugene IV, in the Bull "Exultate Deo" (1439). See Charles George Herbermann, ed., *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*, vol. 2 (New York: Appleton, 1907), 259.

Word and work cannot be without fruit. Yet it has this effect alone in the child. Were it to fail here it would fail everywhere and be in vain, which is impossible.⁷

Calvin taught that “infants are baptized into future repentance and faith, and even though these have not yet been formed in them, the seed of both lies hidden within them by the secret working of the Spirit.”⁸ Baptists, however (as Anabaptists before them), differed most significantly from other groups by insisting, to quote the London Confession of 1644, that baptism “is an Ordinance of the New Testament, given by Christ, to be dispensed only upon persons professing faith. . . . The way and manner of the dispensing of this Ordinance the Scripture holds out to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water.”⁹

The Regulative Principle of Worship

In addition to differences over theology and practice of the ordinances, disagreements over the authority of Scripture upon worship practice also led to denominational division. As with the Lord’s Supper, Luther and Zwingli could not agree on this point. Luther taught

whatever is free, that is, neither commanded nor prohibited, by which one can neither sin or obtain merit, this should be in our control as something subject to our reason so that we might employ it or not employ it, uphold it or drop it, according to our pleasure and need, without sinning and endangering our conscience.¹⁰

Zwingli disagreed, insisting that worship practices must have explicit biblical warrant, leading him to denounce images, other ceremonial adornments, and even music from public worship since he could find no warrant for them in the New Testament.

⁷ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 40: *Church and Ministry II*, ed. Jaroslav Jan; Oswald Pelikan, vol. 40 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 244.

⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.16.20.

⁹ *London Confession* in H. Leon McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 50.

¹⁰ Luther, *LW* 38, 38:319.

He insisted, “Show me that it is good and I will believe it to be good. God alone is good and the sole source of all good things.”¹¹ Calvin agreed in principle with Zwingli’s regulative principle of worship, arguing that “a part of the reverence that is paid to [God] consists simply in worshiping him as he commands, mingling no inventions of our own.”¹² Calvin did, however, allow unaccompanied, unison psalm singing, since he found support for such practices in Scripture. He insisted,

The psalms incite us to praise God, to pray to Him, to meditate on his works to the end that we love Him, fear, honor and glorify Him. What St. Augustine says is quite true, one can not sing anything more worthy of God than that which we have received from Him.¹³

The regulative principle of worship also came to define Reformed denominations, perhaps best seen in the well-known statement from the Westminster Confession:

But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.

The principle likewise served as a distinctive of early English Particular Baptists, whose 1689 Confession repeated the Westminster statement almost verbatim.¹⁴ Denominations such as the Church of England ascribed to a position more closely resembling that of Luther.

Thus, today one could explain the differences between the Reformers by irreconcilable disagreements in specific areas of

¹¹ Quoted in Charles Garside, *Zwingli and the Arts* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1966), 38, 44.

¹² Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.10.23.

¹³ From the preface to the Genevan Psalter, quoted in Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship: Reformed According to Scripture*, Revised and expanded (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 45.

¹⁴ See Matthew W. Ward, “Pure Worship: The Early English Baptist Distinctive” (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013).

worship theology and practice. Roman Catholics hold to baptismal regeneration, to the doctrine of transubstantiation in the Mass, and to a normative principle of worship. Lutherans reject transubstantiation in favor of sacramental union, practice a non-regenerative paedobaptism, and are governed by a normative principle, with Anglicans holding to very similar views with differences in polity. Presbyterians affirm a spiritual presence of Christ in the Supper, practice a non-regenerative paedobaptism, and shape their worship according to the regulative principle. Baptists ascribe to the Zwinglian/Anabaptist memorial view of the Table, practice credobaptism by immersion, and traditionally followed the regulative principle.¹⁵

Traditional Worship as Cross-Denominational Unifier

Psalmody and Hymnody

One specific matter of worship practice that was not mentioned in the previous section is music. On the one hand, music does present another example of an issue that historically divided the Reformers. For example, Luther promoted the liberal use of psalms and hymns in worship, Zwingli prohibited music altogether, and Calvin limited singing to psalms without instrumental accompaniment.

However, this division can be interpreted primarily as a result of the more significant matter of the regulative principle vs. the normative principle, as discussed above. All three Reformers agreed concerning good music's spiritual benefits and cautioned against the degenerating influence of some music.¹⁶ What separated them is whether they believed they had biblical warrant for particular musical practices (or, in Luther's case, whether biblical warrant was even necessary).

Furthermore, even though differences over the governing principle of worship did lead to distinctions in practice with worship music, groups springing from these early Reformers

¹⁵ I use the past tense here because the regulative principle of worship is not characteristic of a majority of American Baptists today.

¹⁶ See Robert Loman Harrell, "A Comparison of Secular Elements in the Chorales of Martin Luther with Rock Elements in Church Music of the 1960's and 1970's" (Bob Jones University, 1975).

shared their songs across denominational lines. For example, many of the earliest Lutheran hymns were translations of Latin texts from the Roman Church. Examples include “*Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr*” (Nicolaus Decius, 1523) from the Latin “*Gloria in excelsis*,” “*Komm, Heiliger Geist*” (Martin Luther, 1523) from “*Veni, Sancte Spiritus*” (Pope Innocent III, thirteenth c.), and “*Christum wir sollen loben schon*” (Martin Luther, 1524) from “*A solis ortus cardine*” (Caelius Sedulius, fifth c.). Lutheran chorale texts, in turn, were brought to the Anglican tradition, first through Myles Coverdale’s *Goostly Psalmes and Spirituall Songes drawen out of the Holy Scripture* (c. 1535–1536). According to Reynolds and Music, “Of its 41 hymns, 36 were translations from German sources, one of which was the first English version of *En’feste Burg*.”¹⁷ Other Lutheran hymn texts were delivered to other denominations through the translations of those like Methodist John Wesley. An example is “Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness” (1740) from “*Christi Blut und Gerechtigkeit*” by Nikolaus von Zinzendorf (1739), Anglican Catherine Winkworth, whose translations include “All Glory be to God on High” (1863) from “*Allein Gott in der Höh sei Her*,” “Come, Holy Spirit, God and Lord” (1855) from “*Komm, Heiliger Geist*,” “Now Thank We All Our God” (1858) from “*Nun Danket Alle Gott*” (Martin Rinkart, 1636), and “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” (1863) from “*Lobe den Herren*” (Joachim Neander, 1680). Additionally, the Genevan Psalter arose out of the psalmody-only Calvinist tradition, but “within little more than a decade it was translated into several other European languages,”¹⁸ which at that time would imply transdenominational influence.

This transdenominational use of traditional psalms and hymns continued well into later centuries. For example, in 2002 Stephen Marini conducted a study of 86 of the most significant American evangelical hymnals from 1737 to 1860 and compiled a list of those hymns that were published in at least one third of the hymnals. Marini comments on what he discovered:

¹⁷ William J Reynolds and David W. Music, *A Survey of Christian Hymnody*, 5th ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing Company, 2010), 63.

¹⁸ Reynolds and Music, *Survey*, 50.

The most popular evangelical hymns cited in this essay were transdenominational, all of them published outside their original denominational family as well as within it, and published more times than can be accounted for by that family's hymnals alone. Their inclusion on the most popular list indicates precisely that they circulated beyond the confines of editorial opinion or denominational identity. Therefore although actual use of hymns cannot be empirically determined, transdenominational hymns with high frequency of publication can reasonably be assumed to have been genuinely popular and used more generally than any others.¹⁹

Similarly, in 2011 Robert T. Coote surveyed 4,905 hymns in the 28 hymnals of six mainline Protestant denominations from 1883 to 2006, and analyzed the 13 hymns that appeared in every hymnal, 9 that appeared in 27, and 5 that appeared in 26, observing that the hymns manifested transdenominational popularity.²⁰

Yet, this unity across denominational lines through the sharing of hymns did not blur the important theological and practical distinctions between the denominations. In other words, the use of hymns from outside a particular denomination did not cause those in the denomination to weaken their denominational loyalty. This is largely due to the fact that the psalms and hymns that crossed denominational boundaries were catholic in doctrine and thus avoided expressions that were unique to the denomination of the author. Coote in particular notes that the most used hymns "focus on such foundational themes as the enduring triumph of the Cross, assurance in the ultimate rule of Jesus, and prayer for the continuing experience of God's love."²¹

¹⁹ Stephen Marini, "Hymnody as History: Early Evangelical Hymns and the Recovery of American Popular Religion," *Church History* 71, no. 2 (June 2002): 279.

²⁰ Robert T. Coote, "The Hymns That Keep on Going," *Christianity Today* 55, no. 3 (March 2011): 30–32.

²¹ Coote, "Hymns that Keep on Going," 32.

The other factor that influenced the transdenominational nature of traditional psalmody and hymnody is the fact that tunes were exchanged liberally between psalm/hymn texts and thus across denominational lines as well. For example, Luther borrowed tunes from Gregorian chant and other Roman Catholic office hymns for his early German hymns. Examples include *All Ehr' Und Lob Soll Gottes Sein* (*Kirchengesangbuch*, Strassburg, 1541) from the tenth-century *Gloria tempore paschali* and *Kyrie, Gott Vater In Ewigkeit* (c. 1541) from the tenth-century *Kyrie fons bonitatis*. Further, many tunes originally composed for Lutherans were transplanted when their corresponding texts were translated and brought into other denominations. Likewise, tunes from the Genevan Psalter made their way into the Anglican Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter, primarily through the Anglo-Genevan Psalter. This Psalter, which contained English versifications for all the Genevan tunes, was created while English Protestants lived in exile in Geneva during the reign of Queen Mary (reigned 1553–1558).²² The lasting influence of Genevan psalm singing upon Anglican practice can be seen in the use of several common tunes such as OLD 100TH by Louis Bourgeois (originally Psalm 134 in the Genevan Psalter).

This practice of borrowing traditional tunes from other denominations continues to this day. Paul Westermeyer notes this when in 2005, after surveying hymn tunes in fourteen denominational hymnals from 1978 forward, he observed that “the tunes we use cross our confessional divisions, and their number is small enough to form a common core. In spite of our fractures, we still tend to sing a common song.”²³ He found 179 tunes common to 9 or more of the hymnals and 147 texts common to those tunes that “come from the fourth to the twentieth centuries and from across the whole gamut of the church's liturgical year, occasions, and themes.”²⁴

²² Reynolds and Music, *Survey*, 51–52.

²³ Paul Westermeyer, *Let the People Sing: Hymn Tunes in Perspective* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2005), 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Liturgy

Another worship element that has encouraged transdenominational unity while preserving denominational distinctives is traditional liturgy. While each of the Reformers reshaped their liturgies to greater or lesser degrees in response to Roman Catholic abuses, most post-Reformation denominational groups traditionally preserved a similar shape to their worship services. For example, in his 1523 *Formula Missae*, Luther retained most of the pre-Tridentine Roman liturgy, the only substantial change being in the language of the Canon, stating, “It would be good to keep the whole liturgy with its music, omitting only the canon.”²⁵ He explained, “It is not now nor ever has been our intention to abolish the liturgical service of God completely, but rather to purify the one that is now in use from the wretched accretions which corrupt it and to point out an evangelical use.”²⁶ Even in his 1526 *Deutsche Messe*, Luther preserved much of the shape of the liturgy, simply replacing Latin elements with vernacular hymns and readings. Likewise, John Calvin, despite his strict adherence to the regulative principle, nevertheless also reflected the shape of the pre-Tridentine liturgy, though much simplified, in his Genevan liturgy.

As Bryan Chappell notes, “where the truths of the gospel are maintained there remain commonalities of worship structure that transcend culture”²⁷ and, I would add, denomination. Groups with various denominational identity have traditionally shared a liturgical shape of revelation, adoration, confession, assurance, thanksgiving, petition, instruction, charge, and blessing.²⁸ As

²⁵ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 54: Table Talk*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 54 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999), 361.

²⁶ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 53 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999), 20.

²⁷ Bryan Chappell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 8.

²⁸ Others have made this observation including Robert B Rayburn, *O Come Let Us Worship: Corporate Worship in the Evangelical Church*

with traditional psalmody and hymnody, this common worship structure allowed Christians of various denominations to share an appropriate unity while maintaining their important distinctiveness.

Worship Movements that Have Contributed to Denominational Decline

As the previous sections have shown, while differences over worship theology and practice have been one of the most significant dividers between post-Reformation denominations, traditional psalmody, hymnody, and liturgy provided a means by which distinct denominations were able to enjoy an appropriate catholicity while at the same time maintaining necessary theological and practical boundaries.

This delicate balance between healthy unity and appropriate diversity among denominations has been diminished, however, in more recent worship trends. Indeed, as the following section will show, contemporary worship movements have significantly contributed to denominational decline,²⁹ primarily due to the emergence of music style as an essential feature in church identity.

Praise and Worship

The first contemporary worship movement to contribute to denomination decline I will explore is the Praise and Worship movement, which emerged out of the Charismatic movement of

(Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980); Constance M Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010); James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013); Robbie F. Castleman, *Story-Shaped Worship: Following Patterns from the Bible and History* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013); Mike Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church's Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

²⁹ By “denomination decline,” I am less concerned with denominational organizations as I am with diminishing the key theological and practical distinctives that have traditionally defined denominations.

the 1960s.³⁰ Whereas Pentecostalism had produced its own denominations,³¹ the Charismatic movement infiltrated traditional denominations, largely due to the rising popularity of the contemporary music styles of charismatic Praise and Worship, which some saw as a force that would end denominationalism altogether in the name of ecumenical unity.³²

Christopher J. Ellis observes that charismatic worship contributed to “what we may call a ‘pan-evangelical culture’ with its contemporary expression in music and informal worship.”³³ Randall Bradley agrees:

In recent decades, as denominational lines have blurred, Free Churches have been most influenced by music that finds its origins in the charismatic stream, of which “Praise and Worship” is the best known.³⁴

The importance of contemporary music styles in this movement flows directly from its theology of worship. Breaking from a more confessional liturgical structure, Praise and Worship instead aims to bring the worshiper through a series of emotional stages from rousing “praise” to intimate “worship.”³⁵ This progression through which worshipers are helped to experience “the manifest presence of God” is engineered primarily through musical style.³⁶ Judson Cornwall encourages worship leaders to

³⁰ Brian D. Walwrath, *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 14.

³¹ Examples include Foursquare and Assemblies of God.

³² See Margaret M. Poloma, *The Charismatic Movement: Is There a New Pentecost?* (Boston: Twayne, 1982), 202.

³³ Christopher J. Ellis, “Duty and Delight: Baptist Worship and Identity,” *Review & Expositor* 100, no. 3 (June 1, 2003): 337.

³⁴ C. Randall Bradley, “Congregational Song as Shaper of Theology: A Contemporary Assessment,” *Review & Expositor* 100, no. 3 (June 1, 2003): 353.

³⁵ See Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 70. “By contrast, the worship of the charismatic renewal movements lost some of its gospel shape and became more distinguished by the emotional flow of the service.”

³⁶ Judson Cornwall, *Let Us Worship* (Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Pub., 1983), 146.

begin with enthusiastic songs of thanksgiving, leading the worshipers to an emotional “soulful worship,” and then bringing the mood to an intimate expression where “a gentle sustained chord on the organ and a song of the Spirit on the lips of the leaders should be more than sufficient to carry a worship response of the entire congregation for a protracted period of time.”³⁷ This change in theology of worship led to a new understanding of worship music perhaps best described by Ruth Ann Ashton’s 1993 *God’s Presence through Music*.³⁸ This raised the matter of musical style to a level of significance that Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth describe as “musical sacramentality,” where music is now considered a primary means through which “God’s presence could be encountered in worship.”³⁹ As Chapell notes, “In this modern tradition, contemporary praise music has been the prime instrument to lead worshipers from celebration to contemplation to preparation for preaching. In fact, what many think of as ‘contemporary worship’ is defined only by the style of music.”⁴⁰

Because of the transdenominational influence of charismatic theology and the Praise and Worship movement, this philosophy and method of worship that places a high emphasis on musical style to bring people to an experience of worship has influenced many non-charismatic churches as well. According to a 2010 study by Faith Communities Today, the percentage of Protestant churches characterized by contemporary Praise and Worship rose from 29% in 2000 to 43% in 2010. The percentage change was even higher when they factored out mainline denominations and focused exclusively on Evangelical Protestants (from 35% to 51%).⁴¹ Today, the worship in a majority of evangelical churches is more characterized by Praise and Worship philosophy and

³⁷ Ibid., 158.

³⁸ Ruth Ann Ashton, *God’s Presence through Music* (South Bend, IN: Lesea Publishing, 1993).

³⁹ Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth, *Lovin’ on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2017), 18.

⁴⁰ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 70.

⁴¹ Marjorie H. Royle, “Facts on Worship: 2010” (Faith Communities Today, 2010), 12.

contemporary music than by traditional practices rooted in the Reformation or earlier.

Church Growth

The church growth movement built off this tendency to define a church's identity by musical style and recognized it as a technique to grow a church.⁴² Church growth leaders such as Ed Dobson insisted that musical style was an essential element of church growth:

We wanted a musical style that would elicit a response. Unchurched people come to a service hesitantly. Their mind-set is "you're not going to get me." Their defenses are up. We felt that a style of music that would get them moving in a physical way (nodding heads and tapping feet) would help break down their defenses.⁴³

Rick Warren agrees:

The style of music you choose to use in your services will be one of the most critical (and controversial) decisions you make in the life of your church. It may also be *the* most influential factor in determining who your church reaches for Christ and whether or not your church grows. You must match your music to the kind of people God wants your church to reach.⁴⁴

Randall Bradley notes the similarity between the Praise and Worship Movement and the church growth Movement in their emphasis upon music style as central to church identity:

In addition to "Praise and Worship," other elements that have significantly influenced congregational song include the increasing

⁴² Walwrath, *Message in the Music*, 14.

⁴³ Edward G. Dobson, *Starting a Seeker Sensitive Service: How Traditional Churches Can Reach the Unchurched* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 42–43.

⁴⁴ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 280. Emphasis original.

popularity of Contemporary Christian Music, the influence of the Church Growth Movement with its emphasis on “user friendly” worship.⁴⁵

This has further contributed to the blurring of denominational distinctives in favor of nondenominational churches. John P. Dever notes that megachurches, even though they often remain part of a denomination, nevertheless tend to form a new kind of church that is its own denomination.⁴⁶

Both the Praise and Worship and church growth movements emphasize musical style as a predominant feature of a church above traditional doctrinal and ecclesiastical distinctives⁴⁷ such that an increasing number of evangelical Christians today choose their church based on worship style over traditional confessional reasons. As David Holeton observes, “When people move from one region of the country to another or even to another part of the city, denomination is less and less their first criterion in finding a new parish.” Instead, people choose their church more based on the style of worship and programs the church has to offer.⁴⁸ In a 2009 study of megachurches, researchers found that worship style was the number one factor that attracted attenders to megachurches, with denominational affiliation eighth on the list under the church reputation, music/arts, and adult programs.⁴⁹ Likewise, a 2016 Pew Research study demonstrated that 74% of Americans searching for a church based their decision on

⁴⁵ Bradley, “Congregational Song as Shaper of Theology,” 354.

⁴⁶ John P. Dever, “Fading Denominationalism: New Concepts of Church,” *Review & Expositor* 90, no. 4 (September 1, 1993): 511–12.

⁴⁷ These are not the only two factors that contributed to a new focus on the importance of contemporary worship. Lim and Ruth list five factors including youth culture, Pentecostalism, the baby boomer generation, the Jesus People, and the church growth movement (Lim and Ruth, *Lovin’ on Jesus*, 16–22).

⁴⁸ David R. Holeton, “‘Religion Without Denomination? The Significance of Denominations for Church and Society’: Some Reactions,” *Communio Viatorum* 44 (January 1, 2002): 40.

⁴⁹ Scott Thumma and Warren Bird, “Not Who You Think They Are: The Real Story of People Who Attend America’s Megachurches” (Hartford, CT: Hartford Institute for Religious Research, 2009), 15.

worship style,⁵⁰ and a 2017 Gallup poll showed music to be a major factor in choosing a church, more important than any doctrinal or denominational concerns.⁵¹

Conclusion

Since the Reformation, worship theology and practice has always been central to denominational distinctiveness. Yet psalmody, hymnody, and liturgy have traditionally provided a means for appropriate unity across denominational lines without diminishing the importance of theological matters. Contemporary worship trends, however, have raised musical style to a place of prominence that tends to make style more important for a church's identity than doctrinal issues.

What distinguishes traditional songs and liturgy from contemporary Praise and Worship songs and liturgy in this study is not the transdenominational character of their lyrics or tunes; this is a characteristic feature of most successful congregational songs throughout history. What distinguishes them is the importance placed upon the contemporaneity of musical style in each category. On the one hand, traditional psalms, hymns, and liturgy were both transdenominational and transcultural. Westermeyer describes this characteristic after noting the traditional hymns that have been used in multiple denominations:

That song, from Baptists to Roman Catholics, relies on a common core that has not been coopted by cultural fads, but sings out the subversive message of liberation in Christ in spite of all the forces—no matter how large—that are arrayed against it.⁵²

Contemporary worship songs and structure, however, reflect current culture rather than transcend it, and thus “relevant”

⁵⁰ Pew Research Center, “Choosing a New Church or House of Worship,” *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*, August 23, 2016, <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2016/08/Choosing-Congregations-08-19-FULL-PDF-for-web-2.pdf>.

⁵¹ Lydia Saad, “Sermon Content Is What Appeals Most to Churchgoers,” Gallup News Service, April 14, 2017, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/208529/sermon-content-appeals-churchgoers.aspx>.

⁵² Westermeyer, *Let the People Sing*, 8.

stylistic matters and appealing to particular cultural demographics have become central to a church's identity rather than important confessional matters that have historically defined denominations in the wake of the Reformation.

Music is often blamed as the cause of division within the body of Christ, yet what this study has demonstrated is that contemporary worship movements have actually blurred necessary confessional divisions, creating a form of unity, but not around doctrine—this new unity is around style of music. The Reformation example of necessary division due to legitimate differences and appropriate unity through the use of universal psalms, hymns, and liturgy should serve as a lesson for Evangelical churches today. As John Calvin insisted, even as one who attempted to foster unity among the disparate Reformation churches,⁵³ “Those who wish to build the church by rejecting the doctrine of the Word build a pigsty, and not the church of God.”⁵⁴

⁵³ See W. Stanford Reid, “The Ecumenicalism of John Calvin,” *WJT* 11, no. 1 (November 1948): 30–43.

⁵⁴ Cited in Joel R. Beeke, “The Church's Unity,” *Reformation and Revival* 8, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 69.

The Influence of Church on Wellbeing in Adolescents and Millennials

William C. Stewart, D. Scott Barfoot,
Jeanette A. Stewart, and Lindsay A. Nelson

Abstract: This study evaluates the associations of the church, as well as its members and leadership, to wellbeing in adolescents and millennials. Subjects were surveyed about their background, personal wellbeing (feeling healthy and happy), their Christian walk, and how church affected their wellbeing. In total, 884 participants were surveyed of which the majority of participants attended church 4 or more times/month (80%); were female (73%); age 18-30 (39%); lived in the USA (56%); and were evangelical (77%). The 3 greatest church influences on wellbeing were prayer (59%); spiritual growth (56%); and praise and worship (54%). The 3 most influential factors from church leadership on wellbeing were Bible-based teaching and preaching (75%); Bible-based speech (51%); and powerful biblical vision for the church (44%). The survey results indicate that the church today is influencing the personal wellbeing of youth and millennial believers around the world.

Key Words: Millennials, Adolescents, wellbeing, church, leadership

When asked about the role of the New Testament church, biblical teachers often emphasize four primary functions of (a) worship, (b) education, (c) fellowship,

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and (d) evangelism as exemplified in Acts 2:42-47.⁵ Following Pentecost, the apostle Peter preached the resurrected Jesus as Lord and Messiah. In response, about three thousand people were so deeply moved that they repented of sin and were baptized—giving birth to the church (v. 41).

This community of new believers in Jesus “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching⁶ and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42 NIV). A spirit of awe, and worship imbued everyone as they watched God work through the apostles and many individuals who experienced profound renewal and transformation.

The believing community was uniquely characterized by mutual care, concern and generosity⁷ as they looked not only to their own interests, but to the needs of others (v. 45). The early church gave life, purpose, hope, forgiveness, healing, belonging and a sense of wellbeing to those who believed and gathered

⁵ J. Scott Horrell, “Freeing Cross-Cultural Church Planting with New Testament Essentials,” *BibSac* 174, no. 694 (April 2017): 210-25; Charles R. Swindoll, *The Bride: Renewing Our Passion for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Wayne C. Gruden, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1994); Grudem asserts three purposes of the church: (1) Ministry to God; Worship; (2) Ministry to Believers: Nurture; and (3) Ministry to the World: Evangelism and Mercy (867-68); Steven J. Lawson, “The Priority of Biblical Preaching: An Expository Study of Acts 2:42-47,” *BibSac* 158, no. 630 (April 2001): 198-217.

⁶ See Kuruvilla’s definition of a vision for preaching: “Biblical preaching by a leader of a church in a gathering of Christians for worship is the communication of the thrust of a pericope of Scripture discerned by theological exegesis, and of its application to that specific body of believers, that they may be conformed to the image of Christ for the glory of God, all in the power of the Holy Spirit.” p. 260; (Abraham Kuruvilla, “Theological Exegesis,” *BibSac* 173, no. 691 [July-September 2016]: 259-72); For a detailed discussion of the “breaking of bread” and the Lord’s Supper, see Dr. Michael Svigel’s blog post “Should We Celebrate the Lord’s Supper Every Sunday in Church?,” *RetroChristianity*, April 20, 2012, <http://bit.ly/2KUXZm9>; and book, Michael J. Svigel, *RetroChristianity: Reclaiming the Forgotten Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

⁷ Edmund P. Clowney and Gerald L. Bray, *The Church: Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995.)

together in wondrous praise and communion.⁸ There was a peace with God and one another—a shalom⁹—that permeated this growing community of believers. “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47b). The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines wellbeing as: the state of feeling healthy and happy. Wellbeing is not a typical biblical word; it is used in the medical literature. Consequently, we use it as a word to bridge the gap between the medical literature and the Bible. Surrogate markers for wellbeing in the Bible are contentment, joy, and peace.

Like the early church, when the local church today fulfills its vital function of worship, instruction, fellowship, and outreach, it too brings glory to God and wellbeing to the body of Christ. But what is the church’s influence on the personal wellbeing of church going believers, particularly to adolescents and millennials who are the next generation of Christ followers? This question is important as discouragement appears typical in today’s church regarding its mission and effect in the world. Knowledge of the potential for enhanced wellbeing through the truth of Scripture might strengthen the resolve and persistence of church leadership.

A growing number of clinical studies suggest a connection between religion and wellbeing. In separate comprehensive reviews of peer-reviewed articles in the medical literature discussing religion and spirituality on mental and physical health, Stewart and colleagues¹⁰ and, separately, Koenig¹¹ showed that religion was generally associated with greater

⁸ Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

⁹ Barry D. Jones, *Dwell: Life with God for the World* (Wheaton, IL: InterVarsity, 2014). Jones explores shalom as the “establishment of God’s perfect peace” (Chap. 1) woven into the fabric of the whole biblical story in connection with righteousness and justice.

¹⁰ William C. Stewart, Michelle P. Adams, Jeanette A. Stewart, and Lindsay A. Nelson, “Review of Clinical Medicine and Religious Practice,” *J Relig Health* 52 (March 2013): 91-106.

¹¹ Harold GI Koenig, “Religion, Spirituality, and Health: The Research and Clinical implications,” *ISRN Psychiatry* (Dec 2012): 278730, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3671693/>.

wellbeing, improved coping with stress, and better mental health. Further, Weber and Pargament reviewed religion and spirituality and their ability to promote or damage mental health through positive or negative religious coping, community/support, and beliefs, finding that religion and spirituality can promote mental health through positive religious coping, community, and support and positive beliefs.¹²

Few studies, however, evaluate details of the Christian experience to determine negative or positive contributions to wellbeing. Several church-based surveys have demonstrated that individuals who are most adherent to the practice of Christianity demonstrate better wellbeing.

Tao studied how devout Christians can enhance their subjective wellbeing by means of high health expectations, good family relationship expectations, and sound social networks.¹³ MacIlvaine and colleagues showed that religious adherence may promote a greater sense of wellbeing and feelings of contentment, peace, purpose, and acceptance by God.¹⁴ In a separate study MacIlvaine and coworkers noted that church attendees who serve, either within the church or community, have enhanced wellbeing compared to those who do not assist others as well as greater scores for contentment, peace, joy, purpose and sense of community acceptance.¹⁵ The study found that the effect of service on wellbeing was present with just one hour a week of

¹² Samuel R. Weber, and Kenneth I. Pargament, "The Role of Religion and Spirituality in Mental Health," *Current Opinion in Psychiatry* 27 (Sept 2014): 358-63. doi: 10.1097/YCO.0000000000000080.

¹³ Hung-Lin Tao, "What Makes Devout Christians Happier? Evidence from Taiwan," *Applied Economics* 40 (July 2008): 905-19. doi.org/10.1080/00036840600749839.

¹⁴ W. Rodman MacIlvaine, Lindsay A. Nelson, Jeanette A. Stewart, and William C. Stewart, "Association of Strength of Religious Adherence to Quality of Life Measures," *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice* 19 (Nov 2013): 251-55, doi: 10.1016/j.ctcp.2013.05.001.

¹⁵ W. Rodman MacIlvaine, Lindsay A. Nelson, Jeanette A. Stewart, and William C. Stewart, "Association of Strength of Community Service to Personal Well-being," *Community Mental Health Journal* 50 (Jul 2014): 577-82. doi: 10.1007/s10597-013-9660-0.

volunteer time. Further the enhanced wellbeing could be gained by Christian service both inside the church or in the community.

The lack of more complete data regarding the church and wellbeing is especially true for adolescents and millennials who will be the main adult foundation of the church in the coming decades.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the associations of the church, as well as its members and leadership to wellbeing in adolescents and millennials.

The survey was developed internally at Teleios, Inc., to address issues related to church leadership and wellbeing. Subjects were asked about their background, personal wellbeing, their Christian walk, and how church affected their wellbeing. Survey advertisements were placed on InstaPray (<https://www.instagram.com/instapray>), a Christian Instagram account. The survey was administered through Survey Monkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com>).

Results

In total, 884 participants were surveyed. We defined adolescents as middle and high school age and millennials ages 18-34. The majority of participants attended church at least 4+ times/month (80%); were female (73%); ages 18-30 (39%); resided in the USA (56%, Table 1); had college or post-graduate degree (30%); employed (37%) and evangelical (77%).

Table 1: Geographic location of respondents

Answer	Percent
United States	56%
Asia	16%
Europe	13%
Africa	5%
Canada	4%
Other (less than 3% incidence per country)	7%

Generally, the young participants had good wellbeing and among potential surrogate markers of wellbeing: peace, joy, contentment, and purpose with ratings of 4.6 to 5.0 (scale of 0 to

6. The higher the grade the better the wellbeing). Interestingly, among these young people their Christian walk was the most positive contributor to their personal wellbeing (5.2) with the church worship service coming in second (5.0). The only measure close to these two was their family (4.9, Table 2).

Table 2: Activity ratings contributing to personal wellbeing (Scale 0-6, 6 being best)

Answer	Rating
Personal walk with God	5.2
Church worship service	5.0
Family	4.9
Friends	4.5
Church activities	4.4
Church members	4.3
Professional or student life	4.1
Church leadership	4.0
Health and fitness	4.0
Community service	3.7
Personal finances	3.5

Most participants were adherent to their Christian walk at some level, attending church once a week or more, and participating in prayer and worship. However, they less often were involved in direct Bible study, biblically-based fellowship, teaching others, or sharing the gospel message (Table 3).

Table 3: How often participants did the following?

Answer	Never	A few times/ year	Once/ month	A few times/ month	Once/ Week +
I attend church	4	29	23	123	704
I study the Bible directly	26	66	32	127	632
I pray to God	1	4	3	28	848
I praise God	1	8	5	16	853
I teach others directly from the Bible	161	186	62	176	299
I verbally share the Gospel message with an unbeliever	165	328	87	151	149
I have Christian fellowship discussing biblical topics	86	103	58	141	493

Amazingly, the church's influence on wellbeing did not differ generally between youth and millennials ($P=0.084$) or among world regions including the USA, Europe, Asia, and commonwealth countries ($P=0.394$).

Church and Its Young Members

Participants were asked to select up to three of the greatest influences on wellbeing from their church and its members from a list of 12 (Table 4) from which the most common contributors were the following:

Prayer (59%) – Prayer is a cornerstone of the Christian walk, allowing believers to come directly before God, unafraid with their petitions (Heb 10:20-22, Phil 4:6). The church might assist prayer by acting as a guide to attendee's supplications to God, a more expansive prayer experience, and promoting prayer in member's lives.

Spiritual growth (56%) - Participants generally recognized the church helps them in their Christian walk to become mature believers. The church can do this in many ways but might help best by promoting biblical activities leading to maturity as expressed in the earliest church: prayer, praise, fellowship, outreach, and teaching (Acts 2:42, 47).

Praise and worship (54%) – Acknowledging God for his righteous character and actions is critical for a healthy Christian life. Praise allows believers to remind themselves that his thoughts and goals are greater than theirs. God deserves praise (Heb 13:15, Ps 147-150).

Emotional support (38%) - This finding is heartening in that young believers looked to the church, perhaps specifically to the church leadership or their Christian colleagues, to help them through life with sympathy and advice. Access for young Christians, desiring support from believing peers, is an important function of the church.

Comfortable and pleasing worship surroundings (35%) - Indeed, a beautiful church, often combined with lovely accoutrements, inspiring music, prayer, and liturgy can combine to create an awe-inspiring and encouraging ambiance.

Table 4: Percent respondents believing specific church activities that assist wellbeing?

Answer	Percent
Prayer	59%
Assist spiritual growth	56%
Encouraging praise and worship	54%
Emotional support	38%
Bible-based fellowship	38%
Comfortable and pleasing worship surroundings	35%
Opportunities for service and outreach	25%
High quality small group	18%
My needs are met	11%

Nonetheless, Christians are instructed to take our Christian walk beyond the emotional satisfaction of church worship and friendships and practice our faith daily. Over time, Scripture indicates that believers should become confident in their relationship with God through knowledge and understanding; emotional stability, making correct decisions between right and wrong as well as teaching others (Heb 5:11-14, Col 1:27-2:3, 3:16-17, Eph 5:15-19).

The above results are encouraging in the emphasis of spiritual growth, prayer and praise, and church attendance among young Christians. However, another interesting finding is that Christian adolescents have the same desires for their church experience as the young adult generation and across cultures ($P>0.087$). It appears the Holy Spirit is using the Bible, parents, church members, leaders, and teachers to help form the next generation of believers across the globe to carry forth in unity God's great work.

Church Leadership

The effect of church leadership on wellbeing differed statistically among the adolescent and millennial age groups ($P>0.05$), but not for international regions ($P=0.69$; Table 5). Participants were asked to select up to 3 of the most influential

factors on wellbeing from a list of 12 of which the most common were:

Bible-based teaching and preaching (75%) – It is encouraging to see such an important cornerstone of church function chosen so frequently by young evangelicals. We know that the teaching of God's word is a vital function of the church. Such teaching occurs not only in the Sunday sermon, but in Sunday school, small groups, discipleship relationships, and self-study. Certainly, much fruit can be anticipated in believers' lives by knowing Scripture (1 Tim 3:2, 4:6, 12, 16; 2 Tim 2:2, 25-26).

Bible-based speech (51%) - This choice was a pleasant surprise. This topic often is under stressed in church life. The Bible wisely indicates our speech should be primarily for the hearer, to meet their needs, and not for the speaker (Eph 4:29, 5:17-18; Col 3:16-17, 4:6).

Powerful biblical vision for the church (44%) - Participants perceived that the church leadership helps their wellbeing by directing the church in biblically based goals. Indeed, the church functions primarily to outreach to the world as well as to equip its own members to go out and impact the community for the gospel, build Christian community as well as for our cultural good (Matt 28:20; 1 Tim 2:1; Gal 6:10; 1 Thess 3:12, 5:15).

Table 5: Percent respondents believing how church leadership helps wellbeing?

Answer	Percent
Bible-based teaching and preaching	75%
Encouraging, Bible-based speech	51%
Powerful biblical vision for the church	44%
Supporting church programs	31%
Effective pastoral care	30%
Willingness to undertake church discipline	17%
Assisting my needs	16%

Harmful Effects of the Church on Wellbeing

Participants were asked to choose the most negative influences on wellbeing from their church and church leaders separately, each from a list of 14. Remarkably, there was a relatively low percent of complaints regarding the church and its

leaders among participants. Again, there was a unified response across age groups ($P=0.67$), but not regions ($P>0.05$). However, there were several themes that were associated with poor wellbeing.

Favoritism (19%) –We know of no research on church leadership and favoritism that explores whether it is intended or mostly unintentional. In addition, the participant's lack of social skills and expectations that might accompany youth could have played a role in the perceived favoritism. More research is needed in this unexplored topic.

Poor communication (14%) - Concerning church members the most cited issue diminishing wellbeing was negative communication skills. Again, this is a little studied area. As mentioned above, Scripture admonishes that speech is not intended for the speaker but to love others (John 14:21).

Accordingly, Teleios research has shown that church attendance can be associated with self-serving goals that might be a source of negative speech habits such as control of a church function as a power base, as well as seeking emotional support and having personal needs met (Teleios, internal data).

Significance of the Survey Findings

What do these data indicate for today's church? Several potential results are the following:

Healthy young people - Although we do not have an exact worldwide incidence, we know from this survey that there exists a spiritually active population of adolescents and millennials who visit Christian-based social media and appear intent in their faith. They also report good wellbeing for which their church and Christian walk are the primary progenitors of their healthy mental state, especially in prayer, praise, and church attendance.

No difference in age - We observed surprisingly little difference between older youth and other age groups regarding wellbeing, the influence of church on wellbeing, and their views of the church and its leadership.

Geographic unity – We also noted little divergence between geographic populations regarding general wellbeing, the influence of church on wellbeing, and their views of the church and its leadership. Young Asian people appeared to be slightly

more displeased with leadership in terms of favoritism and hypocrisy, and among other members by negative speech patterns, but the difference was not significant ($P>0.05$).

Healthy churches and leadership - The survey results are very positive in that not only are the youth responding to the survey healthy mentally and spiritually, but the churches and leadership themselves provide a positive experience for which the level of complaints are surprisingly low. Further, the same positive findings were found in the millennial age group. This is a surprise since they have a reputation in the popular press for being demanding and self-focused.¹⁶

Next Steps

Based on the results of this study, what work still needs to be done in the local church?

Teach the Word - The desire for God is evident in the participants in this survey yet also there are some apparent imbalances in the Christian life. The survey implies, and from our own experience, that young people need to know the Scriptures to be able to accurately apply them to their lives and see the accompanying fruit.

Pastors and leaders should be careful that they teach the Bible directly from the text. Those young people who are truly believers long for God's word and the Bible need not be hidden or neglected. Perhaps those who seem less desirous to hear Scripture and want other functions in the church do not yet understand God's saving grace and need to hear the gospel itself.

Promote complete adherence to the Christian walk - While prayer, fellowship and praise are essential for the believer's maturation, a true Christian can experience even further growth through studying and teaching God's truth to others. This discipline of teaching others cultivates healthy accountability to comprehend, organize and articulate biblical truth. Further, it is the struggle to produce fruit in other people's lives that helps

¹⁶ Jada A. Graves. "Millennial Workers: Entitled, Needy, Self-Centered?" *US News and World Report*, 2012, <https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/articles/2012/06/27/millennial-workers-entitled-needy-self-centered>.

them grow beyond their own inward-looking experience (Col 1:10). Young Christians need to learn basic Bible study methods to teach others from the Scripture.

Spread the Gospel - Additionally, young believers need to share their faith. This is how the church grows in size and maturity. However, it needs to be the specific verbal gospel message. Interestingly, Teleios found that sharing the explicit plan of salvation was number five in the list of preferred methods of sharing the gospel in a well-taught evangelical church (Teleios, internal data).

Encourage one another – pastors and lay leaders should teach their congregation even more how to speak and not to speak to one another in a biblical manner. Biblically-based speech should be encouraged from all believers so that we can better encourage each one another.

More preferred methods were lifestyle example, praying for others, encouraging others and loving them. Further, participants confessed that they did not even know how to verbalize the gospel to somebody else. Pastors should be careful to teach the gospel in their sermons and Sunday school and individual conversations.

Summary

The survey results indicate that the church today is influencing the personal wellbeing of youth and millennial believers around the world. Young people from both age groups and geographical regions are devoted to God and to their local church. Overall the participants have good wellbeing and hold a positive attitude toward their church and church leadership.

This research suggests that the Holy Spirit through the preaching and teaching of God's word, worship, encouraging fellowship, and outreach is at work in building unity among local congregations from around the world. More research is needed to more fully understand the impact the local church is having on the next generation of Christ-followers.

Genesis, Deuteronomy, and the Hope of an Eschatological Mediator

Jared August

Abstract: This study examines the implications of the eschatological nature of Genesis upon the three mediatory roles described in Deuteronomy 17:14–18:22. It is demonstrated that, beginning in Genesis 3:15, there is an expectation that a future individual will come and succeed in the areas where Adam failed. In view of this hope, an anticipatory expectation emerges in Deuteronomy in relation to the offices of king (17:14–20), priest (18:1–8), and prophet (18:9–22). As such, it appears that these three mediatory roles are best viewed as provisional, pointing to the eventual coming of the eschatological Mediator—the Second Adam—first promised in Genesis.

Key Words: Genesis, Deuteronomy, Adam, mediator, prophet, priest, king

As one of the most cited books in both the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, the book of Deuteronomy is frequently examined for its influence upon subsequent Scripture.² Yet although the citations and allusions to Deuteronomy by later biblical authors are often discussed, little has been written regarding the use of antecedent revelation in

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² According to T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), the NT quotes Deuteronomy “some eighty–three times” (295). Alexander notes this that is “hardly surprising” because it sets out the “essential requirements for a harmonious relationship with God” perhaps more clearly than any other OT book (295).

Deuteronomy.³ That is, despite Deuteronomy's frequent allusions to the promises of Genesis given "to our fathers," there has been little consideration of the implications of Genesis upon the interpretation of Deuteronomy.⁴ Central to the relationship between these two books is the connection between the eschatological expectation of Genesis 1–3 and the three mediatory roles of Deuteronomy 17:14–18:22 (king, priest, and prophet).⁵ In light of this expectation, the mediatory roles of king, priest, and prophet in Deuteronomy are best viewed as

³ For this study, the final form and unified composition of Genesis and Deuteronomy is assumed as the basis for discussion. There has been much debate about this topic, a summary of which can be found in almost every commentary on Deuteronomy. Perhaps the primary reason for adopting the unified view relates to the Near Eastern vassal treaty background. See, among numerous resources, Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in the Form of the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament* (Rome: Biblical Institute P, 1978). McCarthy surveys the various ancient treaties (27–153) and develops the implications for the treaties of the OT, including Deuteronomy (157–87; 188–205). See also Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 88–93.

⁴ This is especially evident in comparison with the numerous publications pertaining to the use of Deuteronomy in other biblical books such as Jeremiah. For example, see George Ricker Berry, "The Code Found in the Temple," *JBL* 39 (1920): 44–51; Henri Cazelles, "Jeremiah and Deuteronomy," trans. G. Perdue, in *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies*. Leo G. Perdue and Brian W. Kovacs, eds. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1984), 89–111; R. Davidson, "Orthodoxy and the Prophetic Word," *VT* 14 (1964): 407–16; J. Philip Hyatt, "Jeremiah and Deuteronomy," in *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies*, ed. Leo G. Perdue and Brian W. Kovacs (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1984), 113–27; Jack R. Lundbom, "The Lawbook of the Josianic Reform," *CBQ* 38 (1976): 293–302.

⁵ Various scholars and commentators mention this anticipatory expectation. For example, Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), state, "The book of Genesis is in want of a proper ending" (62). Additionally, K. A. Matthews, "Genesis," in T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, et al, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000) states, "Genesis is oriented toward the future" (141).

provisional, pointing to the eventual coming of the promised eschatological Mediator.

I. Allusions to Promises of Genesis in Deuteronomy

It is evident in the numerous allusions to the promises of Genesis in Deuteronomy that Genesis stands as the basis for the hope of Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy 1:8, Moses commands the Israelites to enter the land promised to their fathers: “the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” Furthermore, the threefold mention of “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” found in this passage occurs six other times in Deuteronomy (1:8; 6:10; 9:5, 27; 29:13; 30:20; 34:4). In all but one (9:27) of these instances, the text states that God had “sworn” (שָׁבַע) a promise to the patriarchs. In 1:8, 6:10, 9:5, 30:20, and 34:4, the Lord “swore” the land. And in 29:13, the Lord “swore” a special relationship with his people. The term “to swear” (שָׁבַע) denotes a solemn and irrevocable promise to undertake or do something.⁶ In each of these cases, the text refers to antecedent revelation (Genesis) to confirm that the Lord had indeed remained steadfastly faithful and loyal to his people. By referencing prior revelation, Deuteronomy demonstrates that the Israelites’ history up to the entrance to the promised land fulfills much of what was promised in Genesis.

In addition to the allusions to the patriarchs by name, reference to the Israelites’ “fathers” (אָבֹת)—as in ancestor or forefather—occurs 49 times.⁷ Each of these instances alludes to the reality that the Lord is the God of Israel’s ancestors. In context, this term appears to be an abbreviated reference to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.⁸ This term occurs in a variety of

⁶ L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, eds., *HALOT* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), electronic ed. 1397.

⁷ There are 71 uses of אָבֹת in Deuteronomy, of which 48 refer to “ancestor,” 21 refer to “father,” and 1 refers to “forefather” and 1 refers to God as “Father.”

⁸ There certainly is some ambiguity here, and this term may also allude to the twelve brothers of whom the twelve tribes trace their ancestry (as in 10:22). However, the similarity in construction and use between references to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob do not seem to be accidental.

sentence constructions, including “the Lord, the God of your *fathers*” (1:11, 21; 4:1; 26:7), in reference to the land which was given “to your *fathers*” (1:35; 6:23; 26:15), and in reference to the “covenant/word which the Lord swore to your *fathers*” (8:18; 9:5). Through these references to the patriarchs, the events of Deuteronomy are linked with the promises originally given in the book of Genesis.

Perhaps one of the clearest examples is 26:5, in which Deuteronomy recounts the past actions of the Lord’s leading. In this passage, the text states, “A wandering Aramean was my *father*. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous” (26:5b).⁹ Although there is uncertainty as to whether the individual described is Abraham (Gen 12:10–20), Israel/Jacob (Gen 47:1–12), or the collective nation Israel (as in Deut 10:22), this is a clear allusion to the Lord’s leading the nation in Genesis.¹⁰ As such, this event is recounted to draw the Israelites’ attention to the Lord’s past faithfulness concerning the promises made to the patriarchs. As this passage continues, it expands to include all Israel (“... the Egyptians treated *us* harshly and humiliated *us* ...” 26:6). As a result of Egypt’s harsh slavery (26:6), the Israelites cried to the Lord (26:7) and the Lord delivered them (26:8) and brought them to the promised land (26:9). Again, the expectation of Genesis appears to stand as the basis for the events recorded in Deuteronomy.

Overall, the Pentateuch is unified in both plot and theme.¹¹ That is, a single plot unifies the Pentateuch, with Genesis as the

⁹ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture references are taken from the *English Standard Version*.

¹⁰ See the discussion in Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 240.

¹¹ Alexander states, “The Pentateuch consists of five books that have been composed in the light of one another to form a single unit” (*From Paradise*, 113). He continues, “Primary among these is the plot, which begins in Genesis and flows logically through to the end of Deuteronomy” (113). Elsewhere, Alexander, “Genesis to Kings,” in T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, et al., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000), asserts that the narrative from Genesis to Kings “is bound together

beginning and Deuteronomy as the conclusion. In light of the numerous connections made in Deuteronomy to the promises and expectation of Genesis, it is necessary to interpret the message of the latter book in view of the former. That is, to fully appreciate Deuteronomy, the overarching expectation of Genesis must first be considered.

II. Summary of King, Priest, and Prophet in Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 17:14–18:22 presents three distinct, yet noticeably similar, roles: king (17:14–20), priest (18:1–8), and prophet (18:9–22).¹² Each of these three passages describes different divinely ordained positions for the nation Israel with implications for social, political, religious, and spiritual life.

The office of *king* relates to those who governed the nation on behalf of the Lord (17:14–20).¹³ The king was to be an individual chosen by the Lord (17:15), committed to trusting the

by two interrelated plots which centre around the divine promises of nationhood and a royal deliverer” (119).

¹² The role of “judges and officers” (16:18) is also developed in 16:18–20 (cf. 17:8–13). However, contextually, it appears that the judges served a more localized role in individual towns (16:18), and even then, they worked under the supervision of the Levitical priests (17:8–9).

¹³ The office of king is permissively regulated; or as Craigie states, “It takes the form of permissive legislation” (*Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed., NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976], 253). Since the nation could survive without a king, Christopher Wright states, “Kingship in Israel is immediately set in an ambivalent light” (*Deuteronomy*, NIBCOT [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson], 208). This assessment stands in contrast to the statement by Daniel Block: “The emphatic opening clause of verse 15 reflects Moses’s fundamentally positive disposition toward the monarchical system in principle” (*Deuteronomy*, NIV Application Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2012], 417). Block’s conclusion is best, given the construction שׁוּם תָּשִׁים (“setting you may set” or “you may surely set”), which consists of an infinitive absolute and an imperfect verb. This intensification of the verb “to set” (שׁוּם) seems to indicate affirmation or certainty. See Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §35.3.1. Waltke and O’Connor state, “Affirmation is the most straightforward role for an infinitive absolute” (585).

Lord in battle (17:16), devoted to putting the Lord's will above his own (17:17), and dedicated to humbly recognizing his dependence upon the Lord's word (17:18–20). The king was to be a model Israelite, on behalf of the Israelites.¹⁴ As king, he was to lead the nation (17:15), yet since the Lord reigned as King over all (33:5), the Israelite office of king was to be a mediator between God and man.

The office of *priest* relates to those who offered sacrifices on behalf of the nation for the Lord (18:1–8).¹⁵ This passage regulates the provisions and treatment of the Levitical priests by the other tribes of Israel. The priestly office and the Levites were mentioned previously in Deuteronomy 10:8–9, and this role is significantly discussed throughout Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. The Levites served as priestly mediators between God and man. Through their service to the sacrificial system, the rest of the Israelites were able to maintain a relationship with the Lord. The Levites were given no territorial allotment as the other tribes were subsequent to the conquest (18:1a). Rather, the Lord was to be their inheritance (18:2) as they served him faithfully.

¹⁴ Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), articulates this aptly when he writes, "The fundamental task of the leader of the people, therefore, is to exemplify and demonstrate true obedience to the Lord for the sake of the well-being of both dynasty and the kingdom" (149).

¹⁵ In relation to the role and distinctions between the priests and Levites, there are numerous views. For an excellent summary of the views, see D. A. Hubbard, "Priests and Levites," in *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed., ed. I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, et al., (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996), 956–62. Hubbard provides an overview of the standard critical views advocated by Julius Wellhausen, and then offers a more conservative approach. Perhaps the view adopted by Craigie offers the most promise: "vv. 1–2 will be interpreted as referring to *all* Levites, vv. 3–5 as referring to Levitical priests, and vv. 6–8 as referring to Levites who would not normally function as priests" (*Deuteronomy*, 258). For similar views, see also Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 213–16; Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 220–22; for the standard critical view, see Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, OTL [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966] 122. Ultimately, it seems that only some Levites were actively serving as priests or assisting in relation to the sacrificial system.

The office of *prophet* relates to those who spoke to the nation on behalf of the Lord (18:9–22).¹⁶ There is debate as to whether Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18:18 anticipate a single individual eschatological prophet, or whether they anticipate the general prophetic office. It is clear that by the time of Jesus, these verses were taken as anticipating an eschatological prophet (John 1:21; 6:14; 7:40; Acts 3:22–26). For the purpose of this study, it is sufficient to note that this description appears immediately subsequent to the previous two mediatory offices of king (17:14–20) and priest (18:1–8).¹⁷ Given this context, it seems that this passage as a whole (18:9–22) describes the general prophetic

¹⁶ Some commentators separate 18:9–14 from 18:15–22. For example, Craigie divides 18:9–14 under the heading “Prohibition of Foreign Religious Practices,” (*Deuteronomy*, 259–61), and 18:15–22 under the heading “The Prophet” (261–64). Edward J. Woods breaks them under the headings “Detestable practices” (*Deuteronomy*, TOTC 5 [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011], 222–23) and “The Prophet” (223–24), respectively. However, this division seems artificial. Commentators who group these passages together include Miller who places 18:9–22 under the heading “The True Prophet” (*Deuteronomy*, 151); Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, likewise groups them together, as does Wright, *Deuteronomy*, and Block, *Deuteronomy*. Given the content of these two passages and their juxtaposition, it is best to view them as one unit, with 18:9–14 as the antithesis to the divinely appointed prophetic office of 18:15–22. In his chapter on 18:9–22, Block aptly entitles the section in his commentary on 18:9–14, “The Foil for the Promise of a Prophet Like Moses” (*Deuteronomy*, 434). The stark contrast between the abominable practices of 18:9–14 and the righteous “prophet like Moses” promised in 18:15–22 could not be more emphatic.

¹⁷ This being recognized, one must not quickly discount the proposal of Miller, *Deuteronomy*, in which he contrasts the proclamation of 18:15 (“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me”) with the statement of 34:10 (“There has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses”). He summarizes his view, “The only way to resolve the tension between chapters 18 and 34 is to project *into the future* the announcement that God will raise up a prophet, which is what eventually happened in Judaism and Christianity (John 1:21, 25; 6:14; 7:40)” (155–56). Robin Gallaher Branch (“The Messianic Dimensions of Kingship in Deuteronomy 17:14–20 as fulfilled by Jesus in Matthew,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 25, no. 2 [2004]) closely follows the argumentation of Miller.

office: the office in which individuals such as Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel eventually served.¹⁸

In each case, the individuals holding these three offices were to serve as mediators between God and man. They were each appointed by the Lord: the Lord would *choose* (יִבְחַר) the future king (17:15), the Lord had *chosen* (בָּחַר) the tribe of Levi to minister in his name (18:5), and the Lord promised to *raise up* (יָקִים) a prophet like Moses to speak on his behalf (18:15). In each of these three cases, the Lord divinely appointed and ordained those whom he desired.¹⁹ Furthermore, in each case, the Lord was the one who enabled the individual to minister to the people on his behalf.

Prior to considering the eschatological expectation of Genesis, it is evident that in Deuteronomy, Moses prescribed these three mediatory offices to govern and serve the nation of Israel on the Lord's behalf. As such, the offices of king, priest, and prophet appear to have been designed to point the people to the Lord and cause them to recognize his sufficiency. However, once the eschatological background of Genesis is considered, it

¹⁸ As is demonstrated below, this does not preclude the possibility that Deuteronomy 18:9–22 serves as a provisional passage, pointing to the eventual eschatological Prophet. However, it is best to view the passage as immediately relevant to the Israelites current situation and eventually eschatological in its prediction. This view is similar to Cairns who proposes that it immediately refers to the prophets of Israel, yet “also points beyond its eighth–seventh century fulfillment toward the eschaton.” *Word and Presence: A Commentary of the Book of Deuteronomy*, ITC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 173. Also see Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 263.

¹⁹ Undoubtedly, this statement would have caused the Israelites to recall how the Lord God had *chosen* (בָּחַר) Israel as his people (4:37; 7:6, 7; 10:15; 14:2). Just as the Lord had divinely appointed Israel as a people for his own possession (7:6, 7), in due time, the Lord was expected to similarly appoint mediatory leaders over his people. This concept of God's “choosing” is woven through the book of Deuteronomy. The word “to choose” (בָּחַר) is used 31 times, and in 29 of these uses, God is the one who has chosen/will choose. It often occurs in reference to the “place that the Lord your God will choose” (12:5, 11, 14; 14:23; 31:11) for his dwelling place. It is clear that the Lord's choice of king would not be arbitrary.

becomes evident that these mediatory descriptions in Deuteronomy served dual roles. On the one hand, they regulated the leadership of the nation, yet on the other hand, they reminded the Israelites of the eventual coming of the final Mediator: the true King, Priest, and Prophet.

III. The Eschatological Mediator of Genesis

The book of Genesis describes the creation of the world and the fall of Adam and Eve. Into the seemingly hopeless situation of Genesis 3, a promise of hope and restoration is given, in which the Lord declares to the serpent in the presence of Adam and Eve, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (3:15). This verse anticipates the victory of God’s promised Restorer over his enemies, and therefore is rightly referred to as the *protoevangelium*.²⁰ Given the larger context of Genesis, the promise of 3:15 articulates a time in the future when God would: (1) *Destroy evil* (defeat the serpent, its offspring, and thereby destroy the influence of evil); (2) *Restore creation* (to the state it was previously, void of all evil, i.e., the Genesis 1–2 state—cf. 1:31); and (3) *Allow God to dwell with his people* (just as he previously dwelt with Adam and Eve in Eden—cf. 3:8).²¹ These three themes are developed both in the book of Genesis, as well as throughout the rest of Scripture.²²

²⁰ Jared M. August, “The Messianic Hope of Genesis: The *Protoevangelium* and Patriarchal Promises” *Themelios* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 46–62. The singular pronoun/pronominal suffix is used in reference to עֲרִי (‘‘offspring’’) in 3:15, 21:13, 22:17b, and 24:60. The plural pronoun/pronominal suffix is also used in reference to עֲרִים in 15:13, 17:7, and 17:8. This distinction allows the reader to determine when the author of Genesis referred to a singular individual and when he referred to a corporate group of individuals (53–56). The LXX reflects this usage in the Greek. See R. A. Martin, “The Earliest Messianic Interpretation of Genesis 3:15,” *JBL* 84 (1965): 425.

²¹ This is threefold hope developed further in August, “Messianic Hope,” 56.

²² For example, Abraham is promised that one of his descendants will: (1) *Destroy evil* (be victorious over his enemies—22:17b), (2) *Restore*

This threefold hope is intrinsically woven into the *toledot* structure of the book of Genesis.²³ It has been demonstrated that each *toledot* fulfills the central promise(s) made in the prior *toledot*.²⁴ Therefore, the *toledot* structure provides an identifiable framework that is intrinsically anticipatory in nature.²⁵ As such, the entire book of Genesis is eschatologically focused on God's future restoration. The first promise, Genesis 3:15, serves as the prophetic fountainhead from which the rest of this eschatological expectation emerges. This expectation that God would eventually restore the world to the intended Genesis 1–2 "very good" state stands as the basis for the Pentateuch, and in relation to this study, for Deuteronomy.²⁶

creation (bring blessing to all nations—12:3; 22:18), and (3) *Allow God to dwell with his people* (dwelling with them forever—17:8).

²³ Matthew A. Thomas, *These Are the Generations: Identity, Covenant, and the toledot Formula in LHBS* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2011); and Jason S. Derouchie, "The Blessing—Commission, the Promised Offspring, and the *Toledot* structure of Genesis," *JETS* 56, no. 2 (2013): 219–47, have advanced the thesis that the ten *toledot* headings (Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1[9]; 37:2) can be divided into two groups of five primary and five secondary headings. According to this thesis, the main headings are grammatically unconnected to the preceding material and the secondary headings are each connected with *waw*. The main headings are Genesis 2:4 (Heaven and Earth); 5:1 (Adam); 6:9 (Noah); 11:10 (Shem); and 37:2 (Jacob), and the subheadings are 10:1 (Shem, Ham, and Japheth); 11:27 (Terah); 25:12 (Ishmael), 19 (Isaac); and 36:1(9) (Esau).

²⁴ Jared M. August, "The *Toledot* Structure of Genesis: Hope of Promise," *BibSac* 174, no. 695 (July–September 2017): 267–82. In the primary *toledot*, a promise is always given concerning a specific individual(s), and the promise given in the previous *toledot* is realized. The secondary *toledot* develop the realization of a promise given, but do not offer an additional promise. This further emphasizes the focus that the five primary *toledot* headings provide the "backbone" for the structure of Genesis.

²⁵ August, *ibid.*, 281.

²⁶ Matthews states, "As part of the Pentateuch, the theology of Genesis must be understood in the context of the theology of the five books. ... Genesis functions as the introduction to the Sinai revelation by recounting how the ancestors of Israel received the promises of God intended also for their descendants" ("Genesis," 141). Additionally, Matthews states, "The

1. Adam as Mediatorial King, Priest, and Prophet

Related to the eschatological hope of Genesis, the mediatorial roles of king, priest, and prophet are presented as the means by which this hope would be realized. Perhaps the most important individual to consider is the first man, Adam. Much has been written in recent years pertaining to the concept of the garden of Eden as God's temple.²⁷ That is, the garden served as the first temple wherein God and man dwelt together (cf. 3:8–9).²⁸ Beale summarizes the key reasons for this view:

Israel's temple was the place where the priest experienced God's unique presence, and Eden was the place where Adam walked and talked with God. The same Hebrew verbal form (stem) *mithallēk* (hithpael) used for God's 'walking back and forth' in the Garden (Gen. 3:8), also describes God's presence in the tabernacle (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14 [15]; 2 Sam 7:6–7).²⁹

Beale's point is that the biblical authors viewed the garden as the first temple, and that all subsequent locations (tabernacle,

theology of Genesis is the prelude to God's election of Israel and her monarchy, whose purpose was to channel the divine blessing for all nations" (Ibid., 146).

²⁷ Of particular interest, see G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004); G. K. Beale, "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation" *JETS* 48, no. 1 (March 2005): 5–31; Walton, *Genesis*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2001), 167–68; Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 85–87, 101.

²⁸ T. Desmond Alexander, *The City of God and the Goal of Creation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), makes the distinction (contra Beale) that Eden is not necessarily a "protosanctuary," but rather, that each later sanctuary is "a restored garden of Eden" (19). Alexander's point is that later sanctuaries "replicate something of this experience as people come to the place where God dwells on earth" and that "the sanctuary enables God to live in close proximity to his people" (19).

²⁹ Beale, *Temple and Church*, 66.

temple, etc.) were reminiscent of this first dwelling place.³⁰ He concludes, “Eden was the archetypal temple, upon which all of Israel’s temples were based.”³¹ Furthermore, Beale argues that not only did the garden serve as the first temple, but that Adam served as the first mediator; he served as priest-king over the newly created world.

At creation, Adam was commissioned by the Lord to serve as mediator between God and man. In Genesis 1:28–29, Adam and Eve were given a five-part commission: “[1] And God blessed them. And God said to them, [2] Be fruitful and multiply and [3] fill the earth and [4] subdue it and [5] have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (1:28). In context, the text records that Adam and Eve had been created in the image of God to rule over the created earth on behalf of their Creator (1:26, 27). Beale asserts that this call for rulership demonstrates Adam’s kingship and was likely a part of the functional image of God in which Adam was made.³² Related to this, the Lord’s command to “have dominion” or “rule” is the imperative *רָדָה* (from *רָדָה*), a term which was often used of a king’s ruling over his subjects (2 Chr 8:10; Ps 72:8; 110:2; Isa 14:2, 6; Ezek

³⁰ Beale, *ibid.*, 70–80, argues that this is evident in numerous ways such as the guarding cherubim (Gen 3:24; Ezek 28:14, 16), the garden as the place of the first arboreal lampstand (the tree of life [Gen 2:9]; Exod 25:31–36), the consistent use of garden imagery in Israel’s temple (1 Kgs 6–7), Eden as the first source of water (Gen 2:10; Ezek 47:1–12), the Garden as the place of precious stones (Gen 2:12; 1 Kgs 6:20–22; Exod 25:11–39), and early Judaism’s view of the garden as the first sanctuary. Beale develops numerous other connections; some appear to be quite clear, though others appear rather tenuous.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 79–80. Beale notes, “We are not left, however, with a collection of similarities that show how comparable Eden is to a temple. Indeed, Ezekiel 28 explicitly calls Eden the first sanctuary, which substantiates that Eden is described as a temple because it is the first temple, albeit a ‘garden-temple’” (80).

³² G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 30.

29:15).³³ That is, when Adam's rulership is described, he is pictured as a king, ruling over creation on God's behalf. As such, it appears that in Genesis 1:28, Adam was commissioned to rule as God's mediatory king over creation.³⁴

Furthermore, it appears that Adam was also priest over Eden.³⁵ This conclusion is based on two aspects: (1) Eden was the first temple (as above), and (2) Adam's command to "work and keep" the garden (2:15) denoted priestly activity. Given the above discussion of Eden as the dwelling place of God and man, the command of 2:15 assumes Adam's priestly role. The text states, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to *work* it and *keep* it" (2:15). The terms *work* (עָבַד) and *keep* (שָׁמַר) are often found in reference to religious and priestly service to the Lord.³⁶ For example, in Numbers 3:7–8, the priests were to *work* (עָבַד) and *keep/guard* (שָׁמַר) the tabernacle. Walton asserts that the first term (עָבַד) was frequently used to refer to "priestly functionaries serving in the sanctuary precinct (e.g., Num 3:7–10),"³⁷ and that the second term (שָׁמַר) was used

³³ The term רֹדֵף often referred to a shepherd travelling with and protecting his flock (Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 1190), yet it was often used in reference to kings ruling those entrusted to their authority. Beale develops this concept from Near Eastern literature and states, "When ancient Near Eastern kings were conceived to be images of a god, the idea of the god's subduing and ruling through him are in mind, and this appears to be the best background against which to understand Adam as a king and in the image of God in Gen 1:26–28" (*New Testament Biblical Theology*, 30–31).

³⁴ It did not take long for Adam to fail in this role, as he listened to a creature (the serpent) and to the woman, rather than to the Lord (cf. Gen 3:17).

³⁵ This is argued rather extensively in Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 66–70.

³⁶ The term *work* (עָבַד) has a broad semantic range and can occur in a number of contexts, yet is often used specifically of service to the Lord (Exod 3:12; 8:1; Num 3:7; 18:7). Similarly, the term *keep* (שָׁמַר) has a broad semantic range, yet is frequently used in reference to the priestly role of guarding the temple (Num 3:8, 10, 38).

³⁷ Walton, *Genesis*, 172.

“in the contexts of the Levitical responsibility of guarding sacred space as well as for observing religious commands and responsibilities.”³⁸ That is, both these terms were used in reference to the priestly activity of the Levites. Walton concludes, “It is likely that the tasks given to Adam are of a priestly nature—that is, caring for sacred space.”³⁹ Ultimately, although Adam failed to accomplish this task, it appears that the Lord had commissioned him to serve as priest over Eden.

Finally, related to his role as king and priest of Eden, Adam was also given a prophetic role by the Lord.⁴⁰ In Genesis 2:16–17, the text states, “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” About these verses, several observations are necessary. First, this command was given to Adam, and never explicitly given to the woman. Second, it was not until after this command was given that the woman was created (2:18–22). However, both the man and the woman were expected to know and obey this command (3:11).⁴¹ This leads one to conclude that Adam—the one entrusted with God’s word—failed to accurately communicate the importance of this command to his wife, who was unable to repeat the

³⁸ Ibid., 173.

³⁹ Ibid., 173. Likewise, Allen P. Ross in *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) states, “Whatever activity the man was to engage in the garden ... it was described in terms of spiritual service of the Lord” (124).

⁴⁰ Although Adam’s role as priest-king over Eden has been developed previously—most specifically by Beale, *Temple and Church*, 66–70—little has previously been written in regard to Adam’s role as prophet.

⁴¹ Another instance of Adam’s prophetic role is found in relation to the sacrifices of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1–16). Cain and Abel brought sacrifices to the Lord (4:3–5), yet at no point is it recorded that the Lord commanded them to do so. Although the text does not specify how they came to sacrifice, it appears that Adam learned of sacrifice from the Lord (cf. 3:20). Although the text is not explicit, it does appear that Adam had some role in communicating the Lord’s desire to his children.

command when tempted by the serpent (3:1–7).⁴² This is not to say that the woman was not responsible in succumbing to temptation; she surely was. Yet Adam evidently failed both in communicating the importance of this command, as well as in his own decision to disobey this command himself. As such, the entire narrative of Genesis 1–3 rests upon the fact that Adam, as the communicatory mediator between God and the woman, failed in his task. Therefore, although the term *prophet* is not used in this passage, the idea of one who receives direct communication from the Lord and speaks on his behalf is certainly present. Overall, the Lord had commissioned Adam to serve as the prophetic mediator between God and the woman.

To summarize, Adam was commissioned by the Lord to serve in three mediatory roles: (1) Adam was to be God’s mediatory king by *ruling* (רָדָה) over the world (1:28); (2) he was to be God’s mediatory priest by *working* (עָבַד) and *keeping* (שָׁמַר) the garden–temple (2:15); and (3) he was to be God’s prophetic mediator by communicating the command to the woman (2:16–17). Given the text of Genesis 1–3, it is clear that Adam served in an archetypal position as God’s divinely chosen mediator—the first king, priest, and prophet.

2. The Hope of a Future King, Priest, and Prophet

Although Adam was appointed as God’s chosen mediator, it was not long until he failed in all three roles— king, priest, and prophet. As prophet, Adam was both unable to effectively communicate the importance of the Lord’s message to the woman (2:16–17; 3:1–7, 11), or even obey the Lord’s command himself (3:6–7). As priest, Adam did not prevent the deceiving serpent from spreading his lie in the garden–sanctuary (2:15; 3:11, 17–

⁴² This is not to remove blame from the woman. However, Adam is punished extensively for the fall, as it was his responsibility to prevent such an occurrence from happening (2:15–17; 3:9–12). Ross aptly states, “In the woman’s response to the serpent’s question, it became clear that the precision of the Word of the Lord had not been retained” (Creation & Blessing, 134). Ross notes that the woman is inaccurate in three ways: “First, she minimized the provision of the Lord. . . . Second, she added to the prohibition. . . . Third, she weakened the penalty for sin” (134–35).

19). And as king, Adam failed to rule over creation and expand God's influence (1:26–28; 3:17–19). In regard to all three aspects of his mediatory role, Adam was unsuccessful. However, as discussed above, the Lord did not leave this first couple without hope. In Genesis 3:15, the eschatological Restorer was promised to defeat the serpent and restore the world to God's intended design. Given Adam's failure to serve God as mediatory prophet, priest, and king, this promised individual is presented as the one who would successfully minister as God's Mediator in place of Adam. This individual is pictured as the Second Adam, undoing that which the first Adam did, and reversing the curse that was brought upon creation. That is, by serving as the Second Adam, this individual would succeed as God's divinely appointed Prophet, Priest, and King. As Prophet, he would communicate God's Word accurately. As Priest, he would intercede between a holy God and sinful man. And as King, he would rule with justice over creation, expanding God's influence to the far reaches of the earth.⁴³ Below, the mediatory offices of king, priest, and prophet are briefly examined from the remainder of the book of Genesis.

⁴³ It is vital to recognize that the commission given to Adam in 1:28 is repeatedly given to God's chosen people throughout the book of Genesis, as well as throughout the OT. As above, this commission involved five elements: "[1] And God blessed them. And God said to them, '[2] Be fruitful and multiply and [3] fill the earth and [4] subdue it and [5] have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (1:28). These five elements are evident in the commissions given to Noah (9:1, 7), Abraham (12:2–3; 17:2, 6, 8; 22:17–18), Isaac (26:3–4, 24), and Jacob (28:3–4, 13–14; 35:11–12). This promise receives some form of initial fulfillment in the book of Genesis and in the Pentateuch. For example, the people "were fruitful and became very numerous" (Gen 47:27); they "were fruitful and increased greatly" (Exod 1:7); they were too many to count (Num 23:10–11); and they became "as numerous as the stars of heaven" (Deut 1:9).

The commission first given to Adam (as God's mediatory king) in 1:28 is progressively traced to the nation in Genesis and in the rest of the Pentateuch. Beale develops this concept by examining the verbal and grammatical links from the first commission (1:28) to various statements in Deuteronomy. Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, traces this commission throughout the entirety of the OT (46–51). He states, "The same commission repeatedly given to the patriarchs is restated numerous

a. The Office of King in Genesis

The concept of a future mediatory king who will rule on God's behalf over all the earth is first given in Genesis 1–3. As a result of Adam's failure as king over Eden, the Lord promised that a future eschatological individual would be victorious over his enemies (3:15). Numerous glimpses of this expectation are developed throughout Genesis. In addition to the general repetition of the Lord's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, several specific promises are given concerning a future king. For example, the Lord declares to Abraham, "I will make you into nations, and *kings* shall come from you" (17:6); he also announces that through Sarah, "*kings* of peoples shall come from her" (17:16).⁴⁴ To Jacob, the Lord promises, "A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and *kings* shall come from your own body" (35:11). Additionally, Abraham (as well as Isaac and Jacob) served in somewhat of a kingly capacity. This is evident both in Abraham's personal militia (318 armed soldiers—14:14), as well as his interactions with foreign kings and leaders (Pharaoh, king of Egypt—12:10–20; the various kings mentioned in 14:1–24; and Abimelech, king of Gerar—20:1–18). Abraham's family held the unique expectation that the promised eschatological king would come through their genealogical line.

times in subsequent OT books to Israel" (47). Obviously, Deuteronomy is of special focus for this present study. Beale cites Deuteronomy 7:13; 15:4, 6; 28:11–12, and 30:16 as passages which develop this expectation of the nation fulfilling the commission originally given to Adam. The point is that the Lord promised to bless the nation so that through the nation, the Promised One might come to mediate and expand God's glory to "all the nations" (Gen 22:18) and "all the families of the earth" (Gen 28:14).

⁴⁴ Interestingly, both these promises of future *kings* from Abraham's line come in the context of the Lord's changing Abram and Sarai's names to Abraham (17:5) and Sarah (17:15). As Walton notes, "The names themselves indicate an expansion of the covenant" (*Genesis*, 449). That is, they develop the eschatological hope of the covenant repeatedly given throughout Genesis. See August, "Hope of Genesis," 58–62.

Related to this coming mediatory king, Genesis 49:8–12 is perhaps the clearest reference.⁴⁵ The central verse (49:10) states, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.” Most commentators see an expectation of Judah’s leadership over the nation and the world in this passage.⁴⁶ This is a key point—Judah was blessed with the expectation that through him, future kings would come. Given the overarching eschatological hope of Genesis, this promise would have included both the hope of future kings (plural), as well as the hope of the final Mediatory King (singular) first promised in 3:15.

Additionally, there has been much discussion regarding the Hebrew word *shiloh* (שִׁילֹה), and how it should be translated.⁴⁷ When the details are considered, it appears that a messianic understanding of this verse is the most textually viable option.⁴⁸ Kaiser agrees that this verse should be interpreted messianically. He offers the following interpretive translation of 49:10: “The

⁴⁵ There is certainly not consensus concerning this verse. For example, the standard critical view, as espoused by Vawter is that “The tribe of Judah came into pre-eminence with the coming of the monarchy under David, and this fragment of poetry doubtless dates from that time” (Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 461). Obviously this stands strongly against an evangelical view, yet even here, it is important to note that Vawter recognizes the “messianic” nature of this passage. For an overview of the interpretive options, see the discussion in Walter C. Kaiser Jr, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1995), 50–53.

⁴⁶ Walton summarizes the most basic assumption about this passage when he states, “Judah assumes the role of the younger son, who is emerging to a place of leadership. The indication that his father’s sons will bow down to him (49:8) puts him on par with Joseph” (*Genesis*, 714).

⁴⁷ Historically, Jewish exegesis interpreted this verse messianically. *Targum Onkelos* reads, “Until the time King Messiah comes, to whom belongs the kingdom.” The LXX reads, “until that comes which belongs to him.”

⁴⁸ Walton, *Genesis*, 715. Walton states that the messianic view “coincides with both the Davidic and messianic interpretive directions that have a firm foundation in the early history of interpretation both in Jewish and Christian exegesis” (716).

scepter [an insignia of dominion] shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet [i.e., 'from him'], until he [i.e., the Messiah] comes to whom it [i.e., the rule, reign, and/or dominion] belongs."⁴⁹ Ultimately, it appears that Genesis 49:10 teaches that rulership and kingship belong to the tribe of Judah. In light of this expectation, the promised eschatological Mediator must be understood as coming through Judah's genealogical line. That is, due to the promises given by the Lord in Genesis, the Israelites would have expected a future final King to be born into the line of Judah.⁵⁰

b. The Office of Priest in Genesis

Adam first served in the role of priest, and upon his failure, the Lord promised a future individual who would intercede as the faithful mediatory priest, in place of Adam (3:15). Throughout Genesis, there are several brief glimpses of priestly activity in Genesis which warrant attention. These consist of (1) the proclamation that Levi's tribe would be scattered in Israel, (2) the patriarchal ability to offer sacrifice, and (3) Abraham's interaction with Melchizedek.

The first of these concepts—the proclamation that Levi's tribe would be scattered in Israel—has little bearing on the eschatological individual of Genesis 3:15. It is sufficient to note that what appeared to be a curse in Genesis 49:5–7 was later revealed to be a blessing to the nation of Israel as a whole, as the tribe of Levi was scattered around the nation and enabled to serve the priestly role.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Kaiser, *Messiah*, 53.

⁵⁰ Kaiser aptly summarizes this hope: "Thus, we are more than justified in concluding that this verse is a messianic text that adds to the Messiah's credentials the fact that he will govern, not only the nation Israel, but all the nations of the world" (Ibid., 53).

⁵¹ It is important to mention this concept, given its connection to Deuteronomy 18:1–8. In Jacob's blessings to his sons, he groups Simeon and Levi together (49:5–7). In many ways, this passage reads more like a curse than a blessing—as 49:7a even reads, "Cursed [אָרָר] be their anger ..." This passage alludes back to Genesis 34:25–29, where Simeon and Levi killed Hamor, his son Shechem, and the rest of the city. Jacob was not pleased with this action (34:30), and it appears that he references this event

The second concept—the ability of the patriarchs to offer sacrifice—demonstrates the more universal scope of the priestly office. Several passages involving priestly activity include the accounts of Cain and Abel (4:1–5), Noah’s sacrifice after the flood (8:20–22), and Abraham’s almost-sacrifice of Isaac (22:1–14). Much could be developed about these passages, yet for this study, it is sufficient to note that the Lord expected his chosen people to serve in some sort of priestly role. Though not referred to as “priests,” by offering sacrifice and approaching God’s presence, they functionally acted as priests.

Related to this is the third concept—Abraham’s interaction with Melchizedek (14:17–24). Although the patriarchs who served in priestly roles may not have been explicitly called “priests,” Melchizedek was referred to with this title. The text reads, “He was *priest* [כֹּהֵן] of God Most High” (14:18b).⁵² For the purpose of this study, it is sufficient to note that Melchizedek is an example of a priest of the Lord who preceded Abraham and was obviously thus not a Levitical priest.⁵³ Not only was Melchizedek “priest of God Most High,” but he was also “king

when he states, “In their anger they killed men.” (49:6b). Ultimately, the key statement is found in 49:7b, “I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.” Historically, this happened to both the tribes, and Levi is dispersed among the rest of the tribes (Deut 18:1–8; Num 35:1–5; Josh 14:4; 21:41). What appeared to be a curse in Genesis is later revealed to be a blessing by the Lord.

⁵² In contrast to the view assumed in this study (that Melchizedek worshiped the True God; Yahweh), Walton argues, “Since El Elyon could represent the designation of a Canaanite god, we have no reason to think of Melchizedek as a worshiper of Yahweh or even as monotheistic” (*Genesis*, 419). Both Waltke and Fredricks, as well as Ross, disagree. Ross states, “Abram had here found a true spiritual brother, one who believed in the Spirit God who created matter, the sovereign God who had given Abram the victory, the true God who had promised Abram the blessing” (*Genesis*, 300).

⁵³ See the discussion of Melchizedek in Ross, *Genesis*, 299–302; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2001), 234–35.

of Salem” (14:18).⁵⁴ Although this is not the first time the offices of priest and king had been connected (i.e., Adam was priest-king over Eden, as above), it is the first time after the fall that the two offices are *explicitly* connected in one individual.

Given the expectation of an eschatological mediator who would serve as the final priest (3:15), each of these instances pointed to this individual’s future victory. Therefore, each of the examples of priests in Genesis must be viewed as provisional and temporary.⁵⁵ That is, once the eschatological priest of Genesis 3:15 accomplishes the threefold task of destroying evil, restoring creation, and allowing God to dwell with his people, there would no longer be a need for individuals such as the patriarchs—or Melchizedek—to offer sacrifices to approach God’s presence. The Genesis 3:15 mediator will have accomplished this once and for all.

c. The Office of Prophet in Genesis

Adam first served as the communicatory mediator between God and the woman (2:16–17; 3:1–7, 11). Upon Adam’s failure, the Lord promised a future individual who would succeed in the role first assigned to Adam (3:15). In contrast to Adam, this individual would both truthfully communicate God’s word to the world, and faithfully live by it. Throughout the rest of the book of Genesis, there are several allusions to the prophetic role by the patriarchs. All of these examples center around the communication of God’s covenant to the patriarchs.

In Genesis 20, Abraham journeyed to Gerar (20:1) and began referring to his wife Sarah as his sister (20:2a). Upon seeing her, Abimelech, king of Gerar took her to be his wife (20:2b). However, the Lord appeared in a dream to Abimelech and commanded him to release Sarah (20:3–7). The text reports the Lord’s instruction to Abimelech in 20:7a, “Now then, return the

⁵⁴ The location of Salem—and whether or not it refers to Jerusalem—is outside the scope of this study. Additionally, Walton, *Genesis*, states, “His joint role as king and priest is common in the ancient Near East” (419).

⁵⁵ The concept of the Levitical priesthood as provisional and temporary is developed below in connection with Deuteronomy 18:1–8.

man's wife, for he is a *prophet* [נָבִיא], so that he will pray for you, and you shall live." Interestingly, this is the only use of the term *prophet* (נָבִיא) in the book of Genesis. It evidently implies that Abraham had the ability to receive God's word and intercede on behalf of others—as he would “pray” for Abimelech.⁵⁶ Waltke and Fredricks aptly summarize this concept, “Abraham is a man who, having received revelation, mediates God's word (Exod 4:15; 7:1) and makes intercession (Gen 12:7; 15:1; 18:18 ...).”⁵⁷

Ultimately, one must consider what Abraham's role as *prophet* involved, and if the same title can be applied to the other patriarchs. Briefly stated, Abraham's role as prophet seems to have referred to his relationship with the Lord more so than it did to a specific event. That is, given the context this passage in the life of Abraham, it seems to describe Abraham's relationship with the Lord and his unique ability to communicate the very words of God. This communication between Abraham and the Lord is quite frequent in Genesis (12:1–3, 7; 13:14–17; 15:1–21; 17:1–21; 18:22–33; 21:12–13; 22:1–2; 11–18). Additionally, various other patriarchs (including Noah—7:1–4; 8:21–9:17; Isaac—26:2–5; and Jacob—28:13–15; 35:10–12) received significant revelation from the Lord. Although these individuals are not referred to explicitly as *prophets*, their roles as communicatory mediators aligns quite closely with Abraham's, and it appears that they served in some sort of prophetic role.

As the book of Genesis is examined as a whole, the concept of a prophetic role is certainly developed. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all served in varying degrees in this capacity. Again, in light of the first prophet Adam's role and the promise of Genesis 3:15, it is quite evident that the Israelites would have expected a future eschatological Mediator who would speak the Words of God with absolute clarity.

⁵⁶ Surprisingly, Abimelech appeals to God on the basis that Abraham had not been truthful to him (Gen 20:4–6). Additionally, he rebukes Abraham for not being completely truthful in his communication, which ultimately caused Abimelech to “sin” (Gen 20:9).

⁵⁷ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 286.

IV. Implications of Genesis Upon Deuteronomy

This expectation of a future mediatory King, Priest, and Prophet, stands as the basis for the hope of the Israelites as they stood on the plains of Moab, about to enter into the promised land (Deut 1:1–8). Therefore, when Deuteronomy references “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” by their names seven times (Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5, 27; 29:13; 30:20; 34:4), and as “our fathers” 49 times, it appears that it alludes to the eschatological expectation given in Genesis. Since very specific promises had been given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Genesis, these promises must stand as the foundation for a proper understanding of Deuteronomy. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the specific implications of the Genesis account with the establishment of the Israelite offices of prophet, priest, and king in Deuteronomy 17:14–18:22.

1. Specific Implications for King, Priest, and Prophet

Office of King (Deut 17:14–20)—The book of Genesis clearly expects an eschatological Individual to eventually destroy evil, restore creation, and allow God to dwell with his people. This was first promised in Genesis 3:15, and subsequently woven into the structure of Genesis. Furthermore, this *king* was promised to be a descendant of Abraham (17:5), a descendent of Sarah (17:15), and a descendent of Jacob (35:11) to come through the genealogical line of Judah (49:10). Therefore, the Israelites in Deuteronomy *would have expected* their eventual king to come through the line of Judah. Although this tribal heritage is not mentioned in Deuteronomy, the text is quite clear that the future king will be “whom the Lord your God will choose” (Deut 17:15), and since the Lord had already declared that a future king would come through Judah’s tribe, this would have come as no surprise to the Israelites.

The book of Deuteronomy teaches that the king would be chosen by the Lord (17:15), committed to trusting the Lord for victory (17:16), dedicated to putting the Lord’s will above his own (17:17), and devoted to recognizing his dependence upon the Lord and his word (17:18–20). That is, the king described in Deuteronomy was to be a model Israelite, on behalf of the Israelites. Although Deuteronomy 17:20 indicated the

multiplicity of kings (“he and his children”), it seems best to understand this as the line through which the promised King of Genesis would eventually come.⁵⁸ Ultimately, given the Genesis background for Deuteronomy 17:14–20, the Israelites would have viewed the office of king as provisional and temporary as they waited for the final king who would accomplish all which was foretold of him in Genesis.

Office of Priest (Deut 18:1–8)—In light of the promises made concerning the eschatological priest who would succeed in the areas in which Adam failed (Gen 3:15), Genesis teaches that eventually there will be no need for individuals to offer sacrifices to approach God’s presence. Therefore, the Israelites in Deuteronomy *would have expected* a future mediatory priest who would come and be the final mediator between God and man. Just as the first priest, Adam, was to guard God’s sacred garden—temple (Gen 2:15), this last priest would not only protect God’s dwelling place, but would make the way for God to dwell among his people, as he had first dwelt among them in Eden. Again, he would undo what Adam had done, and succeed where Adam had failed.

Ultimately, this indicates the provisional and temporary nature of the Levitical priesthood of Deuteronomy 18:1–8. Although the text is clear that in some fashion, the Levites will “stand and minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons for all time” (18:5), once Genesis is understood as the background of Deuteronomy, it becomes clear that eventually an eschatological priest would serve as the final mediator between God and man. The Israelites would have longed for the day when God would eventually send his Promised One to achieve all that was foretold of him. Overall, the Levitical priesthood would have

⁵⁸ About this passage, Miller states, “Much has been written about the way that messianic passages of the royal psalms and Isaiah point us to and find their actuality in Jesus of Nazareth. It is possible we have overlooked the text that may resonate most with the kingship he manifested; he was one who sought and received none of the perquisites of kingship, who gave his full and undivided allegiance to God, and who lived his whole life by the instruction, the torah, of the Lord” (*Deuteronomy*, 149).

served as a daily reminder that something greater was yet to come.

Office of Prophet (Deut 18:9–22)—Subsequent to the first prophet, Adam’s failure to communicate God’s word to the woman or obey the command himself, the Lord promised to send an eschatological mediator to undo all that Adam had done (Gen 3:15). Given the context of Genesis, this future prophet is expected to communicate God’s word with absolute clarity and unconditionally obey the Lord’s commands. In Deuteronomy, the office of prophet is established for the Israelites (Deut 18:9–22). The two verses which have received much debate are 18:15 and 18:18, both of which refer to the future prophet whom “the Lord your God will raise up for you” (18:15). Since the Israelites *would have expected* an eschatological prophet in light of Genesis, this passage appears to refer both to the immediate prophetic office and ultimately to the eschatological prophet. That is, although Deuteronomy seems to refer to the office which individuals such as Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel held, given the future-oriented nature of Genesis, this passage in Deuteronomy is forward-focused and anticipatory. The eschatological expectation of Genesis reveals that the Israelite office of prophet was provisional and temporary.

2. Summary of Implications

Each of the divinely appointed offices of king, priest, and prophet had numerous immediate implications for Israel’s social, political, religious, and spiritual life. The office of *king* (Deut 17:14–20) related to those who governed the nation on behalf of the Lord. The office of *priest* (18:1–8) related to those who offered sacrifices on behalf of the nation for the Lord. And the office of *prophet* (18:9–22) related to those who spoke to the nation on behalf of the Lord. In each of these three cases, the individual who held the office was to serve as a mediator between God and man. The Lord announced that he would *choose* (יִבְחַר) the future king (17:15), that he had *chosen* (בָּחַר) the tribe of Levi minister in his name (18:5), and that he had promised to *raise up* (יָקִים) a prophet like Moses to speak on his behalf (18:15). In light of the eschatological background of Genesis, it

is evident that these mediatory offices served as temporary and provisional roles, pointing the nation to the eventual day when the Lord would send the final Mediator—the Second Adam—to serve as King, Priest, and Prophet.

V. Conclusion

Overall, the books of Genesis and Deuteronomy are intrinsically related. Genesis consistently sets the stage for Deuteronomy, and Deuteronomy repeatedly alludes back to Genesis. In view of the eschatological expectation of Genesis and the hope of a future mediator, the Israelite offices of king, priest, and prophet (17:14–18:22) must be viewed as forward pointing and anticipatory in nature. Even though these passages were not necessarily “prophetic,” they served as reminders for the Israelites regarding their future hope. That is, they served to remind the Israelites of the expectation that the Second Adam would come and succeed in all areas where the first Adam had failed. Perhaps the words of Alexander summarize best the message of the Pentateuch:

The divine promises of blessing and nationhood, which are so important to the development of the plot, remain unfulfilled by the end of Deuteronomy. As a result, the Pentateuch is oriented toward the future. What will become of these promises? To answer this we must look beyond the concluding chapters of Deuteronomy. As it stands, the Pentateuch is an unfinished story.⁵⁹

“What will become of these promises?” In relation to this study, as the book of Deuteronomy ends, a similar question may be posed: “When the will final King, Priest, and Prophet come?” Those who trust in Christ may rejoice that in the fullness of time, the final eschatological Mediator, the Second Adam, indeed did come in the person of Jesus Christ.

⁵⁹ Alexander, *From Paradise*, 118.

(Re)Defining the Gospels: Mark as a Test Case, Part Two

Wayne Slusser

Abstract: The Gospel accounts are stories that report biographical, historical, and theological information regarding the central character, Jesus Christ. This article proposes that the Gospel of Mark not only possesses the elements of narrative that are typical to a story, but Mark also demonstrates that it fits into the subgenre classification known as theological narrative biography proposed in part one of this study. Mark's story ultimately answers two questions: "Who is Jesus?" and "What is a follower of him to do?"

Key Words: Gospel, Mark, genre theological narrative biography, three-fold identity

Studying the Gospel of Mark as Literature

The focus of the preceding article (*JMAT*, Fall 2017, Vol. 21, no. 2) was the classification of the Gospel accounts as genre (narrative) and subgenre (theological narrative biography). The goal was to redefine the traditional long-standing term known as *Gospel* and explicate more fully and carefully the intent of the Gospel authors. The subgenre classification was necessary due to the fact that the Gospels are unique and unlike any other narrative. The examination of genre and subgenre captures the basic framework of the Gospels.

The second part of this study demonstrates that the elements of the narrative of Mark's Gospel is a story comprised of episodes. These brief episodes are structured through three geographic locations (Galilee, "on the way" to Jerusalem, and Jerusalem). They are also communicated through the expressions

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and/or responses of various characters or groups treated as characters (religious & governmental authorities, disciples, and crowd) as they interact with the unifying character and life of Jesus Christ (teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection).

Mark's story contains a theological emphasis. It is more than a biography and history. The theological emphasis is one of the unique features of the Gospel accounts that serves as the basis for its subgenre category, theological narrative biography. Mark's story emphasizes two aspects. He declares, defines, and affirms the identity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God throughout his story. This is the formal aspect. Mark also emphasizes the role of the disciples thus providing the significance and application of Jesus' identity to the reader. This is the functional aspect. In other words, Mark identifies who Jesus is and in light of knowing him, what Jesus' disciples ought to do.

Literary Genre: The Gospel of Mark as Narrative

Mark developed and composed his story through a narrative comprised of brief episodes structured together, communicated in and around Galilee and Jerusalem during Rome's military control over Israel. Mark is concerned with the life of Jesus and his disciples, Roman and Jewish governments, and other followers. Mark's narrative is put forward as a story that essentially conveys an account of the good news about Jesus Christ (cf. Mark 1:1).² Stein states that Mark is "the biography of Jesus interwoven in a historical narrative."³ In other words, the Gospel of Mark is a narration of the life of Jesus as the Son of God told as a story through various historical accounts within the life of Jesus. Achtemeier states, "We must look at it [the Gospel of Mark] as a totality and allow it to tell its own story. . . . We

² Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, WBC 34a (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), xxi. He also contends that Mark's use of "gospel" in the prologue of his story offers a logical designation for similar writings; that is, 'The Gospel according to'

³ Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BEC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 21. Contra Robert H. Gundry. Gundry concludes that the Gospel of Mark is a "loose disposition of materials," or "a collage, not a diptych or a triptych or any other carefully segmented portrayal of Jesus" (*Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 1048-49).

must respect the narrative as it stands and follow its invitation to enter into the narrative world it creates.”⁴

A broad look at each of the elements (e.g., structure, setting, character, and point of view) of narrative throughout the Gospel of Mark demonstrates the coherence and unification of the whole text, thus validating the classification of the Gospel accounts as narrative. This analysis assists the reader with an understanding of the arrangement of the components typical to a narrative (*how* the story is told) and the argument of the narrative (*what* is the content of the story). This facilitates a means to study Mark.

The Gospel of Mark: Structure – Three-fold Identity

Mark’s narrative structure is captured through an eclectic approach called three-fold identity. The reason for the eclectic approach is to illustrate how Mark weaves together geography and theology in order to communicate his story. Geography and theology are not only common among scholars as they understand Mark’s structure, but they also best point to Mark’s purpose.⁵ In other words, the geographical locations are used as the means to communicate the theology, or Mark’s purpose; which is the message of the opening verse of the Gospel 1:1. Mark’s purpose for his story is to explicate the identity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God (formal aspect, “who is he?”) for this is found in the title of Mark’s story (1:1). As a result of knowing Jesus, Mark also provides the applicational significance to his story (functional aspect, “what are the disciples to do?”). Therefore, Mark utilizes geography and theology to write the story of Jesus Christ. And in doing so, he demonstrates that his story is purposeful.

⁴ Paul J. Achtemeier, *Mark*, Proclamation Commentaries 2nd ed., rev and exp. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 42.

⁵ Guelich also claims that geography and theology can be the basis for Mark’s structure. (*Mark 1-8:26*, xxxvi). See other options reported by Kevin W. Larsen, “The Structure of Mark’s Gospel: Current Proposals,” *CBR* 3, no.1 (2004): 140-60. Rikki E. Watts proposes that the structure of Mark’s story has a dual perspective of salvation and judgment within the context of the Isaianic New Exodus (*Isaiah’s New Exodus in Mark*, Biblical Studies Library [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997], 4).

Mark composes his story through three geographical settings; the region of Galilee (1:1-8:21), the way to Jerusalem (8:22-10:52), and Jerusalem itself (11:1-16:8) in order to portray Jesus' identity, the formal aspect of Mark's story.⁶ He uses geography to capture the essence of the story of Jesus through his travels. Jesus' ministry in and around Galilee is followed by his journey southward toward Jerusalem, which ultimately culminates in the climax of his death and resurrection in Jerusalem.⁷

Although the geographical section breaks may not be clearly discernible, for example does the middle section begin at 8:22 or 8:27, an understanding that Mark's story is a flowing narrative seems apparent and his structure is discerned through a reading of the text. Therefore as one reads the text, the following conclusions are made. The first section of Mark's story is communicated through various episodes where Jesus' ministry is primarily in and around Galilee (1:14-8:21). Mark's focus is on the declaration of Jesus' identity. Jesus primarily declares his identity through his teachings and miracles. But Mark's story seems to take a turn at 8:22. This shift is demonstrated not only because of a change in geography (Bethsaida), but also a change in focus (disciples); thus demonstrating the relationship between geography and content, or theology. The focus seems to be more on the disciples' responsibility as followers and less on Jesus' identity.

The middle section of Mark's story demonstrates that Jesus is more narrowly focused on the disciples. He teaches them how to respond and live in light of knowing Jesus' true identity (8:22-10:52). In order to teach his disciples, Jesus defines himself as the suffering and self-sacrificing Messiah.

⁶ Marcus claims that though several structural outlines exist for the Gospel of Mark, that "there does seem to be an overarching geographical framework to the Gospel, within which literary and theological structures play their roles" (*Mark 1-8*, 63).

⁷ See also Dennis Sweetland, *Mark: From Death to Life* (Hyde Park, NY: New City P, 2007), 17. Gundry disagrees. He concludes that "walking through Mark takes us hither and yon with little or no discernible pattern" (*Mark*, 1046).

Mark identifies the final section of his story through a geographical shift. It is here that Jesus now approaches Jerusalem (11:1). Jesus' ministry changes once again. His ministry now is focused on affirming his identity. He enters the eventual place of his death and resurrection, Jerusalem (11:1-16:8), proving he is indeed who he said he was. Therefore, not only does Mark use a change in geography as the means to communicate his story, but also relates these geographical settings to the identity of Jesus Christ, who is the unifying focus of the narrative.

The three-fold geographical settings serve as the means to communicate the formal aspect of Mark's story; the identity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. In the beginning of Mark's story, an introductory verse sets the stage with the emphasis for the readers.⁸ This opening verse, the "good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God" grabs the readers' attention. It is placed at the beginning of Mark's story so the readers can answer the question concerning Jesus' identity.⁹ Hooker claims that Mark's theological purpose is found in 1:1. She writes,

Mark has chosen to present 'the gospel of Jesus Christ' in the form of a narrative. . . . Mark has provided a guide to his narrative in the form of a prologue that provides the information we need to read the rest of his Gospel, and so gives us a succinct summary of his christology. . . . The gospel is more than the message that Jesus preached. It is, in fact, Jesus himself—that is, the gospel *about* Jesus Christ. So from 1:9 onward—with the exceptions of 6:14-29 and 14:66-72—Jesus is the central figure in the narrative.¹⁰

⁸ Boring agrees. He claims that Mark is a carefully structured narrative that is composed through the author's Christology provided through his title in 1:1 ("Mark 1:1-15 and the Beginning of the Gospel," *Semeia* 52 (1990): 43).

⁹ Jack D. Kingsbury claims that Mark's focus is on Jesus' identity as the 'Messiah, Son of God' that is ultimately revealed by the Roman centurion in 15:39 (*The Christology of Mark's Gospel* [Philadelphia: Fortress 1983]). See also Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, xl. Joel B. Green states that the answer to the question, 'who is Jesus,' is found in verse one (*The Way of the Cross: Following Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock], 20).

¹⁰ "Who Can This Be?" in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005),

The episodes of the story of Mark help the reader “wrestle with the question ‘Who then is this man that even the wind and the sea obey him?’ (4:41).”¹¹ These episodes elucidate Mark’s authorial emphasis; that is, Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Mark composes this story through the teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as he travels from Galilee to Jerusalem.

The question of identity for Mark runs throughout his story, for each section of the story explicates his identity. The first section (1:1-8:21) declares Jesus as one who causes astonishment and possesses unprecedented authority. Various characters try to make sense of his teaching and miracle-work, but to no avail they are not able to do so. The central section (8:22-10:52) breaks through with Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ (8:29), but this section also continues to report that the disciples are those men who struggle to follow Jesus due to their lack of understanding. Therefore, Jesus further defines who he is (formal aspect); the suffering and self-sacrificing Messiah, and teaches the disciples what they ought to do as a result of knowing him (functional aspect).

The last section (11:1-16:8) affirms Jesus’ identity as the Son of God through Jesus’ own words (14:62) and the words of the Roman Centurion at Jesus’ death (15:39). This section also

80-81. See also Edwards who claims that “Jesus is the uncontested subject of the Gospel of Mark, and he is portrayed as a man of action” (*The Gospel According to Mark*, PNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans], 13).

Achtemeier also claims that Mark’s narrative is to be seen through this verse. He writes, “Yet, for the whole of Mark’s narrative, as for this verse, the only one through whom we can gain life is Jesus. It would appear, therefore, that the power of Jesus is also present with his power to save. Apparently the narrative of Jesus’ deeds and words, accepted as a narrative of deeds done and words spoken with the authority of God’s royal Son, is able to save a person’s life. . . . That means that when Mark speaks of the ‘beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ,’ he is not referring to where a book or even a public career begins, but rather to the fact that God’s saving acts, which make up the ‘gospel,’ began with the career of Jesus. . . . Where the gospel is present, there Jesus’ power is present and perhaps even Jesus himself!” (*Mark*, 64).

¹¹ Stein, *Mark*, 21.

testifies to Jesus’ resurrection (16:6), a testament to Jesus’ ability to predict both his death and resurrection (8:31, 9:31, and 10:34). This ability is only demonstrative of God. The following table (table one) shows the cohesive relationship between the three sections of Mark’s story, thereby, demonstrating that the three-fold identity structure of Mark’s story seems to be correct. The three sections are Jesus’ Galilean Ministry (1:14-8:21), “on the way” to Jerusalem (8:22-10:52), and Jerusalem (11:1-16:8).

Table 1. Three-fold Identity of Mark’s Story

Aspect of Mark’s Story	Jesus’ Galilean Ministry (1:14-8:21)	“on the way” to Jerusalem (8:22-10:52) – Jesus’ Three Passion Predictions	Jerusalem (11:1-16:8)
Formal Aspect “Who Is Jesus?”	Declares Jesus’ Identity	Defines Jesus’ Identity and Mission	Affirms Jesus’ Identity
	1:1, 11 (Son of God)	First passion prediction – use of δεῖ	Jesus speaks to his identity (14:61-62)
	3:11; 5:7 (Son of God)	Second passion prediction – use of παραδίδοται and εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων	Jesus suffers and is killed (15:16-41)
	8:29 (Messiah, Christ)	Third passion prediction – use of Ἱεροσόλυμα	Jesus rises again, after three days (16:1-6)
Functional Aspect “What Are His Disciples to Do?”	Actions of the Disciples	Characteristics of the Disciples	Failures of the Disciples
	Follow Jesus (1:16-20; 2:13-17)	Loyalty to Jesus (8:34-9:1)	Failure of obedience (14:32-42)
	Service on behalf of Jesus (3:13-19)	Service to others (9:35-37)	Failure of following (14:50-54)
	Obedience to Jesus (6:7-13)	Humility and Self-sacrifice (10:41-45)	Failure of loyalty (14:66-72)

Mark uses cohesion throughout his story.¹² The horizontal arrows that connect the three sections of his story (three-fold identity) show cohesion. The emphasis falls on the central section (8:22-10:52) due to the repetition of concepts and the explication of details pertaining to both Jesus' identity and the role and responsibility of the disciples. The premise that Mark's central section "hangs together" within Mark's story as a whole is shown in Table One. In other words, Mark's central section offers the reader multiple connections that point both backward and forward to the formal and functional aspects of Mark's story. The following conclusions can be made.

First, Mark shows cohesion between the central section and the rest of Mark's story because he explicates Jesus' identity (Messiah). He does so by pointing back (1:14-8:21) to the multiple times Mark reports Jesus' identity as the Son of God. Mark's report of Jesus' identity serves as cohesive ties connecting the first section to the central section of Mark's story. In other words, Jesus' three predictions of his death, located within the central section, further define what has already been stated by Mark as the author (1:1), stated by God himself (1:11), stated by the demons (3:11; 5:7), and stated by Peter (8:29); thus connecting the central section to the first section of the story.

The central section also points forward to Jesus' identity. Mark's story also implements cohesive ties to affirm his identity. The ties are Jesus' own words (14:61-62) and the words of the Roman Centurion (15:39). Mark is also able to report the affirmation of Jesus' identity because Jesus' predictions come true. Jesus predicts he will suffer, will be killed, and will rise again (cf. 8:31, 9:31; 10:33-34); and he indeed suffers, dies, and rises again (15:16-41; 16:1-6). The final cohesive tie Mark uses to explicate Jesus' identity is through geography. Mark reports in Jesus' final prediction that the destination of his suffering is Jerusalem (10:32). The reader is able to make the connection that this is where Jesus will die in the next chapter (11:11ff).

¹² Cohesion is about relationship, specifically the relationship between words, sentences, paragraphs, and discourses. It is what ties a text or a discourse together. However, cohesion does more than tie texts together; it also relates them into a meaningful whole.

Second, Mark shows cohesion between the central section and the rest of Mark's story (11:1-16:8) because he explicates the role of the disciples. Mark demonstrates cohesion regarding the disciples' role that is based on Jesus' identity, not only within each passion prediction, but also by pointing back to the disciples' various actions within the first section of Mark's story. For example, the disciples followed Jesus (1:16-20; 2:13-17), served others (3:13-19), and obeyed Jesus (6:7-13). It is clear within the central section that the disciples were not aware of all the implications of following Jesus; thus leading to their misunderstanding (cf. 8:32b-33; 9:33-34; 10:35-40). Mark therefore reports Jesus' expectations for the disciples (cf. 8:34-9:1; 9:35-37; 10:41-45). However, the reader also realizes that Mark reports similar expectations, for the most part, of Jesus earlier in the story.

The central section also points forward to the failure of the disciples (11:1-16:8). Although Jesus clearly specifies the characteristics his disciples are to exemplify, they still find it difficult to obey (14:32-42) and loyally follow (14:50-54, 66-72). It seems clear that Mark shows the disciples' obedience in the first part of his story only to report that they struggle in later sections of his story. The central section seems to show Jesus taking an active role to clarify the disciples' role, but yet Mark later shows their failure in the last section of his story (11:1-16:8). Therefore upon knowing Jesus, the disciples do not fully understand what it means to follow Jesus.

Understanding relationships between the central section (8:22-10:52) and Mark's story as a whole (1:1-16:8) confirms the theme of the story. The central section fits into the story and serves to explicate the details of Jesus' identity. This relates to Mark's christological title (1:1). The central section also portrays the role of the disciples. This relates to the theological significance for the reader. Therefore, the three-fold identity of Mark best represents the structure of his story.

Summary: The Gospel of Mark: Structure – Three-fold Identity

Mark's story is structured as a narrative. It is structured through geography that illustrates the journey of the Son of God.

However, there are specific movements within this geography that relate to Jesus' identity; which is Mark's theological emphasis. Geography and theology for Mark are inextricably tied together. Galilee is where Mark declares Jesus' identity through his teachings and miracles (1:14-8:21), "on the way" to Jerusalem is where Mark defines Jesus' identity by reporting Jesus' three passion predictions (8:22-10:52), and the city of Jerusalem is where Mark affirms Jesus' identity as the Son of God through his suffering, death, and resurrection (11:1-16:8). Therefore the three-fold identity approach to the structure of Mark's story best captures his message.

The Gospel of Mark: Setting

The setting of a narrative provides the "world" in which the episodes take place and characters function to tell the story. Setting is more than location and more than time. It "may illuminate or bring new significance to otherwise obscure features."¹³ At this point, it is important to note that the author provides the setting and he determines what the reader is to know through reading and imagination.

The Gospel of Mark is told through the means of a combination of travel and geography. It is the journey throughout the Gospel that binds the story together. But it is not just movement across a landscape. Rather it is a journey that moves one to the climax of the story; that is, Jesus' death. Therefore, it is the "way" to the cross. During this movement Jesus' identity is declared as the Son of God (1:14-8:21). Jesus continues to move "on the way" to Jerusalem where he will suffer death. It is during this movement that Jesus instructs his disciples regarding their cost to follow him, the central section of the story (8:22-10:52). He arrives in Jerusalem where he is welcomed by the acclamation of crowds only to be crucified by Roman and Jewish authorities (11:1-16:8). It is during Jesus' crucifixion that his identity is affirmed as the Son of God (15:39). Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie claim that Mark's structural setting "leads readers to join the journey of 'the way of God.' . . . The story draws readers

¹³ R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark*, Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2007), 25.

into the journey and the destiny of Jesus.”¹⁴ Thus, the spatial setting plays a vital role in understanding Mark’s story.¹⁵

The Gospel of Mark is also told through several different temporal venues. As Jesus, his disciples, and the crowds of various sizes move across the landscape, episodes that make-up Mark’s story occur during a general length of time, as well as, the specificity of the length of time.

Mark’s story is generally told through the time period of days rather than weeks or months.¹⁶ Mark’s story also includes the specificity of the day; that is, the period of the day: evening or morning. Thus it is clear that Mark’s story is told in a sequence of episodes that do not just involve geography, but also chronology.

The Gospel of Mark is told through a specific social and cultural climate. This is seen through two venues; the geographical setting and the characters’ social class. As Mark writes his story across the landscape, opposition becomes apparent between the two primary geographical settings; Galilee and Jerusalem. Van Iersel states,

Jerusalem is the centre and capital of the country, the seat also of political power and the temple authorities. Galilee, on the other hand, is on the periphery, a faraway province whose inhabitants are

¹⁴ David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress), 72.

¹⁵ For more detail regarding the setting of Mark see Guelich, “Mark, Gospel of,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic), 516-17.

¹⁶ Mark Allen Powell indicates that nothing happens in Mark’s story that needs longer than a day to explain. He states, “A crowd remains with him ‘for three days’ (8:2). He teaches that he will rise from the dead ‘after three days’ (8:31). He is transfigured on the mountain ‘after six days’ (9:2). The Passover is reported to be coming ‘after two days’ (14:1). He is accused of claiming he will rebuild the temple ‘in three days’ (14:58; 15:29)” (*What Is Narrative Criticism* [Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 1990], 80).

looked upon with suspicion by Jerusalem, partly because of their being mixed with non-Jewish populations.¹⁷

This opposition also demonstrates a distinct classification between people groups and their social standing.¹⁸ The society depicted in Mark's story seems to illustrate a class society. The Pharisees and scribes were those who interpreted and upheld the law of Moses. While on the other hand, the rest of the people in Mark are common folk.

The political climate of Mark's story is the nation of Israel under the military control of the Roman Empire. Herod Antipas and Pilate enforce this military control. This political environment was especially difficult for those living under the dominion of Roman rule within Galilee and Jerusalem and is made evident in Mark's story (10:42; 12:13-17; 13:9). This political regime also served as the appropriate setting for those in opposition to Jesus and his ministry (14:53-15:41).

The setting of the Gospel of Mark is oriented in two major areas: Galilee and Jerusalem. It is in these two locations that Jesus' identity as the Son of God is declared and affirmed. The majority of the episodes that compose Mark's narrative occur during the time period of a day rather than a month or year. At times however, Mark is specific both with the kind of day and the location in which the episodes of his story occur. Mark's story depicts a cultural environment where people of different classes and status function as characters to help facilitate the portrayal and thus the validation of Jesus' identity. In other words, the teachings and miracles of Jesus occur with the

¹⁷ Bas van Iersel, *Reading Mark*, trans. W. H. Bisscheroux (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical P, 1989), 22.

¹⁸ R. T. France states, "Mark's geographical symbolism, if such it is, is not a matter of great theological weight; it is rather a vehicle of his dramatic retelling of the story of Jesus, serving to draw out the intensely opposite reactions which he provoked, the contrasting soils into which the good seed had to be sown" (*The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 35). For a detailed discussion of the Roman social classes of people see Duane F. Watson, "Roman Social Classes," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 999-1004.

common folk near or around Galilee; whereas the death and resurrection events involve the military, political, and religious authorities in and around the city of Jerusalem.¹⁹

The Gospel of Mark: Characters

The characters in the Gospel of Mark serve as agents to carry out the plot. They are not only agents *in* the plot, but their actions are also an expression *of* the plot. In Mark, there are four primary characters. They are the Son of God, Jesus Christ; the authorities (both governmental and religious); the disciples; and the common folk (typically described as the crowds who follow Jesus).²⁰

The reader discovers that the plot of the story revolves around the opening verse, "the good news about Jesus Messiah, the Son of God." Mark expresses this message throughout the episodes of the story. In other words, from the very beginning the reader sees that Jesus is the central figure through the announcement and anointing by God (1:1-11). Jesus is the Son of God because God has given him this authority to be the Son, his "beloved Son (9:7)." Mark illustrates Jesus' identity primarily through his words and deeds; namely his teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection.

Mark declares Jesus' identity through the responses to his teachings. Jesus' teaching caused his hearers to be amazed, or overwhelmed for he was no ordinary teacher.²¹ Mark also

¹⁹ Van Iersel notes the apparent contrast between locations and people groups within the story of Mark. He writes, "In Galilee Jesus is very active: he makes a new beginning, finds a number of supporters, gets response, helps the sick and handicapped, casts out demons, and resists his adversaries. Jerusalem is the scene of the passion narrative, in which Jesus plays a passive rather than an active part; here he announces the end of the temple and the world, loses his supporters, fails to get a hearing, cures no one, does not cast out any demons, and is defeated by his adversaries" (*Reading Mark*, 22).

²⁰ The basis of the treatment of these characters will only come from the Gospel of Mark. There will not be a construction of the background or history of these characters from other Gospel accounts.

²¹ ἐκπλήσσω "to cause to be filled with amazement to the point of being overwhelmed, amaze, astound, overwhelm" (Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*,

declares Jesus' identity through his miracles. His identity assumes the prerogatives that only God possesses (2:7); therefore he provides the means for the performing of miracles. These actions of Jesus clearly demonstrate his extraordinary character. In fact, Jesus is so extraordinary that he astounds those who see what he does, causes others to question who he is, and invites opposition from those in authority.

Mark declares Jesus' identity through his death. The significance of Jesus' death for Mark's theology is his willing obedience toward the heavenly Father and his vulnerability to suffer execution at the hands of the governmental and religious authorities.²² Jesus' death must take place (8:31, use of $\delta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}$); therefore implying his death is a part of the divine plan.²³ The purpose of his death (8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34) is to be a ransom for many (10:45). Jesus has a God-given commission; to serve as the replacement or substitute in order to assure the release of a slave from his owner. In this case, ransom humanity from sin and death.

3d ed., rev. and ed. by Frederick William Danker [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 308.

²² Francis J. Moloney claims, "He is the Christ and the Son of God as the crucified one. This is a matter of major importance for Mark: Jesus is the crucified Christ and the crucified Son of God. It is in and through crucifixion that Jesus fulfills God's messianic design, and shows that he is the beloved Son of God, in whom the Father is well pleased (1:11; 9:7). However, the tragic end of Jesus' life is not a dreadful fate that simply falls unjustly upon him. Mark associates the categories of Messiah and Son of God with Jesus' death because he wants his readers and hearers to be aware that the crucifixion of God's Son and Messiah are part of God's larger design" (*Mark: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004,] 142).

²³ Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 80. Stein states, "Jesus' death is part of the divine plan for his life. It is not a tragedy; an example of how things can take an unfortunate turn or how the best laid plans can go awry. On the contrary, in the death of Jesus all things go exactly according to the divine plan" (*Mark*, 34). $\delta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}$ is a divine passive indicating that God ultimately is acting as the agent in Jesus' death; it is necessary that Jesus suffers, dies, and rises again.

Mark declares Jesus' identity through his resurrection. Jesus' death is not the end. Everything in Mark's story has led to this episode. It is the final scene that invites the readers to reflect on the fact that God's Son has now risen from the dead. As a result, Jesus' predictions that he will suffer, die, and rise again are true (cf. 8:31; 9:31; 10:34). Jesus' death also vindicates his innocence.

Mark's story involves those in opposition to Jesus as the Son of God. Though the groups of authorities are different, governmental and religious, their opposition is united (3:6).²⁴ The governmental authorities were concerned that their right to rule was given to them by God; therefore they protected this right. They also protected the temple and kept social order. The religious authorities, on the other hand, confronted Jesus regarding legal issues, purity regulations, and his authority in general (teaching, healing, and permitting work on the Sabbath). Although governmental and religious groups had substantial social and political authority, they feared the people (11:18; 12:12; 14:1-2; 15:15) and maintained their position through manipulation (15:9-13) and hypocrisy (12:38-40). It is clear that their primary goal was to oppose the one who had "true authority" from God (1:22), Jesus Christ.

The governmental and religious groups lacked understanding. At times Mark demonstrated that they only had a human understanding of Scripture; therefore they were often in error. They objected to the rule of God and refused to change. They possessed an inability to see and therefore blasphemed God. They rejected Jesus' power and envied his popularity.

The followers are typically viewed in two circles, a narrow circle (the twelve disciples) and a broader circle (others also called).²⁵ Both of these groups are the beneficiaries of Jesus'

²⁴ See the following works regarding the authorities: Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)*, rev. and ed. G. Vermes and F. Millar, 2.381-403; 2.404-14 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973-87); Jack D. Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), 14-21.

²⁵ Guelich characterizes the two groups as "both a narrower circle comprised of the Twelve who are called to be 'with him' and specially

ministry (teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection). However, for the most part Mark references the narrower circle of followers when referencing the disciples. The disciples play an important role throughout Mark's story. Although they may not be the "central" character, France contends that they often serve as the eyes through which Mark tells the story of Jesus.²⁶ The disciples also are more than historical figures. The disciples are the early group of followers who exemplified those who carried out the mission of the kingdom of God through their wholehearted commitment (1:18, 20; 2:14; 10:28-30), through their privileged insight (4:11), and through their united effort regarding proclamation (3:14-15; 6:12-13, 30).²⁷

The disciples are mentioned throughout Mark's story. They are mentioned either in a positive or negative way; thus illustrating their commitment, their lack of understanding, their fear and faithlessness, their selfish ambition, and their eventual abandonment of Jesus. The positive way Mark illustrates the disciples is through their commitment. They followed Jesus when he called them (1:16-20; 2:14). The importance to the commitment, and therefore an expression of Jesus' authority, lies in the fact that the disciples left their livelihood (1:16-18) and families (1:19-20) to be followers of Jesus (8:34-38).²⁸

commissioned to share in his ministry of teaching, healing and exorcism (3:13-14; cf. 5:18; 6:7-13) and a larger circle who also are called (e.g., Lev 2:13), commissioned (e.g., 5:19-20) 'followers' (e.g., 2:15-17)" ("Mark, Gospel of," 522).

²⁶ France, *Gospel of Mark*, 28. "It is about how twelve ordinary men who met Jesus and entered into a new dimension of living" (28).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁸ Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie argue that the disciples fulfill their calling. They write, "They become fishers for people—leaving work and family to follow, going to him on the mountain, then proclaiming, exorcising, and healing when he authorizes them to do so. They serve Jesus by following his instructions to take him in the boat, to find a donkey for him, and to prepare the Passover meal. They go with him anywhere he permits them, staying with him despite storms, trips to the desert, corrections, warnings, and little or no praise or assurance of reward" (*Mark As Story*, 124).

One of the negative ways Mark illustrates the disciples is through their lack of understanding, through a hardened heart (6:52; 8:17). It is through two episodes, namely the feeding of the five thousand (6:32-44) and four thousand (8:1-9), that the disciples do not grasp the significance of the identity of the one they follow.

Another negative way Mark illustrates the disciples is through their selfish ambition. This proves they possess a human mindset. They waited for Jesus' triumphant march into Jerusalem to overthrow the Roman government and desired a reward because they had followed him (9:33-34; 10:35-40). Not only did the disciples desire to be honored, they did not want to experience a shameful death.

This leads to the last negative way that Mark communicates the disciples' character, for they eventually abandoned Jesus (14:50). They abandoned Jesus because of their fear and overestimation of the ability to be faithful (14:26-31, 32-42). The disciples misunderstood Jesus' message and ministry. As a result, they followed, feared, denied, and abandoned their leader and teacher Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The crowd, ὄχλος or πλῆθος, refers to the common people.²⁹ The common folk appear throughout the story with little or no connection to one another (e.g., Simon's mother-in-law [1:29-31]; the woman with an issue of blood [5:25-29]; the Syrophoenician woman [7:24-30]; the deaf and dumb man [7:31-37]; the blind man at Bethsaida [8:22-26]; and blind Bartimaeus [10:46-52]). The appearances of the crowd are brief, but important. The crowd demonstrates faith. However this faith is not always a turning to Jesus in repentance and belief. They instead often come to Jesus for the purpose of changing their situation (2:3-5; 5:34; 9:23-25; 10:52).

The story of the Gospel of Mark is told through the various expressions of four characters (or groups treated as a character): Jesus, the authorities, the disciples, and the crowds. Jesus was

²⁹ Edwards claims that Jesus' popularity was so significant that Mark refers to the crowds forty times before chapter 10 (*Gospel According to Mark*, 74). For more information see Kingsbury, *Christology of Mark's Gospel*, 78-80.

one who taught with authority. He also possessed an extraordinary identity. He enjoyed the prerogatives of God. But it was mainly in and through his death and resurrection that Mark's story finds its climax. It is therefore through what Jesus does that invites expressions such as opposition, commitment, amazement, and faith. Mark also makes it clear that these various expressions overlap between characters.

The authorities' primary role was to oppose and seek the destruction of Jesus. Jesus' actions were a challenge and threat to the rulers of the government and religion. The disciples on the other hand, did not oppose Jesus. Rather they were committed and fearful at the same time, following Jesus wherever he went but doing so not really knowing who they were following. The common folk demonstrated faith in the abilities of Jesus; but they came to him only trusting that he would change their situation. It is in the life of these four characters, or groups treated as characters, represented through various and reliable expressions, that the reader is invited to consider Mark's story.

The Story of Mark: Point of View

Mark's story is basically written from two different points of view: the narrator and the characters. Mark dominates the telling of the story. It is through his point of view that the reader captures the characters' opinions, thoughts, and emotions.³⁰ The characters, on the other hand, depict a world that provides the reader with firsthand information. In other words, though their actions, words, etc. are written by Mark, the reader directly hears/reads the characters' view of the situation at hand. It is not from the narrator's point of view.

Mark as narrator captures the historical episodes in the structure that he deems best in order to communicate his story

³⁰ Norman R. Petersen describes this third-person point of view as the omniscient point of view of a narrator. He writes, "That the narrator knows everything that needs to be known about the agents and events; that he is entirely free to move as he will in time and place, and to shift from character to character, reporting (or concealing) what he chooses of their speech and actions; and also that he has 'privileged' access to a character's thoughts and feelings and motives, as well as to his overt speech and actions" ("Point of View in Mark's Narrative," *Semeia* 12 [1978]: 105-06).

about Jesus Christ.³¹ He then integrates the setting, the characters and their actions and depicts the story through episodes and his point of view. For example, in the stilling of the storm (4:35-41) Mark begins the episode by describing a scene in which he presents information as if he were with Jesus and his disciples.³² He reports Jesus' command, "Let us go over to the other side." He continues this close perspective throughout the episode by reporting the significance and danger of the storm by using the result clause, "waves beat into the ship *so that it was now full*," and the informative statement, "Jesus was asleep in the hinder part of the boat." Mark then shifts the perspective to that of the characters in which the reader is able to imaginatively hear and see the words spoken by the disciples, "Master, do you not care that we are close to dying?" and the words spoken by Jesus, "Peace be still." The scene ends with the disciples' frightening discovery that they do not know the identity of the one in the boat with them who possesses power over nature. Mark draws the reader into the story through his and the characters' point of view. In order to accomplish this purpose, Mark selects and arranges historical episodes into the narrative plot.

Summary of The Gospel of Mark as Narrative

In sum, the Gospel of Mark is a narrative that essentially reveals Jesus as he is declared, defined, and affirmed as the Son of God. Mark reports Jesus' teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection through historical episodes.³³ Jesus' words and

³¹ An example of an author using the structure to communicate a particular theme/subject matter is Mark's collection of miracle stories in 4:35-6:56. Here he uses several miracles stories (Jesus' power over nature: 4:35-41; 6:45-52; Jesus' power over demons: 5:1-20; Jesus' power over disease: 5:25-34; 6:1-6; 6:53-56; Jesus' power over death: 5:21-24, 35-43) to demonstrate Jesus' power as the Son of God.

³² This is but one example in the story of Mark. This does not indicate that all episodes are written in this way. However, it does demonstrate to the reader the typical way in which the narrator communicates his story.

³³ Achtemeier states that Jesus is the central figure of the narrative. Mark's Christology is influenced by the beginning of the story, 1:1. Mark's narrative thus revolves around "what Jesus says and does, and the significance of what happens to him" (*Mark*, 52-53). Boring agrees. He too

deeds point to his authority. He possesses divine prerogatives. It is due to Jesus' divine prerogatives that the authorities, disciples, and crowd respond and therefore are revealed as those who are committed, opposed, and amazed.

The elements of the narrative (structure, setting, characters, and point of view) are present as Mark tells his story. Mark organizes his narrative around three geographical locations (Galilee, "on the way" to Jerusalem, and Jerusalem); while maintaining a christological emphasis that Jesus is the Son of God. Consequently, the reader must not miss Mark's strategy to communicate his purpose as he weaves geography and Christology into his narrative. Mark uses the geographical movement of Jesus and the authorities, disciples, and crowd to declare, portray, and confirm his identity as the Son of God. Those involved convey various expressions that illustrate their relationship to Jesus as the Son of God, for they either commit to him or oppose him, and sometimes both. Mark tells the narrative from perspectives that are engaging and accommodating to the reader's understanding. It is clear that the Gospel of Mark is a narrative establishing the identity of Jesus Christ.

Literary Subgenre: The Gospel of Mark as Theological Narrative Biography

Mark composes a story of a central unifying character: Jesus Christ. Mark is a story that chronicles the life of Jesus Christ (biography) within a historical context (history). Mark also has a theological purpose. The preceding genre discussion demonstrates that Mark's narrative structure consisted of the weaving of geography and theology together. Mark's christological emphasis originates with the opening verse of the story and is reported throughout the story by the means of three geographical locations. This emphasis is the identity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

The discussion here will more carefully develop details of Mark as a theological narrative biography. Mark's theological

claims that Mark's story is about Jesus, one "who appears in almost every scene and is the subject of most of the verbs in Mark. . . . To tell the story of Jesus is to tell the self-defining story of God" (*Mark: A Commentary*, 3).

purpose goes beyond simply identifying Jesus Christ. There is a greater significance for the reader. Mark records how Jesus' disciples, and consequently his readers, ought to live in light of knowing his identity.³⁴

Mark formulates a portrait of Jesus through his teachings, miracles, death and resurrection. Jesus puts forth a message. This message is the gospel; that is, the redemption of God brought to humanity. Mark not only puts forth the gospel message of Jesus Christ, but he also demonstrates how one is to relate to this message.³⁵ Therefore if one knows Jesus Christ and his message, how ought he to follow Jesus? The pivotal issue for Mark centers on the identity of Jesus Christ and how one ought to follow him.³⁶ There are two questions Mark answers throughout his story; that is, "who is Jesus?" And in light of this, "what are his disciples to do?" These two questions speak into the formal and functional aspects of the story of Mark.³⁷ Thus, as the reader answers these two questions, the subgenre classification, theological narrative

³⁴ Peter Bolt agrees that all aspects (biography, history, and theology) must be incorporated into an understanding of Mark's Gospel. He writes, "Some later narrative studies make it a trichotomy by adding the category of narrative. But rather than pitting these three against one another, we should see it as eminently more sensible to recognize them as three aspects of the Gospel of Mark. Mark is narrative about theologically significant historical events" ("Mark's Gospel," in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004], 409).

³⁵ An example of Mark illustrating how one ought to relate to Jesus' message is the blind man, Bartimaeus (10:46-52). Bartimaeus placed his faith in Jesus, whether he could see or not. No longer was he a bystander alongside of the road unable to follow Jesus; rather after placing faith in Jesus and receiving sight, he was able to follow Jesus on the road.

³⁶ Sweetland contends that the identity of Jesus is inextricably tied to following Jesus. He states, "Mark is very interested in his readers' understanding of who Jesus is. We will see that misunderstanding the identity of Jesus leads to misunderstanding discipleship" (*Mark: From Death to Life*, 17).

³⁷ Joel B. Green states, "Mark is not interested in identifying Jesus for the sake of producing the right answer; he is concerned with much, much more than getting his doctrines correct. Equally transparent is the related Markan concern with appropriate response to Jesus" (*Way of the Cross*, 19).

biography, provides the theological significance and therefore the application of Jesus' identity to the reader. To have answered the one question is to have answered the other.

Formal Aspect: "Who is Jesus?"

The Gospel of Mark answers the question "who is Jesus?" in a number of ways. First, Mark answers this question through the christological title or the opening statement of the story (Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ]),³⁸ "The beginning of

³⁸ Although there is much debate regarding the phrase υἱοῦ θεοῦ, the longer reading is taken as original. Tommy Wasserman states, "The main question is whether the phrase 'Son of God' was accidentally omitted from an original or added by some scribes in order to expand the divine name or the title of the book" ("The 'Son of God' Was in the Beginning (Mark 1:1)," *JTS* 61, pt 1 [April 2011]: 20). The basis for the longer reading as original is both external and internal evidence. The longer reading has strong manuscript support:)¹, A, B, D, L, W, Δ. The shorter reading however has less external support:)*, Θ. (Patristic and versional support seems to be diverse and favorable for both readings.) Internal evidence also provides support for the longer reading; namely authorial style. Wasserman states, "The argument from Markan style is often appealed to in favour of the longer reading, since the idea of sonship forms a crucial theme in Mark (1:11; 3:11; 5:7; 8:38; 9:7; 12:6; 13:32; 14:36, 61; 15:39) and would be appropriate to indicate in the title or introduction" (42). Eldon Epp agrees and states, "to rule it [the phrase] out . . . might be to remove from the opening sentence the author's dramatic announcement of a major theme for the entire work that follows" ("Textual Criticism in the Exegesis of the New Testament, with an Excursus on Canon," in *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 47). See also Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 41, n. 7; Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 34; Alexander Globe, "The Caesarean Omission of the Phrase 'Son of God' in Mark 1:1," *HTR* 75 no. 2 (April 1982): 217.

Those in favor of the shorter reading are: Jan Slomp, "Are the Words 'Son of God' in Mark 1:1 Original?" *BT* 28 (1977): 143-50; Peter M. Head, "A Text-Critical Study of Mark 1:1 'The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,'" *NTS* 37 (1991): 621-29; Adela Yarbro Collins, "Establishing the Text: Mark 1:1," in *Text and Contexts: The Function of Biblical Texts in their Textual and Situational Contexts*, ed. Tord Fornberg and David Hellholm (Oslo: Scandinavian UP, 1995), 111-27. The main argument in

the Good News about Jesus Christ, [Son of God]" 1:1).³⁹ This is the first clear statement that Mark uses for the identification of Jesus. It is these introductory words that alert the reader of the significance that is to follow for it provides a key to understanding the whole book.⁴⁰

Second, Mark answers the identity question through the divine confirmation of God at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration (Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, "you yourself, are my son, the beloved one" 1:11 and Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, "This one is my son, the beloved one" 9:7). There is little doubt that these passages speak to the declaration & affirmation that Jesus is God's Son; the former, a declaration (1:11) to the reader/hearer and the latter, an affirmation (9:7) to the disciples.⁴¹ God's voice

favor of the shorter reading is the unlikelihood of an accidental omission in the beginning of a Gospel.

³⁹ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is taken as an objective genitive; that is, "the gospel [about, concerning] Jesus Christ.

⁴⁰ France states, "Mark's book is intended, therefore, to pass on the good news about Jesus. This news has been hitherto the subject of primarily oral declaration . . . but Mark's book is an attempt to communicate it in written form" (*Gospel of Mark*, 52). Edwards agrees, "In v. 1 Mark declares the essential content of the *euangelion*, the 'good news.' The Gospel of Mark is thus not a mystery story in which readers must piece together clues here and there to discover its meaning; nor is it a pedestrian chronicle of dates and places without purpose or significance; nor is it reducible to a mere system of thought. Rather, from the outset Mark announces that the content of the gospel is the person of Jesus, who is the Christ and Son of God" (*Gospel According to Mark*, 26). See also Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 9-10; Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*, 32; Hooker, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 34; Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 44; and Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 146-47; Stein, *Mark*, 40-41; Sweetland, *Mark: From Death to Life*, 17-20. Robert L. Humphrey claims that the prologue (1:1-13) is one of three key narrative moments in Mark that provide Mark's message, (*Narrative Structure and Message in Mark: A Rhetorical Analysis* [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen P, 2003], 29ff).

⁴¹ France states, "Jesus is here explicitly identified in the terms used in Mark's heading, υἱός θεοῦ. In the narrative that follows there will be secrecy and paradox, but here in the prologue there is open declaration. The reader

declares what Jesus is, not what he has become. There is no adoptionistic view tenable through the text, rather it can only be contrived based on one's dogmatic considerations elsewhere.⁴² Therefore, in both passages Jesus is referred to as God's beloved Son.⁴³

Third, Mark answers the question through the confession of Peter. Jesus asks the disciples for the view of the public as to his identity (8:27-28); but then also asks the disciples for their understanding *ὁμεις δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι*, ("but who do you yourselves say that I am," 8:29). Peter's confession identifies Jesus as the *Χριστός*, ("Messiah"). This response is representative of the titular statement in 1:1. As Mark reports elsewhere (cf. 1:1, 11; 9:7; 14:61-62; 15:39), Peter's confession was true, for it was his understanding of the significance of his confession that was proved to be erroneous (cf. 8:31-33).⁴⁴

Fourth, Mark also answers the question through the commentary of others. As one reads through the story, he is reminded several times of Jesus' identity. The troubling aspect to this truth is that Jesus' identity is not clearly known by his own followers, but outsiders instead. For example, demons clearly know that Jesus is the Son of God (1:24). Although Mark communicates the demons' understanding of Jesus as *ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ* ("the Holy One of God"), this is probably synonymous with Jesus' identity as *υἱός θεοῦ* ("Son of God," 3:11; 5:7). They recognized the special relationship that existed between Jesus and God. Another example is the Roman centurion at the scene

need be in no doubt, whatever the reactions of the actors in the story" (*Gospel of Mark*, 79).

⁴² For a view that Psalm 2:7 implies adoption see Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 1:1-50, Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 11-12.

⁴³ The word *ἀγαπητός* functions as a filial term denoting a special relationship between Son and Father. It could mean the same as John's term *μονογενής* ("one and only") in John 1:14, 18. See France, *Gospel of Mark*, 82; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 34; Stein, *Mark*, 59.

⁴⁴ Ralph P. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster P, 1972), 129.

of the cross (15:39). He states that Jesus was the Son of God ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν (“surely, this man was the Son of God”). France argues that this is the climax of the crucifixion scene; that is, “what is new is the source from which the declaration comes, the first human witness to describe Jesus as υἱὸς θεοῦ, and mean it, and that witness not a disciple or even a Jew at all, but a Gentile army officer with no previous connections with Jesus.”⁴⁵ Mark communicates what the centurion saw; a dying man; but more than that, the Son of God.⁴⁶

Last, Mark reports Jesus’ identity through the words and deeds of Jesus Christ himself. Jesus declares that he is the Messiah, Son of God before the Sanhedrin (14:61-62). Due to the accusation of blasphemy and therefore the necessity to confirm this; Jesus is asked by the Sanhedrin if he was the Messiah-Son of God Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ (“are you the Christ, the Son of the blessed?”) and he answers with a strong affirmative answer ἐγώ εἰμι (“I am”). But Jesus does not just affirm his identity, he also states his role as the exalted Son of Man (Ps 110:1) – who possesses the highest honor at the right hand of God, and the coming Son of Man (Dan 7:13) – who will be the Anointed of God with power and majesty as the eschatological judge. Jesus therefore is more than a suffering Messiah; he is an exalted and vindicated Messiah that fulfills the eschatological mission of God.

Functional Aspect: “What Are His Disciples to Do?”

Mark’s intent is not to stop simply at cataloging information and/or doctrine and thus give the reader a Christology. Rather his

⁴⁵ France, *Gospel of Mark*, 659.

⁴⁶ Hooker writes, “For Mark, it is this Gentile soldier who gives to Jesus the title which hitherto has been spoken only by the heavenly voice or by unclean spirits acknowledging their master. . . . Whether Mark thinks that the centurion is aware of the true significance of his words is not clear. . . . Nevertheless, the centurion stands at this point as the representative of those who acknowledge Jesus as God’s son. His words form the climax of Mark’s gospel, for they are the words used in the confession of Christian faith, and they are found in the mouth of a Gentile at the moment of Jesus’ death” (*Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 379).

intent is to move the reader/hearer to the applicational significance based on an understanding of Jesus' identity. Therefore, there is a close connection between "who Jesus is" and "what disciples are to do;" the theological significance. Mark's intent is to transform his audience regarding the nature of discipleship based on a thorough understanding of the identity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

The Gospel of Mark answers the question regarding discipleship in a number of ways. First, it illustrates the actions of a disciple. Mark structures the first section of his book, where Jesus' ministry is in and through Galilee (1:14-8:21), into three major parts (1:14-3:12; 3:13-6:6; 6:7-8:21).⁴⁷ This section of Mark declares and illustrates Jesus' identity as the Son of God while carrying with it the actions of discipleship; that is, the call, the commission, and the work of the ministry. Each of these is tied to the identity of Jesus in the following ways: the call highlights the abruptness of the encounter and immediacy of the response (1:16-20; 2:13-17), thus indicating the force and power of Jesus' presence. The commission highlights the priority of presence with Jesus and the purpose to evangelize (3:13-19), thus demonstrating the importance of Jesus' teaching. The empowering and engaging ministry given to the disciples (6:7-13) signifies Jesus' ability to deal with evil forces. It is the connection therefore between identity and discipleship that is Mark's intent for his readers/hearers.

Second, Mark illustrates the role or characteristics of a disciple. Mark structures the central section of the story (8:22-10:52) into a three-fold pattern where the disciples find themselves traveling with Jesus to Jerusalem. This central section illustrates the connection between Jesus' identity, and *how* the follower is to respond to the identity of Jesus; therefore, requiring a proper definition of Jesus' role and function as Messiah. This central section consists of a three-fold pattern. It contains Jesus' three predictions of his death (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34), providing within each one his definition of Messiah. Each prediction is followed with a misunderstanding by the disciples when confronted with Jesus' meaning of Messiah (8:32b-33; 9:33-34;

⁴⁷ Green, *Way of the Cross*, 50.

10:35-40). And third, it contains instruction from Jesus to explain the disciples' role as follower based on his identity (8:34-9:1; 9:35-37; 10:41-45).⁴⁸ Therefore, this central section in the story of Mark also connects the affirmation and declaration of Jesus' identity (biography and history) with significance for the reader/hearer (theology).

Based on this central section of Mark, what are the roles or characteristics of a disciple? Following each of Jesus' predictions of his death, Mark emphasizes three main characteristics of a disciple. The first characteristic is loyalty to Jesus (8:34-9:1); a single-minded identification with Jesus' message and mission by both "denying oneself" and "loyally following Jesus." In other words, the whole person is to stand under Christ's claim.⁴⁹ This truth follows Peter's misunderstanding of what Jesus will do (8:32b-33). Peter's view of messiahship gives him a wrong view of discipleship. Jesus clearly understood his fate; however Jesus chose loyalty to the Father's plan even though this plan included his death on the cross (cf. Phil 2:7-8). Therefore, Craig Evans states, "To be a true disciple, one must accept the fate of the Master; and the Master's fate is inextricably bound up with his identity, purpose, and mission. True discipleship cannot emerge

⁴⁸ Robert H. Stein states, "The threefold pattern found in Mark 8:31-10:45 reveals that, for the Evangelist, Jesus' passion was neither accidental nor tragic but was clearly foreknown by Jesus. . . . Furthermore, the errors of the disciples are used as a foil by which Jesus' teachings on discipleship can be presented. Discipleship, for Mark, means following Jesus and taking up a cross (8:34). It means a willingness even to lose one's life Christ's sake or, to word it differently, to lose one's life for 'the gospel's' sake (8:35). Discipleship, for Mark, means becoming servant of all (9:35), even as Jesus was servant of all (10:45)" (*Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretation*, 2nd ed [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001], 271).

⁴⁹ Each of Jesus' predictions of his death indicates that Jesus foreknew his own destiny; a predictive power in knowing both the fact and manner of his death reserved for one with divine prerogatives. Each of these predictions demonstrate Mark's connection with identity, 'who is Jesus?' and function, 'what is a disciple to be?' This central section of Mark is exemplary of sections that both precede and follow it.

in isolation from true Christology.”⁵⁰ Jesus does not want any follower to propose, and therefore practice his own agenda in lieu of God’s agenda. The follower is to loyally follow God’s Son despite the potential cultural consequences.

The second characteristic is to willingly care for others. A disciple is not to be preoccupied with being the greatest (9:35-37); service is to be directed to all. This truth follows the disciples’ discussion as to who will be the greatest; that is, who will be the greatest among themselves. But clearly Jesus’ death revolutionizes the thinking of being a follower, for being a follower does not entail greatness, but service. Therefore, Green states, “The primary issue is not who receives honor from the rest, but who gives honor to the least. ‘Welcoming’ has to do with showing respectful service . . . Jesus asks his disciples to understand that the greatest honor is extending respectful service to those with no status at all, to the powerless, to those whom society-at-large largely overlooks.”⁵¹ Jesus does not want the follower to promote himself to a position of greatness through a self-exalting pride. Rather, he desires that the disciple willingly serve the insignificant even if it reverses the conventional value-scale of the community.

The third characteristic is to sacrificially serve. A disciple is not to pursue power and prestige (10:35-40); rather one is to insist on being a servant.⁵² This truth follows James and John’s

⁵⁰ Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, WBC 34b (Dallas, TX: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 30. Graham Twelftree states, “The idea of taking up one’s cross would have been a graphic metaphor not only for Mark’s readers but for all who lived in the Roman world. . . . Thus, in being called to take up his cross the follower of Jesus was being asked to forfeit his life. His life was to be given over into the hands of another” (“Discipleship in Mark’s Gospel,” *StMRev* 141 (1990): 9).

⁵¹ Green, *Way of the Cross*, 74. Dennis Sweetland states, “The result is that Jesus turns things upside down; he teaches that true greatness means giving yourself in personal service to the one from whom you can receive no benefit in return” (*Our Journey with Jesus: Discipleship According to Mark* [Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987], 64).

⁵² The text states ‘whoever wants to be first must be a slave of all.’ Edwards states, “The pronouncement is, of course, an oxymoron, for a slave (Gk. *doulos*), who was inferior even to a servant (Gk. *diakonos*), was in

request to sit at the right and left of Jesus, the positions of honor. However, as do all of Jesus' predictions of his death, he turns this request upside down and contrasts the world's value system with his teaching and example of service. Jesus speaks of greatness with service, not power and prestige, for power and prestige focus on the love for self instead of others. Jesus' example of humility and love for others is demonstrated in his purpose of his death (10:45). Stein states, "Jesus does not die the death of a martyr. He dies rather a vicarious and substitutionary death for 'many.' Thus his death is not only the supreme example of what it means to be 'great' in the kingdom of God, that is, being a servant and slave of all; it is also the once-for-all sacrifice."⁵³ Therefore, Evans states, "Jesus' followers must seek to serve and not vie for positions of authority; they must be willing to suffer and not flee from persecution; they must be willing to be last and not insist on being first."⁵⁴ Jesus does not want the follower to presume upon God's prerogative to honor and value what he does. Jesus desires a self-sacrificing service and ministry on behalf of others that ultimately represents God and Jesus, not self.

Last, the Gospel of Mark illustrates the failures of the disciple. Mark writes his final section of his story in Jerusalem (11:1-16:8). It is here that Mark speaks of the coming Messiah who is to be "the ransom for many." Although this section of the story does not provide specific instructions related to discipleship, it does speak to the failure of obedience (14:32-42), the failure of following (14:50-54) and the failure of loyalty (14:66-72) on the part of Jesus' disciples. As Jesus faithfully prepares for his death through prayer to the Father (14:32-42), the disciples exemplify faithlessness in their lack of watchfulness. As Jesus is betrayed into the hands of men (14:43-49), the disciples demonstrate a cowardice and panic. As Jesus

ancient society the last and least of all. The idea of a slave being first is as absurdly paradoxical as a camel going through the eye of a needle (v. 25) – and it probably likewise induced smiles and shaking heads from Jesus' audience" (*Gospel According to Mark*, 326).

⁵³ Stein, *Mark*, 490.

⁵⁴ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 115.

identifies himself as Messiah, the Son of God (14:61-62), Peter denies his identification with Jesus three times. Mark communicates Jesus' resolve to follow the will of God, even to the death of the cross. Surely the Son of God is worthy of continuing devotion and allegiance.

Conclusion

The Gospel of Mark narrates the story of Jesus; thus expressing, through the episodes of Jesus' life, the identity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. But the Gospel of Mark is not just about knowing Jesus; it is also about following Jesus. The purpose of the theological narrative biography is to awaken and subsequently strengthen the faith of the follower. This enables the reader/hearer to connect the "what" and "why" of Mark's intent. In other words, Mark not only writes his story with a christological emphasis but also a theological significance to the reader/hearers' life.

Mark answers "who is Jesus" through the opening christological statement, the confirmation of God, the confession of Peter, the commentary of others, and through Jesus himself. All these support the declaration that Jesus' identity is the Son of God. Mark also answers "what are his disciples to do" through the actions of a disciple, the characteristics of a disciple, and the failures of a disciple.

The connection between form (Jesus' identity) and function (disciple's responsibility) enables the reader/hearer to see how Mark ties together the "what" of his story with the "why." In other words, it seems clear that Mark utilizes the narrative structure (genre) of the story and more specifically the theological narrative biography (subgenre) to communicate and therefore connect the doctrinal emphasis of knowing (identity) Jesus with the practical emphasis of following (discipleship) him. Mark makes this connection throughout the whole story and namely, through the central section of the book. The reader/hearer is able to comprehend the intention of the author through understanding how Mark writes the Gospel as genre and subgenre, or form and function.

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Daniel (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries). By Paul R. House. Grand Rapids: IVP Academic, 2018. 208 pp. Softcover \$19.00.

In general, Paul House, a well-respected evangelical scholar and former president of the Evangelical Theological Society, has produced a helpful resource for pastors and scholars with his commentary on Daniel. The work shows the same helpful characteristics of other works in the Tyndale Old Testament Commentary series.

The commentary reflects several strengths worth noting. First, House's work lies clearly in the conservative evangelical camp with a high view of Scripture. For example, the fact that Daniel is historically accurate is clearly stated (26). Furthermore, in the discussion on authorship, date, and setting, the author reflects a rejection of the common tendency to date the book in the Maccabean Period (2nd century BC) due to a naturalistic worldview:

... predictive prophecy is a real phenomenon;...predictive prophecy should not be discounted as automatically arising after the fact.... While predictive prophecy will always require faith open to reason, this does not mean that a naturalistic worldview that denies it is possible deserves full acceptance (26).

These solid statements form the backbone of the strength of the commentary.

A second positive trait of House's work is its readability. Daniel is not the easiest book to read and understand among the prophets. The writing style of House's text allows the reader to enter the discussions with ease rather than consternation. This does not mean there are no difficult areas where rereading must be done. It also does not mean that House oversimplifies. His work is simply accessible for more than other scholars—for pastors, students, and laypeople.

A balanced approach to genre provides a third strength for the work. Many scholars hold that Daniel is the fountain for apocalyptic literature that became prevalent during the Second Temple Period. Unfortunately, overdose on apocalyptic genre in reading some biblical texts is widespread with associated interpretive problems. One finds, however, no exaggeration in House's analysis: "The book's contexts should therefore not be judged negatively by

someone starting with a definition of the whole apocalyptic genre which they then impose on Daniel's contents" (26). In short, apocalyptic elements can be observed in Daniel's text without dismantling its narrative framework or reducing other non-apocalyptic features. In addition to these observations, House correctly understands that the message of Daniel reveals details about God's will both near and far:

... apocalyptic literature takes special interest in the future. In this sense it emphasizes eschatology, the study of the end of time. It also emphasizes how people, especially suffering people, live now, and how God dispenses justice in this world prior to the day of final justice. Therefore, people always struggle to balance ethics now and judgment then. (36)

In this way, House avoids the pitfall of believing that end-time teaching somehow has no relevance for living today.

Despite such praiseworthy aspects of House's commentary (and more could be given), there are areas where questions can be raised. First, the absence of serious discussion of calendar issues is problematic. There is no robust exploration of whether chronology (e.g., for the 70 sevens prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27) is based upon the general solar calendar or the modified lunar calendar common to Israel. Such choices affect how one views the beginning and end points of the various calendar calculations. House's approach may be one of disinterest stemming from a belief that all the numbers represent a symbolic and indefinite period of time:

Since seven and ten are symbols of full and complete amounts in the Bible, multiplying them together and multiplying by seventy simply means a very long and complete time.... One cannot match this exact number of years to specific amounts of time and particular events, as the numerous failed attempts to do so throughout history have shown.... (157)

In dealing with the calendar issues in this way, House is somewhat dismissive of some of the credible work that has been done in chronology by serious scholars such as Hoehner (*Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977], 115-

39); Walvoord (*Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* [Chicago: Moody, 1971]; and Miller (*Daniel*, NAC [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994]). House sparingly alludes to Miller's work and provides a few other solid premillennial works in his bibliography (Walt Kaiser, Gleason Archer) but appears to avoid serious interaction with dispensationalists like Hoehner, Walvoord, and McClain.

House also omits any discussion of potential chiastic structure in *Daniel*. While acknowledging (as all scholars do) a somewhat limited analogy between the kingdoms of the statue in chapter 2 and the beasts of chapter 7 (132), there is no hint of a possible larger structure which also provides the parallel of chapter 3 (fiery furnace) and chapter 6 (lion's den) and the corresponding of chapter 4 (the first great Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar brought low) and chapter 5 (the last Babylonian king Belshazzar brought low). Such a structure actually enhances the theme of the kingdoms of the world brought low while the kingdom of God rises, something House does not miss even though he does not present the structure. Here he misses the opportunity to strengthen the message.

In addition, some organizational issues bear scrutiny. The terse table of contents is almost unnecessary. Moreover, the absence of an index of any kind does not help the student who is working through cross references. Of course, such evaluation is not necessarily aimed at House. Such decisions are often made by editors and publishers. Finally, it is somewhat puzzling why the section on authorship, date, and setting is only one of many sections discussed under literary elements. The significance of the debates about authorship and date may suggest that this area needs be emphasized in the outline some more.

The dispensational interpreter will also sense some tensions in the content as he reads House's commentary. The future of national Israel is not as clearly spelled out as much as dispensationalists prefer, especially in light of the promises of the seventy sevens being for Daniel's people (Dan. 9:24). Moreover, in the analogy of the four kingdoms of chapters two and seven, the idea of four kingdoms in both is the key point for House. He views the listing of the four as a "periodization device one can adapt to continuing history." Beyond that, he holds that the four kingdoms of chapter 7 are not the same as those in chapter 2, opting to see differentiated details forcing the

distinction rather than seeing a more complete analogy from different perspectives (132-33). Finally, in perhaps the most confusing section of his commentary, House mentions modern scholarship's view of the four kingdoms as Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece in contrast to the traditional interpretation that the fourth kingdom is Rome. He seems to opt for neither: "Daniel 2 and 7 do not identify four nations, in contrast to chapter 8" (132). This counters the customary dispensational position that the third world empire is Greece and the fourth is Rome. This would mean that the little horn of chapter 7 (fourth world empire) is not the same as the little horn of chapter 8 (third world empire). The dispensationalist notes this and sees a divinely intended analogy between the little horn in the 2nd century BC (Antiochus Epiphanes) from chapter 8 and the future antichrist figure or little horn in chapter 7. Theologically, the significance can be seen in the way that later writers in the canon use the description of the little horn from Daniel 7 to describe such a futuristic personage (Paul in 2 Thess 2; John in Rev 13, 17-18).

The negative portions of this evaluation should not be taken to devalue the fine work that House has provided. As iron sharpens iron, his work will help interpreters of different persuasions to double check their own understandings and think through the textual basis for their own interpretations. In the end, this commentary on Daniel is worth having on the shelf.

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A Reader's Guide to the Bible. By John Goldingay. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 192 pp. Paperback \$20.00.

John Goldingay's *A Reader's Guide to the Bible* (hereafter *Reader's Guide*) introduces readers of the Bible to its story and teachings through a book-by-book overview of the Protestant canon. Although Goldingay never overtly limits his audience to the uninitiated, the occasional detail, like the reminder that Moses' story does not appear in Genesis (37), indicates his primary audience: the new reader of Scripture.

To guide this audience through Scripture's unfamiliar terrain, Goldingay reorganizes the biblical books using the roughly literary categories of God's story, God's word, and Israel's response. Overall, Goldingay's reorganization helps to maintain a fluidity for new readers by grouping those books concerned with the Bible's storyline separately from those with a more directly didactic style. God's story (chapters 3–7), then, focuses on the narrative storyline from Genesis's creation account to the record of the early church in the book of Acts. After laying out this storyline, Goldingay introduces the reader to what he calls "the word of God to his people" (chapters 8–12), those portions of Scripture that might broadly be described as more overtly didactic (e.g. the Law, wisdom, prophets, and epistles). The final segment of the overview of the biblical books, entitled "Israel's Response to God," includes Psalms and Lamentations (chapter 13) as well as Ecclesiastes and Job (chapter 14). *Reader's Guide* then concludes with an epilogue entitled "The Bible Today," guiding here-and-now readers to consider the abiding relevance of the then-and-there Bible to which they have now been introduced.

Those authors attempting to write works like Goldingay's *Reader's Guide* put themselves in the sobering position of coloring the way new readers look at the Bible. At times, Goldingay's work prods new readers toward a healthy approach to the Bible and its contents; unfortunately, however, at times, it does not.

Goldingay promotes a healthy view of the Bible by encouraging openness and by repeatedly demonstrating that the Bible contains real messages for real people. In his introduction, Goldingay invites readers to their best chance of understanding the Bible's message by encouraging open-mindedness in their reading. "You don't have to believe in God to understand the Bible," Goldingay writes, but "you do have to be sympathetic to the way it talks about God and about the world as his world" (3). This gentle prodding toward openness encourages new readers to begin their exploration with a healthy attitude unimpeded by bias or hindering presuppositions.

Not only does *Reader's Guide* encourage openness to the Bible's message, but it also promotes a healthy reading by encouraging the reader to look beyond content to the purpose of the biblical books. Goldingay's guide consistently moves beyond the question of "What?" to consider the question of "Why?" Goldingay writes, "[The biblical authors] are concerned to communicate, to make the story

interesting, to make it intelligible for the sake of later readers, and to show them how it is significant for them” (34). This emphasis on significance becomes a hallmark of the volume’s approach to introducing new readers to the Bible. Ruth, then, tells more than just a delightful love story: it demonstrates an openness to the non-Jew who commits to the God of Israel (68). Jonah does not simply recount the prophet’s flight from God: his story points to the gap that sometimes exists between God’s view and his people’s view of those who don’t know him (68–69). Esther does not tell just the story of Israel’s escape from Haman’s hateful plot: it demonstrates God’s providential working in man’s affairs (69). And Daniel does not just relate the harrowing experiences of the captive Jews: the book encourages faithfulness and demonstrates God’s knowledge of the flow of world events (70). In every book, Goldingay promotes this healthy approach of emphasis on the significance of each book, an emphasis that builds a strong foundation for his final appeal in the epilogue to the Bible’s abiding significance for its modern audience.

Although *Reader’s Guide* promotes a healthy approach to understanding Scripture, Goldingay makes multiple assertions that work to undermine this healthy approach with an unhealthy view of the nature of Scripture itself. To be sure, Goldingay is quick to affirm that the Bible is “God’s book,” that the human element of its authorship did not “spoil” it (3), and that its events did indeed “happen” (34). But these assertions are tempered by statements of a different sort. Regarding the historicity of the details of the biblical accounts of the fall, the battle of Jericho, and the story of Jonah, Goldingay suggests that it is “impossible” to answer the question as to whether these events occurred as recorded (34). Regarding creation, Goldingay avoids potential criticisms that the Bible is unscientific by claiming that the point is not in the details: that Genesis’s question is “not whether the world was created in six days or not, but rather, whether the world was created in a purposeful way at all” (42). And regarding the “stricter” OT laws requiring capital punishment for adultery and murder, Goldingay concludes that “no accounts of the execution of people guilty of such offenses suggests this sanction was more theory than practice” (91). Collectively, the statements introduce an approach to Scripture where details deemed unsavory are regularly explained away in favor of more congenial readings. Even if such readings promote greater receptivity of the

Bible, the question must be asked, what kind of Bible is being promoted? The implication is that the Bible is the kind of book that cannot be read at face value but instead likely contains embellished stories, insignificant and possibly incorrect details, and laws that were such in theory only.

This is not to say that Goldingay's *Reader's Guide* has no redeemable qualities. Its emphasis on the abiding importance of the Old Testament (177-85) provides an especially timely counterbalance to the current debate over its importance to Christian belief. And certainly, the volume is filled with a great number of insightful and accessible explanations of the contents of the biblical books. However, while its gentle tone and attempts to assuage the concerns of the modern Western sensibility will be perceived by some to be to its great credit, the repeated credence given to doubts surrounding the particulars of the biblical message do not, in the opinion of this reviewer, encourage the healthy view of the nature of the biblical books that an introduction of this sort must promote. Promoting a face value reading would have more clearly exemplified the openness to the biblical world and ideas that Goldingay himself endorses in his introduction to the reader.

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An Introduction to the Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge. By Dirk Jongkind. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 128 pp. Softcover \$14.99.

In 2017, Dirk Jongkind and Peter Williams released *The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge* (abbreviated as THGNT). This much celebrated text is unique among Greek editions in that it places significant focus on scribal habits and gives priority to the earliest manuscripts available (For a complete summary and critique of the THGNT, see the Spring 2018 *JMAT* review by Wayne Slusser).

As an introduction and companion guide to the THGNT, Jongkind released *An Introduction to the Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge*. The aim of this book is

twofold. First, Jongkind offers core background information about the THGNT. Second, he provides a concise summary of the broader discipline of NT textual criticism. As Jongkind notes, “This little book tells the story behind [the THGNT] and is a tool for all who have the privilege to learn New Testament Greek” (17). The book is divided into eight chapters spanning 128 pages (ninety-four pages if not including front or back matter): 1. Your Greek New Testament and the Manuscripts (17–26), 2. Practicalities (27–39), 3. Manuscripts (41–64), 4. How Decisions Are Made (65–85), 5. Why Not the Textus Receptus? (87–91), 6. Why Not the Byzantine Text? (93–100), 7. Biblical Theology and the Transmission of the Text (101–108), and 8. Where to Go from Here? (109–110).

Perhaps the most helpful chapters are two, three, and four (the first is an introduction to the topic of NT textual criticism in general, and the fifth through eighth are focused on select issues). The second chapter deals with unique aspects of the THGNT and is a valuable primer to this edition. The third offers a helpful summary of the textual apparatus, as well as the distinctives of important manuscripts. The fourth chapter discusses how the editors of the THGNT came to their conclusions and offers some criteria for readers on how to make their own decisions. Jongkind then offers practical discussion of controversial passages such as Mark 16:9–20 (78–82), John 7:53–8:11 (82–84), Luke 22:43–44 (84) and Luke 23:34a (85). At this point, it may have been helpful to include a few examples of how to work through less controversial passages.

There are several helpful and practical features of this book. For instance, there are several fairly high-resolution photographs and illustrations (black and white) to help the reader visualize the manuscripts discussed as well as the text of the THGNT itself. Additionally, Jongkind includes the link to a larger collection of articles about this text available on the Tyndale House website (109): <https://academic.tyndalehouse.com/thgnt/production-notes>. For readers unfamiliar with key text critical terms, Jongkind’s glossary at the back of the book will come in quite handy (113–16).

The beauty of *An Introduction to the Greek New Testament* is that there is little to critique. Some will disagree with Jongkind’s methodology and the approach of the THGNT. Others may take issue with his views, for instance, on the Byzantine text. However, by and large, Jongkind offers an evenhanded summary and introduction to a

rather complex topic. Again, in approaching this book, one must recognize that it is an introduction specific to the THGNT. If one expects Jongkind to be an unbiased observer, one will be disappointed.

Of course, *An Introduction to the Greek New Testament* does not replace more formal introductory or technical books on the topic (such as Metzger's *The Text of the New Testament* or Aland and Aland's book by the same name), yet it was never meant to. What Jongkind does is whet the reader's appetite to dig into the Greek NT. As such, his conclusion could not be better stated: "The important thing to take away from this little book is that you have every reason to read the Greek New Testament with confidence and pleasure" (109).

It almost goes without saying that *An Introduction to the Greek New Testament* should be required reading for any course on textual criticism. I heartily recommend this book to anyone interested in the topic. The undergraduate will be challenged, the seminary student will be engaged, the pastor will be encouraged, and the scholar will be refreshed. A difficult task for any book—especially one on textual criticism!

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Exile: A Conversation with N. T. Wright. Edited by James M. Scott. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017. 343 pages. Hardcover \$40.00.

James M. Scott (DTheol, University of Tübingen) is professor of religious studies at Trinity Western University, British Columbia, Canada. N. T. Wright (M.A., D.D., Oxford University), was the Bishop of Durham between 2003 and 2010 and since then has served as Research Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at St Mary's College, University of St Andrews, Scotland.

This volume is sub-titled "A Conversation with N. T. Wright." All participants are represented by essays. Some of the essays were written for a symposium on "exile" organized by Scott, in

collaboration with others, and held at Trinity Western University, in 2010. Many papers read at the symposium were revised for publication, and other essays were commissioned to round out the coverage of the book.

N. T. Wright has championed the view that even though there was a partial return of those who were exiled from their homeland to Babylon, the return to the land was not seen as the end of exile by many of the Jewish people into the Second Temple period. Elements of Wright's views have been presented in several of his publications, including *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (2013) (see especially vol. 1, 139ff.). The foundation of his paradigm is a biblical trajectory that begins in the promises and warnings of Moses in Deuteronomy, continues with the extended period (490 years) of exile described in Daniel 9, and ends with the finished work of Christ.

Wright argues that the Second Temple era writings, the teachings of Jesus, and the writings of Paul reflect the concept of continuing exile and of provided restoration. During his earthly ministry, Jesus was announcing "his belief that the real return from exile for the people, and the real return of YHWH to Zion, were happening in and through His own work" (46). Paul presents Jesus as the Messiah through whom the story of the Torah, including the restoration of Israel from exile, has been accomplished.

The editor of the volume introduces the conversation with an introductory chapter on issues and answers regarding Wright's "hypothesis" of an "Ongoing Exile." Wright then leads off the conversation with an essay in which he summarizes his views on exile and restoration. The eleven essays that follow are divided into four parts. They are Old Testament/Hebrew Bible/Septuagint; Early Judaism; New Testament; and Theology.

Part 1. Walter Brueggemann in his response is both appreciative of many interpretive connections and fresh insights he has gained from reading Wright on this subject and critical of some reduction in significance of biblical traditions he sees in Wright's argument. Robert Hiebert devotes his space to a detailed study of terminology for exile and restoration in the Septuagint and the NT. He provides a suggestion as to why Septuagint translators might have used captivity and displacement language even where their Hebrew/Aramaic source texts did not. Jörn Kiefer concludes the first part with an interesting article highlighting positive views of the condition of exile, reflecting

not the doom and gloom of God's wrath, but an experience of God's presence in the diaspora.

Part 2. The first essay in the second part of the book is by Philip Alexander. He attempts to see the extent to which the events in Palestine in the Second Temple period can be explained by the "political ideologies of the day." This would serve as another form of evidence of whether the Jews in Palestine believed that they were still in exile. He believes that the evidence shows that a "particular nationalist view of exile and restoration" was present in the Jewish community. While accepting as "uncontroversial" the idea that the first-century Jews felt themselves to be in exile in the land of Palestine, Robert Kugler argues that the Dead Sea Scrolls reveal that the Jews imagined endings to the exile that are not elaborated by Wright. He suggests several ways in which his observations from the Scrolls have consequences for Wright's project. Dorothy M. Peters wrote the last of the essays in this section with a lively discussion of the War Scroll, and the views of the Essenes regarding the word and the sword of vengeance of the Lord as bringing eschatological restoration and victory.

Part 3. The NT part of the conversation is begun by Scot McKnight. He is convinced that "exile and restoration" are the terms of choice (above millennium, heaven, rapture, etc.) for systematic theological thinking about eschatology. Based upon questions asked by Wright, he proposes a reorientation of the story Creation/Fall/Redemption/Consummation: A: God is king through his people/B: human kings are kings and God uses them/Revised A: God is king in King Jesus: "... the arrival of Jesus as God's King ends the exile and establishes the inauguration of the Kingdom of God" (215). In his essay, S. A. Cummins agrees with Wright that exile is an important theme in the NT, but he argues that in the context of the Pauline passages examined, exile can best be seen as one element of the "all-encompassing economy of God" (236), in which more can be said, for example, in the area of the regained glory of humanity. He expresses concern about the need for Wright to clarify his concept of the covenant and his views relating to the Sandersian view of Paul.

Part 4. In his concluding essay, Wright accuses the two essayists in the systematic theology part of the book of having not heard what he has been saying. Hans Boersma calls for a theological, sacramental grounding of the narrational history—the strictly historical biblical

interpretation—Wright is using. Ephraim Radner “offers a straightforward summary exposition of scriptural exile’s figural [spiritual as contrasted with historical] explication within the Christian tradition” (273). He argues that naming “exile” and “restoration” as one thing or another in historic, temporal terms can bring about an objection of historical contradiction.

Wright’s concluding essay is helpful in providing both thoughtful responses and objections and clarification of exactly what his position is and is not claiming.

Two concluding remarks are in order. First, for orthodox Jews who do believe in the coming of the Messiah, the consciousness of being in continuing exile is a commonplace. They continually wait for the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, and it would be no surprise to them to be told that faithful Jews in the Second Temple period were conscious of being in exile. Second, in his eschatology, Wright sees the exile of Israel together with “exile” of the whole human race. He redefines the Western tradition’s view of the concept of personal salvation: escaping to a disembodied “heaven.” The end of the exile, Christ becoming the temple, and the establishment of his kingdom are themes that call for response by dispensationalists.

This book is must reading for Old and New Testament scholars, readers of Wright’s many insightful volumes, and for those who are concerned about explicating biblically, historically, and theologically, the relationships between Israel, Jesus, Paul, the church, soteriology, and eschatology.

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How New is the New Testament? By Donald A. Hagner. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. 224 pp. Softcover \$22.99.

In recent years there has been a movement to eliminate all discontinuity between Christianity and Judaism. In this understanding, Paul did not break with Judaism at all, but remained an observant Jew his whole life. In some ways this is a radicalization of the New Perspective on Paul, a view which argues that Paul only broke with Judaism as it concerned his attempt to preach to the Gentiles. Proponents of the New Perspective believe that Judaism assumed covenantal grace rather than being a purely merit-based religion. Furthermore, the works of the law that Paul attacked were Jewish badges of identity, like circumcision, not an attempt to earn righteousness by self-effort. These interpretations of Paul are the opposite of the strong discontinuity that was the primary teaching of the church from sub-apostolic times through to the 18th century.

Donald Hagner responds to the modern trend to see increasing continuity between the testaments without falling into the excessive discontinuity of earlier generations. Hagner is George Eldon Ladd Professor Emeritus of New Testament, senior professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, and a prolific author. He argues that Christianity is neither opposed to Judaism nor is it a Jewish sect. The NT is the fulfillment of the OT promises. As such it retains some continuity while remaining new. To demonstrate this thesis, Hagner surveys the NT to see how new it claims to be. He recognizes the unique contributions of each book. Some have a stronger emphasis on continuity while others focus on discontinuity, yet each book balances the two ideas. Luke shows continuity in that the promises of Israel are being fulfilled in Jesus, yet Jesus' radical statement of the fulfillment of these promises is also a discontinuity. John is the most Jewish gospel yet expresses a sharp discontinuity with Judaism. In the Pauline corpus, Paul's conversion required a break with his past life, yet he describes it by the language of God's call to the prophets. His gospel is the same as that to the circumcision, yet it is still the gospel of salvation to the Gentiles. Justification is available to both Jew and Gentile through faith in Christ, but it is also found in the Scriptures of Israel. The author of Hebrews argues for the superiority of Christ, yet compares Jesus' priesthood with Melchizedek. Christ came and offered the perfect sacrifice that

fulfilled the OT sacrifices. In 1 Peter, our salvation is already our possession, yet it lies in the indeterminate future. Christ's sacrificial atonement was the realization of God's purpose from the beginning but only revealed now at the end of the ages.

Hagner's views on NT authorship are not entirely conservative, but they remain within the evangelical camp. For many NT books, traditional authorship is assumed without argument since it is not the purpose of his book. For others he leaves the door open for pseudonymity without being dogmatic. He states, "Even if Ephesians was not written by Paul, which is far from certain, it certainly reflects Pauline theology" (183). Though he refers to the author of 1 Peter as Peter, the omission of a name for the author of 2 Peter is conspicuously absent (212). For the gospels, the prevailing four-source theory of origins is assumed (61, 79). Although this view is compatible with orthodoxy, there is no need in a book of this nature to assume a particular theory of gospel origins.

The question of dispensationalism is inevitable in a book on the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. Hagner rejects dispensationalism specifically: "Dispensationalism's a priori bifurcation of Israel and the church is an example of finding or creating an extreme discontinuity in Scripture, not to mention in the purpose of God." Therefore, "the promises to Israel are of a more symbolic or spiritual nature, so that the reference to Israel's national hope amounts to a kind of code language" (78). In his discussion on Galatians 6:16, he observes that it is far from certain that Paul refers to the church as the Israel of God, yet for him the evidence is slightly in favor of this being Paul's intent (149). Peter refers to the church by names originally given to Israel—a royal priesthood and a holy nation. This, says Hagner, "makes it a natural conclusion that the church is now regarded as the true Israel (212). Yet he is not ready to dispense with Israel entirely. He gladly states that "God is not through with Israel" in the sense that Jews can be grafted back into the church by faith (165). Indeed, he believes that "the church is an expression of God's faithfulness to Israel as a nation" (212).

Hagner has performed a valuable service in answering radical claims to continuity between the testaments. His exegesis on this score is methodical and balanced. Few conservatives will object to the idea that both continuity and discontinuity exists, and that the New Testament brought an era of prophetic fulfillment. His choices

on the authorship of NT books is unfortunate but seldom interferes with his argument. The greatest weakness is his rejection of dispensational hermeneutics. This holds him back from complete exegetical consistency. Yet he avoids an easy supercessionism and is irenic and balanced throughout. The discerning reader will profit by the sound logic and careful exposition.

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1 & 2 Thessalonians (Zondervan Critical Introductions to the New Testament. By Nijay K. Gupta. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 320 pp. Hardcover \$44.99.

Nijay K. Gupta, Associate Professor of New Testament at Portland Seminary, authors the critical introduction to Paul's Thessalonian correspondence as part of the *Zondervan Critical Introductions to the New Testament* series, a new commentary series that aims to address the major critical issues of a biblical text. For both 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Gupta presents an evaluation of four areas in New Testament research. First, he evaluates the text of each letter, which includes an examination of major variants, authorship and dating, and literary features including genre, style, and possible sources for each letter. Second, Gupta presents an evaluation of their background and situation. Besides documenting important information on the city of Thessalonica and its culture, this section also evaluates the chronological relationship between the historical record of Acts and the Thessalonian correspondence, as well as the order of the letters. Third, Gupta presents an evaluation of the major themes and interpretive issues present in these works. Fourth, Gupta includes a history of interpretation for each letter.

1 & 2 Thessalonians does well in handling the major historical and interpretive issues of the Thessalonian correspondence, and especially in 1 Thessalonians. All these issues have important applicatory consequences and thus his evaluation will be received well by the preacher preparing to address the text from the pulpit. These issues include the textual variant of 1 Thessalonians 2:7b, i.e., should the text read "gentle" or "infants"? (106-14); the nature of

“vessel” in 4:4, i.e., is a “vessel” one’s body, a wife, or something else? (123-30); and the nature of “work” in 4:11, i.e., is Paul addressing eschatological fever, involvement in politics, or a neglect of work? (130-39). Perhaps Gupta’s most helpful evaluation is his address of 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16, the one section of the Thessalonian correspondence sometimes considered to be an interpolation because of its supposedly anti-Semitic character. In response to this difficulty, he makes two key arguments against interpolation. First, Gupta notes that Paul’s rhetoric is theologically, and not racially, motivated. Citing Hagner, Gupta explains that Paul’s response to his kinsman is closer to a “Deuteronomistic-type judgment oracle” than racial slander (120). This evaluation makes sense, and especially because of the Jewish presence in the church at Thessalonica, individuals Paul would not be criticizing (cf. Acts 17:4). Second, Gupta cites studies which argue that the comma following “Jews” in verse 14 is an unnecessary inclusion in English translations. Its absence would restrict Paul’s reference to certain Jewish individuals and not the Jews at large (120-121). This response make sense as well. Paul’s concern was specifically with the unbelieving Jewish opposition to the gospel message, the same kind opposition coming from the unbelieving Gentiles in Thessalonica (cf. 1 Thess. 2:14).

On the other hand, some readers may desire a more thorough analysis of some of the major interpretive issues in 2 Thessalonians. For example, Gupta does not address the views of the nature of the “temple” in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, an interpretive issue that has major implications for the meaning of the text. While he does address the man of lawlessness and the proposed precursors to this individual, a helpful study in itself (244-249), there is little discussion as to how the man of lawlessness fits into broader eschatological themes. Although that topic would certainly take many more pages to flesh out, it is essential discussion because of the relationship between the man of lawlessness and the day of the Lord. Furthermore, the text does not address the issue of tradition (2 Thess 2:15), a major dividing line between Catholics and Protestants.

As a final comment, it might have also been helpful for Gupta to include a traditional chronology that links the events of Acts 17-18 with the events documented in the Thessalonian correspondence. Although Gupta does address some of the issues involving the

relationship between Acts and 1 and 2 Thessalonians (54-61), it would have been helpful to know how he pieces all the data together, especially Paul's reference to being left in Athens alone (cf. 1 Thess 3:1) and the movement of Silas (cf. Acts 17:10, 13; 18:5). This movement is one of the major obstacles in reconciling the two works, and it would be very helpful for the pastor to know as he looks to present these historical events to his congregation.

Overall, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* is a helpful addition to a pastor's library. Its strength is in providing direct presentations of the major historical and interpretive issues of the letters, which will certainly help the pastor quickly find the information he needs on difficult passages. However, the reader should be aware that he may need more resources when dealing with the major eschatological passages of the letters, especially in 2 Thessalonians.

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Angels: What the Bible Really Says About God's Heavenly Host.

By Michael S. Heiser. Bellingham, WA: Lexham P, 2019. 248 pp.
Hardcover \$19.99.

Angels: What the Bible Really Says About God's Heavenly Host by Michael Heiser is a comprehensive, biblical, interesting, and, at times technical, and even humorous treatment on the subject of angels. In the introduction, Heiser states, "To clarify, this is not a book about demons.... I'm really only concerned with what the Bible says about the good guys" (xiii). He comments, "Much of what Christians think they know about angels is more informed by Christian tradition than Scripture" (xiv). Thus, Heiser has provided a well-exegeted, grammatical and historical study about angels. He writes,

Rather than jumping to the New Testament, the book will move from the Old Testament to Second Temple ("intertestamental") period literature,... The book then turns to the New Testament....

Finally, we will bring our study to a close with a fascinating (and hopefully fun) analysis of Christian myths about angels (xix-xx).

The footnotes and bibliography are extensive (179-91), and the indices of subjects and modern authors and of Scripture and other ancient literature are excellent references and resources (193-223).

There are two “red flags” regarding Heiser’s preliminary assertions or interpretations raised in the introduction. First, Heiser contends that Genesis 1:26 is not a cryptic reference to the Trinity. He states,

God is speaking to his heavenly host. He is sharing a decision with them—decreeing his will, as it were. If he were speaking to the members of the Trinity, they would already know what’s in God’s mind, because they are coequal and coeternal with him. (xv)

He further asserts that while man is God’s image bearer on earth, angels are his image bearers in heaven. I strongly disagree with this interpretation as it effectively makes man and angels coequal image bearers, just in different realms, one terrestrial and the other celestial. Nowhere in Scripture is it either explicitly stated or implied that angels were made in the image of God. Man is the unique image bearer of God, the crown of creation, not angels. Heiser also states that angels “were children of God before us” and that “the Bible makes it clear that God wanted more children” (xvi.). Then he refers to angels as “our spiritual siblings” (xvii). Again, I take strong exception with connecting man and angels as fellow image bearers and/or siblings. Thankfully, the body of the book is much more consistent with an historical and grammatical hermeneutic. Three of the better and more helpful offerings of Heiser’s book on angels include the following.

First, Heiser’s interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:10 is both interesting and insightful and includes extensive footnotes (125-27). He comments that angels are not infallible and indicated that Paul was concerned that they could fall again. This is something I had not considered, but find intriguing.

Second, Heiser’s commentary on guardian angels is the most comprehensive one I have read. It is well-documented and a good read (132-36). His summary statement is worth remembering:

The idea of guardian angels apparently includes protection, as angels rescue people, but angelic oversight in the human sphere also includes keeping track of evil perpetrated on the innocent for later judgment or a record of those who will inherit eternal life. (135-36)

Third, Heiser provides an outstanding treatment of the seven stars/angels of Revelation 1-3 (141-46). It's a thoughtful study addressing different views. His conclusion is that the seven stars are supernatural, heavenly beings assigned surrogacy of the churches of Asia Minor. Heiser states,

The angel of each church is therefore some sort of surrogate. The angels and the churches are not identical, but they are related.... It seems best to understand them as members of the heavenly host assigned to the churches in a surrogacy role. (146)

Heiser concludes his book with a chapter entitled "Myths and Questions about Angels" (163-77). I found this section to be very intriguing and interesting. It provides a "lighter" dimension to the book, without being flippant or irreverent. Some of the myths addressed by Heiser include: (1) "Angels have wings ... and they're women, too" (164-67); (2) "Angels can no longer rebel" (169); (3) "Angels take people to heaven" (173-74); and (4) "Christians become angels when they die" (176-77).

The reason Heiser wrote this book and his basic premise are stated in the introduction:

The angelology of Christian tradition is, to say the least, quite incomplete and, in some ways, inaccurate. But, again, why should we care? The simple answer is that, if God moved biblical writers to take care when talking about the unseen realm, then it matters. ...Why should we care about angels? Because angelology helps us think more clearly about familiar points of biblical theology. (xiv-xv)

This is well put. If an angel of the Lord announced the miraculous conception of God's only begotten Son to the virgin Mary and Joseph

on separate occasions, and if an angel of the Lord announced the actual birth of Jesus to the shepherds and then was joined by a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and proclaiming Jesus' birth, and if angels ministered to Jesus in the wilderness and were present at his resurrection and ascension, then indeed, they matter—a lot! Heiser certainly drives that truth home.

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How to Read Theology: Engaging Doctrine Critically and Charitably. By Uche Anizor. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. 182pp. \$21.99.

How to Read Theology: Engaging Doctrine Critically and Charitably, written by Uche Anizor (Associate Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University), is uniquely written to help students of theology read theology *better*. Anizor's aim is to aid those who enjoy reading theology but need to grow in their ability to comprehend theology (xiv). He writes, "This book is about *evaluating* theologies. In writing it, I have sought to maximize readers' benefit from theological literature, especially texts with which they may have major disagreements" (xiv).

Anizor accomplishes this with a simple and clearly defined structure. Part One, "On Reading Charitably," educates readers on the challenge of reading theology charitably. Chapter one notes that charitable reading is often hindered by the attitudes of the reader. Attitudes such as pride, suspicion, favoritism, and impatience keep the reader from understanding the work accurately and therefore from assessing it correctly (5). In Chapter two, Anizor argues that the context of the author is essential for understanding the theology: "Theology is written from within a context and therefore bears certain contextual marks that must be attended to if we are to understand and assess it well" (28). This includes historical context, cultural context, and polemical context. A discerning reader must be willing to approach the work with a willingness to understand who the author is and to listen with the right attitude.

Part Two, “On Reading Critically,” “aims to develop skills for reading theology critically” (xiv). Chapter three discusses the various views of Scripture and how those play out in theology; chapter four discusses the different perspectives of tradition in theology; chapter five, the relationship between faith and reason; and finally chapter six, the role of experience in theology. Anizor defines the different views of each of these issues and then gives examples of how they are expressed in different theological writings. The intelligent reader must understand the various views and ascertain from which view an author is writing from if he is to understand and respond accurately.

The author closes the book with an epilogue where he urges the reader to practice the principles in his book and gives some helpful suggestions for putting those principles to work in practice. These include an encouragement to start small, to survey articles about the author, and to look for clues in the text that point to the reason for writing.

There are many positive things to note about Anizor’s book. First, the structure is so simple that it is easy to remember. It is difficult to apply what one cannot remember, and Anizor’s structure helps to combat that problem. It is hard to forget that we should engage doctrine “critically and charitably,” and those words bring to mind the principles found in their chapters. Second, Anizor uses detailed examples from theologians who greatly differ in their positions throughout the book. For example, he uses Gutierrez and liberation theology as an example in chapter two and Schleiermacher in chapter six. This helps to show the reader how to critically and charitably interact with positions that he may not agree with. Finally, Anizor grounds his approach in Scripture (Chapter one) by arguing that the most accurate reading is the most loving reading. Anizor notes that an attitude of love is not a suspicious attitude, but is one that is willing to trust and assume the best (12). This moves his book from a purely intellectual argument to the area of the heart.

Several drawbacks to Anizor’s book should also be noted. First, while Anizor targets the heart by urging us to read charitably, he spends little time on reading theology worshipfully. He does argue that good theology should lead to “an experience of the good, true, and beautiful” (165), but does not spend time writing on the attitude of worship that one should have when he reads theology. Second, while not inherently a drawback, *How to Read Theology* is for a

limited readership. Although the overall structure is simple, many of the chapters would be potentially dense for those new to the reading of theology. Anizor's book is probably best suited for those who have spent a couple years engaging with the basics of theological scholarship. Being grounded in their faith, they will be prepared to read and critique the theologians with which they may have major disagreements.

Overall, I would heartily recommend Uche Anizor's book to students of theology who want to grow in their ability to comprehend by reading charitably and critically, especially those works with which they may not agree. Anizor will help them to better understand the issues at hand and therefore better understand the theology that they read.

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The God Who Gives: How the Trinity Shapes the Christian Story.

By Kelly M. Kapic with Justin Borger. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. 288 pages. Paperback \$22.99.

Many believers wonder what the Christian life is all about. They are told about "grace," but struggle to understand it, much less live it. They are taught about God, but their vision of him does not always reflect the full biblical portrait of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Christians struggle to know the ways of God and how to joyfully participate in his work.

The God Who Gives: How the Trinity Shapes the Christian Story provides a vision of the Christian faith and life. As one reads this biblical theology, one will discover just how the Trinity frees believers from sin and allows them to more fully experience life. God gives himself, and this fullness of life comes through the gift of God's generosity. The author

became convinced, through conversations and his study, that when the Christian story is approached through the lens of the Gift, the

story and our lives opens up before God's glorious and empowering grace (264).

The book is set up in three parts. In Part 1, titled "From Belonging to Bondage," the author begins the "story" with creation (15). Everything was created by God and God gave his creation to humanity. Kapic then proceeds to the fall (36). Despite God's giving of creation to humanity, humanity disobeyed God, and humanity was thus subject to the punishment of sin. While God provided grace for his people through the giving of the law, the people did not obey God and they did not follow God. Instead, they wanted a king like the rest of the nations (56). So, God gave them their request, the first king named Saul (75).

The "story" continues into Part 2, titled "God Reclaims All by Giving All: Son, Spirit, and Kingdom." Here, the author writes about God reclaiming all by giving humanity his Son, Jesus (95). Some of humanity accepted the gift, and some did not (112). After the ascension of Jesus, God sent humanity the gift of the Holy Spirit (128). Believers received and experienced that gift (142). God also gave believers his kingdom.

The final part of the "story" is told in Part 3, titled "Living the Gifts: Cross, Resurrection, Church." Here the author describes the "gifts" of the cross, resurrection, and the church, and how they must influence the believer. He states that believers will want to serve God by doing his work (211). For Kapic, service to the Lord is the resurrection life in action (223). The remaining chapters are about the church. In the church, believers and members receive and grow in new life (248). They, in turn, give life to the poor and oppressed (248).

The God Who Gives is a fresh approach to a study of the Trinity and God, the great Giver. Kapic argues that fully embracing the truth of the Triune God's giving of grace changes how believers view God, themselves, and the world. By living in the God's gifts, they are freed to give themselves and truly experience life. When I started to read the book, I found it so interesting that I could not put it down. I agree with all the author's statements. He uses considerable Scriptures and quotations from numerous authors to support his arguments, and the book is an easy read. It is a good resource for anyone who wants to do a further study of the Trinity and God. It is also a good text for a

study into the plan of God for humanity and the church. I would highly recommend this book.

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Honoring the Son: Jesus in Earliest Christian Devotional Practice. By Larry W. Hurtado. Bellingham, WA: Lexham P, 2018. 95 pp. Paperback \$15.99.

Larry Hurtado's book *Honoring the Son* is the newest volume added to the Snapshot Series edited by Michael Bird—a series aimed to engage the church in significant contemporary issues in a brief and accessible, yet masterful and inviting way. Hurtado's expertise in New Testament scholarship of early Christianity makes him an excellent choice as a contributor to this series.

Honoring the Son is a handy-size volume (5x8 inches) of only 94 pages (plus 15 pages of front matter). This slim volume accomplishes the series goal of being "accessible" to both the scholar and interested layman alike, with the footnotes providing the scholar ample grist for further scholarly pursuit. Chapters 1 and 6 form the Introduction and Conclusion, respectively, with the central four chapters unfolding Hurtado's argument. As he explains in the introduction, the impetus for his original exploration into this subject matter was the troubling claims by the History of Religions school, led mainly by Bousset's *Kyrios Christos: A History of Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*, originally published in Germany in 1913. Basically, Bousset, and others from the History of Religions school, set out to demonstrate that the worship of Jesus as being equal with God the Father originated not in Jewish Palestine, where one would expect, but in the diaspora where the Jews were much more subject to pagan influence. In other words, the veneration of Jesus as a messianic divine was an accretion from the Gentile world outside of Palestine. Bousset's book thus set the trajectory of studies in early NT Christian worship for the next century. Even within four years of its publication, an essay by Geerhardus Vos required 68 pages just to review the ensuing academic debate the book had generated. As Hurtado points out, Bousset's premise was that the deeply embedded

commitment orthodox Jews have to monotheistic worship would have never allowed the early Christians to venerate Jesus to the level of worship that is equal to God. Hurtado's four chapters that comprise the heart of this slim volume masterfully show how inexplicable Bousset's premise is to the evidence we see in the NT, especially from Paul's letters.

In chapter 2, "Worship in the Ancient World," Hurtado shows how early Christian worship was mainly identified and characterized by their rituals more so than their creeds. The culture of that era did not demand loyalty to any one god, but it did require participation in the ritually cultic activities that showed honor to the overall polytheistic culture. Hurtado then builds on this in chapter 3, "Ancient Jewish Monotheism," where he observes that it was common practice when travelling abroad to join in the cultic worship of other gods. In doing so, the common people gave it no thought that one's own god would be offended by honoring the foreign god of the culture one was visiting. It was simply a form of religious politeness. Hurtado shows from various ancient sources (e.g., the book of Tobit) that the Jews refused to entertain these pagan influences and instead held unwaveringly to a monotheistic worship even in seemingly innocent and polite ritualistic observances. This, then, works against Bousset's foundational premise.

In many ways, chapter 4 ("The Early Christian 'Mutation'") gets to the heart of Hurtado's conclusion. He uses the word "mutation" to demonstrate that there is a parent-child relationship between ancient Judaism (i.e., the parent) and early Christian worship (i.e., the child). He also introduces the term "dyadic" to describe the "devotional pattern in which the risen/exalted Jesus featured centrally and uniquely with God as virtually a co-recipient of cultic devotion" (43). He then masterfully demonstrates that in the earliest years of Christianity various prominent Old Testament texts—always previously and exclusively applied to God alone (e.g., Joel 2:32 and Rom 10:9–13)—are now applied by the early Jewish Christians to Jesus. He points out that there is simply not enough time for these to be accretions from pagan Gentile diaspora influence. He states, "When viewed in the light of the Jewish concerns to restrict worship to the one God alone, the programmatic place of Jesus in earliest Christian devotion amounts to a novel and historically significant 'mutation'" (49).

In chapter 5, “Jesus in Earliest Christian Devotional Practice,” Hurtado marshals more evidence to further support what he presented in the previous chapter. He not only shows how prayer and worship were directed to God through or “in” Jesus’ name, but he also shows how prayer-wish formulas invoked both God and Jesus together. But there’s more: he also underscores salutations and benedictions, formulas in connection with early Christian rites such as baptism and the Lord’s supper, Christian hymns and odes, prophetic speeches, etc.—all these regularly and routinely include Jesus as part of the earliest Christian worship, which undermines the notion that such things were accretions from Gentile pagan influences in the diaspora. He sums it up well in his concluding chapter: “In my view, this early and rapid ‘mutation’ in typical Jewish devotional practice could have occurred only if earliest participants felt themselves obliged to take part. That is, I think that they must have come to the conviction that God required them to reverence Jesus, and so the dyadic pattern that emerged was, in their eyes, actually obedience to the one God ... as the appropriate response to his exaltation of Jesus and designation of him as Lord” (66).

This slim volume packs a punch and will serve well as a primer for those who are looking to pursue early Christian worship practices, especially against claims that seek to undermine the recognition of Jesus as divine from the outset of Christian worship.

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Three Views on Israel and the Church: Perspectives on Romans 9-11. Edited by Jared Compton and Andrew David Naselli. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2019. 272 pp. Softcover \$21.99.

One of the greatest debates in Christian theology concerns the relationship between Israel and the church. Are Israel and the church distinct entities or is Israel a type of the church or Christ (or both)? One’s answers to these questions influences the way one understands the flow of redemptive history, the use of the Old Testament by the

New Testament, and the relationship between the old and new covenants.

In *Three Views on Israel and the Church: Perspectives on Romans 9-11*, editors Jared Compton (Pastor at Crossway Community Church in Bristol, Wisconsin) and Andrew Naselli (Associate Professor of New Testament and Theology at Bethlehem College and Seminary in Minneapolis) bring together four recognized scholars to present the three leading interpretations of Romans 9-11 concerning Israel's role in redemptive history. In this important portion of Scripture, Paul confronts a major issue facing the success of the gospel: If God has made promises to the nation of Israel, and yet many Jews have rejected their Messiah, then are God's promises unreliable? In response, Paul explain the purpose of Israel in God's sovereign plan and then (controversially) concludes, "All Israel will be saved" (11:26). What that conclusion means and how Paul arrives at that conclusion is highly determinative of the relationship between Israel and the church.

Michael J. Vlach (Professor of Theology at The Master's Seminary) defends the Non-Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View. This view argues that Romans 9-11 promises salvation and a future role for national Israel while denying that the nation serves as a type of the church. Fred G. Zaspel (Pastor of Reformed Baptist Church in Franconia, PA) and James M. Hamilton Jr. (Professor of Biblical Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), defend the Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View. This view argues that Roman 9-11 promises a future salvation for the Jewish people but no distinct future role for the nation of Israel. Ben Merkle (Professor of New Testament and Greek at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary) defends the Typological Non-Future-Mass-Conversion View. This view argues that Romans 9-11 promises the salvation of elect Jews throughout history, but no special future role for the nation of Israel. The goal of *Three Views on Israel and the Church*, as stated by the editors, is to gain "clarity about the precise nature of our authors' disagreements about Romans 9-11" and to produce some "new consensus" on the key issues (238).

Do the editors achieve their desired goals in *Three Views on Israel and the Church*? On the one hand, Compton and Naselli do an excellent job refereeing the interaction between the contributors. Readers, and especially those who have tarried in one camp on the

issue with little exposure to other views, will appreciate the clear presentations and gracious rebuttals. In this way, *Three Views on Israel and the Church* will serve as a valuable and convenient reference for Bible students and pastors as they seek to work their way through this complicated issue. Nevertheless, the goal of “new consensus” is ambitious, as the editors themselves admit (239). It is not likely that “new consensus” is possible because the relationship between Israel and the church is a difficult issue that involves the evaluation of many texts as well as major theological and hermeneutical commitments. This challenge is probably most evident in the opening of Merkle’s defense of the Typological Non-Future-Mass-Conversion View. Here, Merkle establishes his understanding of typology through his interpretation of other texts (161-168). This strategy is critiqued by Vlach, who argues that “major parts of Merkle’s overall argument are not found in Romans 9-11,” including the symbolic interpretation of OT prophecies, the identification of the church as the “new Israel,” and Israel as a type of Jesus (211). However, the other contributors also reach beyond the text of Romans 9-11 to defend their interpretation, including Vlach, who, for instance, argues that both the Old Testament and New Testament promise Israel’s restoration and that sound hermeneutics demonstrate that promises given to the nation of Israel still belong to the nation (65-66). Zaspel and Hamilton do likewise by insisting that Gentiles are now typologically fulfilling OT patterns and promises using passages like Galatians 3 and Ephesians 1-3 in support, as well as arguing that the land promises given to Abraham now extend to the world through Christ based upon Romans 4 (132-139). This does not make any of the views right or wrong per se, but it does show that the debate is much greater than Romans 9-11. Because of this, the reader should have some awareness of the overarching issues involving the relationship between Israel and the church in order to fully appreciate the arguments presented in *Three Views on Israel and the Church*.

The reader should also be aware that the dialogue gets very technical at times. The reader must be prepared to evaluate key Greek phrases (e.g., ἄχρις οὗ in 11:25 and καὶ οὕτως in 11:26) as well as Paul’s use of key prophetic texts (e.g., Hos 2:23 and 1:10 in Rom 11:25-26; Isa 59:20-21 and 27:9 in Rom 11:27-29) and Paul’s definition of Israel (see esp. Merkle’s argument; 175-78; 194-97). To put it simply, *Three Views on Israel and the Church* is not

introductory material. Fortunately, Naselli presents an abbreviated version of each argument in the Conclusion (239-53), a helpful addition for those not familiar with the issues.

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Jesus the Eternal Son: Answering Adoptionist Christology. By Michael F. Bird. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017.

It has become fashionable in recent years for modern biblical scholarship to argue that the earliest Christology of the church was adoptionism, a view that argues that Jesus was a man who acquired divinity and was appointed the “Son of God” based upon his faithful life. Michael F. Bird, lecturer in theology at Ridley College in Melbourne, Australia, responds to these claims in his work *Jesus the Eternal Son: Answering Adoptionist Christology*. To answer modern biblical scholarship, Bird first examines and explains Romans 1:3-4 and Acts 2:36, two key proof-texts used to support adoptionism. He then examines deification in the Greco-Roman world and its supposed influence upon Christianity, and particularly upon the Gospel of Mark. Bird follows with an evaluation of common historical referents to adoptionism (the Ebionites, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the Theodotians). Lastly, Bird briefly surveys adoptionism in modern theology. Bird concludes, “If the preceding study is correct, then there is no tangible evidence for an adoptionist Christology in the New Testament, nor the Shepherd of Hermas, nor among the Ebionites, and it is not until we come across a group of Theodotians that we detect a full-blown adoptionism” (124).

Jesus the Eternal Son is a short read; the ambitious reader can complete it in a night. However, it is a valuable contribution to the study of Christology. The strength of Bird’s work is its precise responses to modern critics and their claims that the early church held an adoptionist Christology. Students of the New Testament will appreciate his exegesis of the key proof-texts. For example, Bird addresses Romans 1:3-4 rightly explains the significance of Christ becoming the Son of God “in power” (v. 4), that “Jesus is installed to

a new position of divine lordship” (20), not that he became deified. Critics have tried to remove the phrase “in power” from the supposed “original” creed of Romans 1:3-4, but Bird understands what is really going on here: “Precisely because the phrase is injurious to the thesis that the creed espouses an early Adoptionist Christology, it becomes necessary to find a way to erase it” (19). Bird’s explanation of Acts 2:36 will also help students of the New Testament. Bird rightly reminds his readers that context and Luke’s overall purpose must guide one’s interpretation of Acts 2:36, and especially Luke’s citation of Joel 2:23-32 in Acts 2:17-21, which equates Jesus with Israel’s Lord (26). Obviously, adoptionism will struggle to explain this citation.

Bird’s review of Greco-Roman influences upon early Christianity (and especially the Gospel of Mark) is especially helpful. It is a common assertion from liberal scholars and critics that the early church made Jesus divine based upon Hellenistic divinization mythologies. In response, Bird, after surveying the relevant literature, rightly points out that, while some mythologies of this type did exist, “the process of divinization was open to question and ridicule” by Greco-Roman philosophers and statesmen (49). Furthermore, Jewish theology of the Second Temple Period was generally rigid in its monotheism and included an “absolute distinction between God and humanity that could not be traversed” (57). Bird concludes, “Adoptionism only really works within a particular Greco-Roman situation. It does not sit safely within a broadly Jewish view of divine ontology, and it requires either a heavily narrowed or hastily redacted canon from which to draw in order to fly” (126). Ultimately, to argue that Mark’s Gospel (a text written within both a Hellenistic and Jewish context) was influenced by such divinization mythologies is quite a stretch.

Perhaps the most significant portion of *Jesus the Eternal Son* is Bird’s clear identification of the consequences of an adoptionist Christology. Using Athanasius’ famous axiom, Bird questions how a divinized human Jesus could truly be the Savior of humanity. He further argues that adoptionism promotes a “merit theology” in which Jesus becomes the example of earning divine favor through works. Bird explains, “A Christology that presents us with a mere man who bids us to earn our salvation is an impoverished alternative to the God of grace and mercy who took on our flesh and “became sin” so that

we might become the “righteousness of God”” (130). Clearly, anyone considering adoptionism must weigh the consequences of this theology.

If there were anything I could desire of *Jesus the Eternal Son*, it would be a survey of the issues involving the “begetting” of the Son (e.g., Heb 1:5 and its quotation of Ps 2:7). Although these issues generally fall under the subject of eternal sonship, a significant topic in its own right and likely beyond the scope of the book, some passages relating to the subject get brought up in the conversation regarding adoptionism. I would love to hear what Bird has to say about those passages and their relationship to the issue presented in the book.

This point aside, *Jesus the Eternal Son* is an outstanding work. Bird has done well to address the key arguments of modern scholarship while giving clear explanations of tough passages. Readers will find the text a valuable resource for their theological studies.

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Counseling Techniques: A Comprehensive Resource for Christian Counselors. Edited by John C. Thomas. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018. 736 pp. Hardcover \$74.99.

Christian counseling has evolved significantly in the past several decades. For centuries, counseling was considered a responsibility of the clergy. However, in the last one hundred years a burgeoning interest in Christian counseling as a profession has encouraged many to attend Christian colleges and universities in search of training to prepare for a ministry that augments the work of the pastor.

In light of this interest and need to provide materials to assist the development of Christian counseling as a profession, one cannot help but notice that many new strategies, interventions, and techniques have appeared. Today Christian counseling is a profession that is constantly changing, and it is realized that research sheds new light on very familiar and not-so-familiar problems that people face. As

Christian counseling professionals are ever mindful that they have a daunting and yet profoundly important task, there is an urgency to stay abreast of developments in the field and adjust their delivery of services as appropriate. Therefore, Christian counseling professionals should be committed to a lifetime of inquiry, research, and refinement of their work so that the greatest opportunity to help is provided.

In order to help meet this responsibility, twenty-three skilled people-helpers share their expertise in *Counseling Techniques: A Comprehensive Resource for Christian Counselors*. This text, edited by John C. Thomas (Professor with the Center for Counseling and Family Studies at Liberty University) brings to the forefront a plethora of strategies, interventions, and techniques (SITs) to assist the experienced as well as the novice Christian counseling professional in providing treatment. In this volume, the abundance of vignettes and the follow-up application of the SITs to the vignettes allow the serious Christian professional an opportunity to glimpse how each can be effectively utilized.

In particular, the responsible Christian counseling professional is concerned with whether SITs under consideration demonstrate a faithfulness to Scripture. Although it is certain that Scripture itself is not necessarily a repository of the SITs found in this book, a Christian counselor should give Scripture the opportunity be the filter, focus, and foundation of all SITs being considered for use. But the Christian counselor should also be concerned with whether SITs being considered for implementation have solid empirical support as well. Therefore, with these significant concerns in mind, it is refreshing to see that at the beginning of each chapter introducing a particular family of strategies the author(s) of that chapter provide(s) an argument for the theological and the psychological validity of the strategies presented. It is of no small comfort to the Christian professional who is earnestly striving to be faithful to Scripture and to the findings of current psychological literature that the SITs presented in each chapter have been investigated for their validity in these areas. Since every Christian counseling professional should never blindly follow the views or positions of another, each chapter has enough information to point the counselor in a meaningful direction for further investigation and consideration.

This book is a tremendous addition to the shelf of a Christian counseling professional's office. However, this book should not be

regarded as a quick reference guide when a counseling need is encountered. Nor should it be considered a tool for use by the layperson. Rather, it should be considered as a resource for review and study so that Christian counseling professionals can examine the use of their own current SITs for the possible inclusion of, or replacement with, others. Although the book is not filled with technical jargon, making its information convoluted or confusing, it invites the Christian counseling professional to take a scholarly and biblically solid approach to the application of strategies, interventions, and techniques for the glory of God and for the benefit of those served.

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Faith in the Shadows: Finding Christ in the Midst of Doubt. By Austin Fischer. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2018. 184 pages. Paperback \$15.99.

Austin Fischer is a pastor with a burden: how to help others maintain a robust faith in Christ while dealing with persistent doubts about the truth of Christianity. Fischer asserts that having doubts is the necessary default for a truly authentic Christianity: “The church has always been a place for ... skeptical saints” (12) and “owning our uncertainty ... makes our faith more human and thus more honest” (20). While I heartily agree with Fischer that “the church should be the most honest place in the world” (35), I found some of his methods and solutions for handling doubt unconvincing.

One persistent trend in the book is Fischer’s excoriation of “fundamentalism” (referenced eight times in the first two pages of the foreword), which he calls “a sneaky but very serious threat to Christian faith” (83). According to Fischer, fundamentalism has turned many away from faith in Christ because, among other sins, it “seeks control by pursuing certainty” (84). In this regard, Charles Hodge, R. A. Torrey, and Lewis Sperry Chafer are taken to task for “trying to read all the Bible as literally as possible” (85–86). Not surprisingly, errant fundamentalist beliefs include the young-earth

creationist view of Genesis 1–2. By contrast, Fischer harbors no doubts that the modern evolutionary perspective of earth history is established fact (chapter 8 and elsewhere). Indeed, “when science *proves* something that seems to contradict Scripture, the proven scientific truth should take precedence over the literal sense of Scripture” (104, emphasis original). Finally, he charges the “self-assured, naïve, dogmatic biblicism of fundamentalism” with leaving “many Christians intellectually crippled and terrified” (91). Yet, his attempted defense of the orthodox doctrine of the fall of man through evolutionary processes and a metaphorical interpretation of Genesis left me gasping for theological air (107–109; see my review of *Four Views on the Historical Adam*, [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013] in *JMAT* 18:1 [Spring 2014]:120–130 for a more thorough critique of this approach).

There is certainly some truth in what Fisher alleges (he cites and then channels Mark Noll’s incisive *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*). As I read the book, I was reminded of a phrase I heard often during my doctoral studies: “chastened epistemology.” That is, believers need to maintain a certain humility with regard to the conclusions they draw from the evidence for the truth of the Christian faith. I am sure most of us can identify with Fischer’s recollection that he “arrived at college with the brazen gait of someone who just doesn’t know how much he doesn’t know” (17). In addition, Fischer (mostly) champions a chastened epistemology throughout his book. Although I found myself duly “chastened” at times, I felt Fischer often conceded too much to the gods of modern science and post-modern hermeneutics.

In his discussion of the problem of evil (chapter 5), Fischer explains and then rejects a solution he formerly embraced, namely, a Reformed view of God’s sovereignty and human freedom (54–57; he previously authored *No Longer Reformed*). In its place, he favors what appears to be a Arminian view of human freedom (62), bordering on openness theology (he quotes Gregory Boyd approvingly), and an overwhelming emphasis on the love of God as the fount from which all other divine “expressions” (not “attributes”), including wrath and justice, flow (67). To me this is yet another concession to the post-modern spirit, though Fischer does pose some pungent challenges to the Reformed view, namely, “the troubling picture it conjures up of God ordaining the world to be set ablaze by

sin and evil so he can play the hero by rescuing some while letting others burn because, according to a strange sense of divine justice, they deserve it" (66). While certainly a caricature of Reformed theology, it strikes a chord.

In general, I found myself enjoying the book even as I disagreed at times with Fischer's perspectives and arguments. He writes in a very engaging and self-effacing style, with many illustrative anecdotes and insightful assertions, along with a plethora of colorful citations of writers (e.g., Voltaire, Gustavo Gutierrez, Miguel de Unamuno, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Mother Teresa) whose worldviews are not wholly compatible with biblical Christianity. One minor but completely unnecessary irritation is Fischer's occasional usage of the word "hell" as an adjective (12, 34, 37). If that is supposed to make his prose edgier or more authentic, I am not impressed. In addition, it is not always clear when he is citing a source, since instead of using footnotes or endnotes, introductory phrases from certain pages are listed in the back along with bibliographical data.

There are other arguments with which to differ, such as his chapter on hell in which he argues along the lines of C. S. Lewis's famous dictum (which he also quotes): "the doors of hell are locked on the inside." Hitler is used as a classic example of Fischer's view that everyone in hell is there because they refused to yield to divine love (131). While there is certainly some truth to that, nowhere does Fischer even mention, let alone discuss, the much more specific requirement of saving faith in Jesus Christ as the sole condition for escaping the fires of hell (John 3:18).

Nevertheless, several thought-provoking statements make the book worth the read such as "[T]he only thing worse than the 'problem' of evil is not having the 'problem' of evil" (48); "[T]he gravest threat to modern Christianity is neither fundamentalism nor science, but stuff" (114); "Religion is the hope of the poor. Stuff is the opiate of the privileged" (123); "The ultimate remedy for doubt is love because love creates faith" (144); "Once you have glimpsed the beauty of Christ, there really is no going back To truly hear the gospel is to evolve past ever being satisfied with something less" (152); "We respond with cynicism when we don't want to be duped; we respond with wonder when we don't want to miss out. We respond with cynicism because we desire control; we respond with

wonder because we desire delight” (159–160); and “What I know will always be less than the great hope I feel” (162).

In summary, I would recommend this book to mature and knowledgeable Christians as a means of sharpening theological and apologetic perspectives. It could also serve as a supplemental text for an apologetics or philosophy class.

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Palau: A Life of Fire: The Spiritual Memoir of Luis Palau. By Luis Palau with Paul J. Pastor. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 231 pp. Hardcover \$24.99.

Palau: A Life of Fire is a memoir by Luis Palau, a spiritual recounting from one of the most respected evangelists of our day. It is a glimpse into the formation of Palau’s spiritual legacy and his signature message. In each chapter, Luis Palau draws one foundational lesson that he has learned from his special relationships with the individuals in his life.

Chapter one documents the importance of Palau’s parents as they set the foundation for his life (17-18). His mother, Matilde Balfour de Palau, was Roman Catholic and played the organ in church. She received a New Testament from an individual who came to their home. She began reading the book of Matthew. She had a hunger in her heart, and the Lord spoke to her in the Scriptures (22-23). She read the Bible, prayed often, and taught her children to memorize Scripture. She had a rock-solid trust in God and his promises (34). She taught all her children to seek first the kingdom of God (35). Her faith had great influence on Palau’s becoming a preacher.

In chapter two, readers meet the special individual who influenced Luis Palau: his father Luis Palau Sr. (37) During the early years of Luis’s life, his father was not a believer. However, one evening Palau Sr. attended a church, stood up during the sermon, and made a profession of faith. It was an impulse, but he did not waver or waffle in his commitment (38). He became a street preacher and he, with a friend, planted churches. He died from pneumonia when Luis

was 10 years old. He taught his son to give everything to the Lord (47).

In chapter three, readers meet another individual who influenced Palau: Mr. Charles Rogers. This was the man who gave the New Testament to Luis's mother and partnered with Luis Palau, Sr. in street preaching and planting churches (51). During the week, Charles Rogers was a high-ranking oil executive. On Sundays, he was the pastor of the Plymouth Brethren Chapel, and weekends and holidays, he was a missionary doing street services and planting churches (52). He lived his faith and respected all individuals (55). He is known for stating "Preach the Truth" and "Preach the Light of the Gospel" (58). He lived his faith his entire life to the end (65).

In chapter 4, readers meet Ray Stedman, the pastor of the Peninsula Bible Church in California (71). When Stedman was in town preaching, Palau attended the meeting and thought Stedman was full of joy and was winsome (72). Stedman influenced Luis to come to the United States to study for the ministry. He became a second father to Luis.

In chapter 5, readers are introduced to Major Ian Thomas, a retired English military officer who was speaking at Multnomah School of the Bible (97). Palau attended the meeting and felt that the Major was speaking to him. The Major was speaking about Moses and the burning bush and the indwelling of Jesus (97). This influenced Palau. The Major said that you can be called to commit your life to a need, a task, or a field, and you will not be complete until you totally gave your life to God (93).

In chapter 6, readers meet Patricia Scofield de Palau, the wife of Luis. Her personality was different from that of Luis. Pat's example of combined strength and character made her incredible (109). Self-sacrifice was her secret (111). The sacrifice of her love, time, tears, and energy and a sense of safety and security influenced Luis (112).

In chapter 7, readers meet Billy Graham (121). He was a teacher, encourager, mentor, friend, and example to Palau. Palau was an interpreter and a member of the Graham team (126). Graham taught Palau about humility and its virtue (133).

In chapter 8, readers meet the Luis Palau Association Team (139). The Graham team showed Palau how to develop a team. A team member must take time with God, love the ministry, see the

vision, and have faith and humility. The team showed Palau that he cannot do it alone (154).

In chapter 9, readers meet Kevin, Keith, Andrew, and Stephen Palau, the sons of Luis Palau (159). Luis Palau relates how the four boys grew up. All four are born-again believers and are committed to God. Kevin is head of the Palau team (173). Andrew is preparing to take over the ministry started by his father (174). Stephen is a fifth-grade schoolteacher (175).

In chapters 10-12, Luis Palau moves from his thoughts on certain individuals to other topics. In chapter 10, he shares his thoughts about the unity of the church (179). In Chapter 11, Luis Palau shares his thoughts about dying. In chapter 12, he shares his thoughts about the future (217).

Palau: A Life of Fire is an easy read and written for any age of those who are interested in biographies and autobiographies. A record of Palau's life and influences makes for a very interesting book, one that readers cannot put down. The author pours out his thoughts in every chapter. Luis Palau's life is filled with adventure, risk, and faith, and it will spark the reader with a fiery faith to live out the Good News of Jesus Christ. I would recommend this book for anyone who is interested in the life of Palau or well-known church leaders.

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Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible. By Mark Ward. Bellingham, WA: Lexham P, 2018. 168 pp. Paperback \$12.99; Digital \$8.99.

Readers of Mark Ward's *Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible* will find its trim size (5x8) delightful and refreshing. As the title suggests, Ward makes the case that there are valid uses of the KJV as well as invalid ones. But that is not what makes the book delightful, in my opinion. Rather, it is his down-to-earth, everyday speech, and good wit and humor. Plus, it quickly becomes clear that he is well-read in a wide variety of fields, especially in the area of Bible translation history and translation philosophy. This, coupled with his varied ministry venues, allows

him to draw upon some rich experiences and address the key issues clearly and effectively.

After a brief introduction (4 pages), Ward unfolds his argument in seven chapters, with the last chapter essentially functioning as his concluding plea. The back matter consists of an Epilogue (2 pages), Acknowledgements (2 pages), and Endnotes (11 pages).

Ward's thesis is that due to the changing nature of language, the academy must produce new translations on a regular basis (about every 30 years or so) in order to ensure that the common man has access to God's word in the everyday language that he speaks. He appeals to 1 Corinthians 14:11, where Paul underscores the principle that understandable language is what fosters edification in the church. Thus, Ward applies that principle in both a positive and negative way. Positively, this implies the need for new translations that keep up with the changing nature of language. Negatively, it means that since the KJV was published over 400 years ago, there are many words and phrases that are cumbersome at best and a stumbling block at worst for those new or immature believers who have not yet established good Bible reading disciplines.

Although Ward's thesis sounds a bit polemical, his delivery is anything but that. In fact, in most of the chapters he underscores the rich heritage of the KJV and argues for the many benefits it still yields today. Thus, he argues that there is a proper use of the KJV. Ward is clear, however, that he is not in favor of preachers preaching from the KJV, or teachers teaching from it, or children memorizing verses from it, or evangelists evangelizing from it. All such would be the *misuse* of the KJV because this violates 1 Corinthians 14:11. Rather, its proper use is primarily in personal study by consulting it as a reliable version among many others to enrich one's understanding of God's word.

He unpacks his thesis in greater detail in the last chapter where he seeks to level a broadside against what he calls "Bible translation tribalism." Such tribalism he defines as "the belief that a group's chosen translation is one of many marks of its superiority over other groups" (124). This must stop, he cries. He sees all the various translations available today as a field of treasure; as an embarrassment of riches. "So let's enjoy them," he urges. He wants to see the tide turn where people no longer ask which is the *best*

translation, but instead, which is the most *useful* one? And that depends on what any given person wants to use it for.

Those who are looking for a volume that will help them refute a “KJV-only” mindset will not find it here. To be sure, he is not in favor of such a mindset, but that is not his aim. The KJV is part of a rich heritage and should be treasured as such. It should not be thrown away, but balance is the key. It no longer qualifies as a vernacular translation. But it is still a treasured resource for the right reasons and occasions. The last paragraph of the book captures his sentiment fairly well:

[It] is a misuse of the KJV to ask it to do today what it did in 1611, namely, to serve as a vernacular English translation. For public preaching ministry, for evangelism, for discipleship materials, indeed for most situations outside individual study, using the KJV violates Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 14. The value of vernacular translation is so great that we must fight to protect it We need God’s word in our language, not in someone else’s (137-38).

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Can “White” People be Saved? Triangulating Race, Theology, and Mission. Edited by Love L. Sechrest, Johnny Ramírez-Johnson, and Amos Yong. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018. Softcover xii+336 pages. \$30.00.

The series *Missiological Engagements: Church, Theology and Culture in Global Contexts* “charts interdisciplinary and innovative trajectories in the history, theology and practice of Christian mission at the beginning of the third millennium.” It features leading thinkers from “evangelical, Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions.” This book fits within the last of the guiding questions for the series: “What innovations in the theology and practice of missions are needed for renewed and revitalized Christian witness in a

postmodern, postcolonial, post-secular and post-Christian world?” (Quotations are from the series description on the InterVarsity Press website.)

The provocative title of this volume in the series attracts the eye and suggests that the book will be dealing with issues of race, but the subtitle narrows the discussion of that subject into some specific disciplines. Willie James Jennings, in the first essay, explains the “whiteness project” and the triangulation of race, theology, and mission, joining his voice to that of the other essayists in a prayer that there might be an end to the fusion of whiteness and Christianity in the church and missions. He describes whiteness as “people caught up in a deformed building project aimed at bringing the world to its full maturity . . . maturity of mind and body, land and animal (use), landscape and building, family and government . . .” (pp. 28-29). As explained in the essays of the book, this deformed project comes together with missions in that in the history of missions, many (but not all) Europeans and Americans with a critical and patronizing mindset toward the people of the rest of the world have gone to the rest of the world with the gospel plus a plan to mature the people to become more like them; and, in the process, taking many things away from the people.

Between the Introduction and Conclusion of the book, eleven essays are divided into five parts: I. Race and Place at the Dawn of Modernity; II. Race and the Colonial Enterprise; III. Race and Mission to Latin America; IV. Race in North America Between and Beyond Black-and-White; V. Scriptural Reconsiderations and Ethnoracial Hermeneutics. The concluding “essay” is a clever *Screwtape*-like letter from the Archdemon of Racialization to Her Angels in the U.S.

The authors of these essays are personally engaged in the fight against racism and discrimination in churches and institutions in the West, and they write with wisdom and fervor. They trace the philosophical basis of racism, the twisting of the Scriptures that justified it, the demeaning views of fellow humans held by those who consider themselves superior (views not limited to white supremacists). They challenge Christianity in general, and evangelical Christians in particular, to critically examine themselves concerning race, discrimination, ethnic diversity, migrants, and

others “not like us” to surrender to God every thought, emotion, and prejudice that corrupts love and destroys unity in this world.

One complaint that must be raised concerning a few of the essays is that they are written in philosophically rich academic language that obfuscates the vital information that begs to be communicated. An example would be Andrew T. Draper’s essay, “The End of ‘Mission.’” While it is an extremely helpful testimony of a servant of God who has obviously, humbly attempted to overcome his own “Whiteness” in ministry, and it is filled with useful examples, the message would be lost to many practitioners of mission because of language, references and allusions they would not understand. These essays were written to be delivered in a missiology lecture series in 2017 at Fuller Theological Seminary’s School of Intercultural Studies: an academic setting. Yet, the subject is of such importance that it demands clarity of presentation so that its message will be repeated and applied in our churches and in missions.

One example of clarity and usefulness of presentation is Johnny Ramirez-Johnson’s essay “Intercultural Communication Skills for a Missiology of Interdependent Mutuality,” in which he uses the Peter and Cornelius incident in the book of Acts and the Image-IQ Inventory to challenge the reader to acknowledge the difficulties of, and by the power of God to develop new skills for, intercultural communication. For the white child of God who has grown up in communication primarily with white peers, these skills are essential.

Each of the essays displays careful research, conveys much needed information, and produces great conviction in the reader. Most readers will disagree with some characterizations of the use of the Scriptures, as well as the use of Scripture and some theological and exegetical positions espoused by the contributors. Nevertheless, few readers will come away with a desire to remain silent and unaffected by the issues dealt with here. Every missionary, pastor, teacher, theological student, and Christian worker should read this book.

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Good Arguments: Making Your Case in Writing and Public Speaking. By Richard A. Holland Jr. and Benjamin K. Forrest. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. 138 pages. \$18.00.

Richard Holland (PhD, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary) is an assistant professor of philosophy at Grand Canyon University, and Benjamin Forrest (EdD, Liberty University) is an associate dean of general studies at Liberty University. Holland and Forrest have provided an accessible guide to critical thinking and sharpened communication, purposefully constructed for a Christian pedagogical context. In the volume's introduction, they maintain that good argumentation reflects God's character, who created us as rational beings in his image (xiii). Moreover, they contend that taking the time to develop one's argumentation reflects respect for one's interlocutors (xiv). Preaching, apologetic encounters, written communication, and even everyday life call for honed communication. They explain, "All of these reasons for understanding and employing good arguments motivated us to write this book" (xvi). This introductory material provides the theological rationale of the book, so perhaps a nod toward the noetic results of the fall might have rounded out the theological framework.

Chapter 1 tackles "The Basics of Good Arguments," including the rudimentary principles of syllogistic reasoning (properly arguing from premises to a necessarily valid conclusion). Chapter 2 describes and contrasts deductive and inductive logic. A clear and consistent implementation of the customary vocabulary of sound vs. unsound (as well as valid vs. invalid) would tighten the presentation of these initial chapters. The example of inductive reasoning given on page 22 could actually be interpreted as suppressing an inductive conclusion which then becomes the basis for subsequent deductive reasoning (thereby nuancing how the authors use the case study to discuss particulars and universals within inductive argumentation). The second chapter ends by explaining basic laws of logic, such as the law of identity, the law of non-contradiction, and the law of the excluded middle. "The laws of logic just tell us how good reasoning works, and they are universally applicable across all times and all cultures" (30).

The beginning of chapter 3 discusses the formal fallacies of affirming the consequent and denying the antecedent. The second half of the chapter covers informal fallacies, ranging from *ad hominem* to

ad populum, and from begging the question to creating a false dilemma. Illustrative examples pepper the pages, spicing up the discussion. A few examples, however, could be disputed using strict logic. For example, the authors propose the following as a true dilemma: "If you are going to make a turn, you must turn either to the right or to the left" (44). Critically thinking "outside the box," however, this represents a false dilemma for an airplane pilot. In such an instance, one is not limited to left or right turns alone, as one could make an upward or downward turn.

The discussion of "A Brief Lesson in Epistemology" (50-51) explains knowledge as "justified true belief." In sum, "knowledge is *belief* that is held for *good reasons* and is *true*" (51). This epistemological discussion could be sharpened by the inclusion of the complexities of so-called "Gettier examples." Moreover, Holland and Forrest connect "fact" with "objective" and public/external availability, and they attach "opinion/belief" with "subjective" and private/internal mental states (52-56). One consequence of this dual configuration is that propositional statements about one's internal states cannot function as "facts," even though they correspond to reality. Even if "I feel disappointed" in reality, this cannot be a fact, only an opinion/belief. The authors rightfully acknowledge, "Of course these descriptions are a bit oversimplified, but they are sufficient to get us going in the right direction to understand why this is important when we talk about claims made in arguments" (49).

The fifth chapter enjoins the defining of terms: "when you properly define your terms, you can avoid misunderstanding and confusion, and you can make your arguments stronger than they otherwise would have been" (57). Holland and Forrest caution against relying upon dictionaries alone since "they report how words are used; they don't actually create the definitions" (61). Put differently, dictionaries reflect the "semantic range" of a word's meaning, but they cannot necessarily identify a word's meaning in a specific literary context. The authors also warn against stipulation, encroachment, equivocation, and self-serving definitions (65-68). The following chapter focuses upon analogies: "Properly employed, analogies can be powerful tools for communication" (69). Relevant analogies with compounded similarities are more powerful than "forced" analogies.

Chapter 7 concerns causal reasoning. The authors caution against conflating coincidental correlation with causation. They specifically warn against the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy, the unwarranted assumption that previous events have caused subsequent events. Furthermore, they discuss such intricacies as remote causation, contributive causation, composite causation, and mutual causation. It is always necessary to consider alternatives seriously (89). One could complicate a few of the chapter's own illustrations with alternative reasoning. As an example of correlation, they assert, "People who pray more often tend to report a deeper sense of connection to God" (81). But cannot frequent crying out to God, in some instances, stem from a sense of lacking a connection to God? The authors also declare that "Visits to the doctor's office do not cause the flu" (89). Certainly, just because a high percentage of visitors to doctors' offices have the flu does not mean that such visits cause their flu (a fallacious reversal of cause and effect, which is the authors' point). But could complex causality also play a role in some cases? A patient who visits the physician for an ear infection may contract the flu from a virus in the office left by a flu-ridden patient. In such specific circumstances, visits to the doctor's office can indeed cause the flu.

The subsequent chapter, entitled "On Good Authority," calls readers to employ recognized, current, objective, scholarly, and relevant authorities (similar to the so-called "CRAAP test" developed at California State University and commonly used in information studies—currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose). For instance, Holland and Forrest maintain that while shopping for a new refrigerator, the expertise of an appliance salesperson is more important than the expertise of an appliance technician, since the salesperson's goal is to satisfy customers who will not return the products, thereby not negating earned commissions. On the other hand, a salesperson may be motivated by the same commissions framework to "push" an equally satisfying yet more expensive product. The authors also properly recommend interacting with sources that disagree with one's perspective.

The final chapter, "Making Your Case," summarizes six tips embodied in the volume: "Know your audience and your purpose," "Check your attitude," "Start and finish with your claim," "Clearly show your reasoning," "Support the argument with arguments," and "Explain the benefits for the audience." Holland and Forrest remind

readers that winning the argument while losing one's audience does not constitute an ultimate victory. The volume wraps up with three tools: an appendix of case studies, a glossary of key terms, and an index of topics. The case studies could serve as discussion starters in the classroom or as the basis of written assignments.

The few critical reflections I mention above should not detract from the overall success of this splendid introductory volume. Rather, such tweaks of reasoning and delivery serve as small reminders of the continuing work of refined thinking and nuanced communication. Holland and Forrest's guidebook could serve as an effective text in either critical thinking or research writing coursework. Improving one's critical thinking and persuasive argumentation skills is well worth the time and effort. This volume is effectively designed to refine both abilities. I therefore confidently recommend a careful perusal as a worthy investment, for both students and general readers. Holland and Forrest have made a winning case for good argumentation.

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Dissertation Defenses at Baptist Bible Seminary

— *Old Testament* —

Gerhard Rehwald — *The Function of Chapter 27 in the Book of Leviticus*

Abstract: This dissertation examines the function of chapter 27 in the Book of Leviticus both as a literary integrative part in its structural function as well as a conclusion to the thematic scope of Leviticus. The chapter 27 comprises a two-fold book closure which finalizes both the structure and the theme of holiness in Leviticus.

Chapter 27 consummates the holiness teachings of Leviticus through practical applications which reveal the sincerity of the devotee. A direct law speech, embedded in a minimalistic narrative frame, formulates a didactic entity with legal provisions on five different kinds of dedication which repeat, apply and implement central aspects of holiness. The arc of suspense in the law speech underlines God's sovereignty and authority in the matter of holiness and uses them as motivation and evaluation for the devotion of the law recipient.

Chapter 27 is part of a larger structural entity which consists of the last three chapters (25 through 27) of Leviticus. While the single law speech of chapter 25 and 26 represents the concluding culmination of Leviticus, the separate but coordinated law speech of chapter 27, constitutes an epilogue to the book closure. In a double function, chapter 27 completes the book closure and finalizes through structural features and key words the whole book.

— *New Testament* —

Mark Mills — *An Analysis of the Clause Patterns in the Greek Text of 1 Peter with Reference to Information Structure*

Abstract: The subject of Koine Greek word order commonly surfaces in scholarly discussions, being a frequent source of research and debate. These often concentrate on establishing the default arrangement of the Subject, Verb, and Object within a clause. Establishing the default order of clause constituents may have descriptive value for the language, but its contribution to the exegesis of the biblical texts is the greater concern for students of the NT. Toward this end NT scholars since the latter part of the 20th c. have

incorporated insights from linguistics and discourse analysis into their theoretical models, proposing clause templates that describe the expected positions of components with various pragmatic and grammatical functions. Many of these build upon Helma Dik's seminal work in the Classical writings of Herodotus.

This study considers the clause templates found in the works of Stephen Levinsohn and Steven Runge, and proposes the following template, which is derived from theirs: Connector—Frames—Topics—Focus—Verb—Arguments—Adjuncts. It then validates this template against the clauses of the NT epistle of 1 Peter. Since this template incorporates the pragmatic concepts of topic and focus, the study appeals to the information structure theory of Knud Lambrecht to provide the basis for understanding and applying it. Therefore, the first stage of analysis evaluates the clauses for their information structure as input to the second stage, which uses this data to compare the clause instances against the template for validation.

The goal of the study is not simply to validate the template, but to demonstrate its value for the exegesis of 1 Peter, and potentially for other NT texts. As a template, it not only explains some of the functions of the components of clauses that conform to its pattern, but also identifies those clauses that should be given specific attention to explain why they differ from the template. In this way, the template and its underpinnings from information structure theory help the exegete to discover the author's motivations for choosing one clause arrangement over another.

— *Systematic Theology* —

John Altizer — *Living for the Day: A Case for Interpreting Select Hm'Epa Phrases as References to the Judgement Seat of Christ*

Abstract: The purpose of this dissertation is to examine eleven Pauline NT phrases containing the word day and demonstrate their direct relationship to the judgment seat of Christ. These phrases include “the day” (Rom 13:12; 1 Cor 3:13), “the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:8), “the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor 5:5), “the day of our Lord Jesus” (2 Cor 1:14), “the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6), “the day of Christ” (Phil 1:10; 2:16), and “that day” (2 Tim 1:12, 18; 4:8). The dissertation also evaluates two non-Pauline NT passages (Heb 10:25 and 1 John 4:17) containing the word day and concludes that one is most likely a reference to the judgment seat (1 John 4:17), even though it is not specifically identified as such. The eleven Pauline phrases are

often viewed by non-dispensational writers as extensions of the OT day of the Lord while dispensational writers generally associate the phrases with either the rapture or an extended period of time. The dissertation also evaluates the central NT passages related to the judgment seat of Christ (Rom 14:10; 1 Cor 3:10–4:5; 2 Cor 5:10) and concludes it is an evaluation for church-age believers to determine whether a Christian will receive or forfeit rewards for works performed on earth.

This dissertation examines the ecclesiological and eschatological implications indicated in the eleven Pauline day phrases and one additional non-Pauline passage regarding the evaluation criteria for the judgment seat of Christ. The passages emphasize the importance of spiritual growth and maturity and encourage unity, peace, perseverance through suffering, and faithfulness as stewards of the gospel message. The passages also encourage believers to financially partner with others in ministry and anticipate the possibility of sharing rewards and rejoicing with others at this evaluation. The one non-Pauline passage emphasizes the importance of loving others and thus having confidence at Christ's evaluation. Therefore, the day phrases examined in this dissertation make a significant contribution to the doctrine of the judgment seat of Christ.

— *Bible Exposition* —

Paul Weaver — *Archaeological Discoveries of Ancient Corinth and the Exegesis of First Corinthians: From Archaeology to Exegesis*

Abstract: This dissertation demonstrates that there is a great chasm between archaeological studies of Corinth and the modern commentaries on the book of First Corinthians; it begins the process of bridging that divide. This is done by documenting, evaluating, and applying the archaeological discoveries from the Corinthia in a manner that is easily accessible to the modern biblical scholar, in one volume. It also demonstrates that these archaeological discoveries confirm the biblical record, provide helpful insights into the cultural milieu of 1st century Corinth, afford a better understanding of the Apostle's metaphors, and in some instances offers significant implications to the exegesis of First Corinthians.

Chapter two investigates the archaeological evidence and extant texts relating to Paul's visit to Corinth and affirms that Paul's visit to Corinth is one of the most well-established dates of Paul's ministry. Chapter three demonstrates that most modern commentaries have made

the mistake of emphasizing the discontinuity between Greek Corinth and Roman Corinth and neglecting the continuity that existed. Chapter four investigates the immoral setting of Corinth and its implications upon the Apostle's teaching regarding πορνεία. Chapter five describes the discovery of the Judgment Seat of Gallio and shows how Paul used it to teach about the Judgment Seat of Christ. Chapter six investigates the discoveries of the pagan temples of 1st century Corinth and their implications upon Paul's Temple of God metaphor. Chapter seven investigates archaeological evidence for worship involving sacrificed food and its implications upon Paul's teaching regarding food offered to idols. Chapter eight discusses the archaeological record regarding the Isthmian Games and the insights it provides for Paul's athletic metaphors. Chapter nine describes the discoveries at the Asklepion, including over 125 votive offerings in the form of body parts, and their implications to the understanding of the Apostle's metaphor of the church being like a human body comprised of many body parts.



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