Journal of Ministry & Theology

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The Journal of Ministry & Theology

Published semiannually by Baptist Bible Seminary,
Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania

From the Editor's Desk

Dear Reader,

This issue I am pleased to present articles from a number of doctoral students. Allie (Alair) August is currently enrolled in a Doctor of Education program. A few years ago, Allie worked for BBS and did significant editorial work for each issue of the JMAT. We are glad to see her on the "other side" of the JMAT with her article on "A Christian Appropriation of Montessori's Holistic Vision of Education."

Joel Thomas is currently a Ph.D. student in New Testament Studies at Baptist Bible Seminary of Clarks Summit University. Joel reviews the criterion of false prophecy in his article: "An Examination of Different Interpretive Approaches in Jeremiah." Another Ph.D. student in Old Testament at BBS, Eric McConnell, looks at Hebrews 1:1-4 through the lens of Discourse Analysis. Chris McIntyre, a Ph.D. student in Old Testament Studies at BBS, seeks the biblical theology of Psalm 2. Lastly, Jared Twigg OT major at BBS, tackles the very real and very weighty issue of the problem of evil.

The JMAT is excited to have these budding scholars join the academic discussion in their related fields. We pray God's blessing upon their lives and research so they might bless God's people.

At the JMAT we seek to serve our Savior, and you, our reader. I look forward to hearing from you as you profit and enjoy this issue of the JMAT.

Mark McGinniss, Ph.D.
Lead Editor

A Christian Appropriation of Montessori's Holistic Vision of Education

Allie August

Abstract: The Montessori Method is a widely recognized educational approach for young children around the world. There have been, however, few attempts to appropriate this comprehensive system of children's education into a Christian's educational philosophy. By surveying Montessori's holistic vision of education, this article attempts to use the Inverse Consistency Protocol to examine which aspects of this method can be adopted by the Christian educator. It is proposed that several principles may be appropriated into a Christian philosophy of education.

Keywords: Montessori, Holistic, Education, Christian, Appropriation

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Introduction

Many words describe the Montessori approach to education: child-centered, self-directed, active-independent learning. When people think of Montessori, some envision aesthetically pleasing classrooms with natural-made toys, sensorial learning materials, and child-sized furniture, while others think of phrases such as maximum effort, practical life, and the absorbent mind. Although these concepts describe aspects of Montessori's approach, the core of her method was her holistic vision of education. This vision

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ultimately undergirds all of Montessori's principles and practices. By surveying Montessori's holistic vision of education, this article aims to appropriate this vision into a Christian philosophy of education by using the Inverse Consistency Protocol.[2]

The Inverse Consistency Protocol is a hermeneutical framework developed by John David Trentham, Associate Professor of Leadership and Discipleship at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The framework assists Christians as they responsibly engage and interpret the social sciences with biblical discernment. The purpose of using the Inverse Consistency Protocol is to faithfully and constructively appropriate social scientific and human development models. The goal of this article is to employ the Inverse Consistency Protocol to evaluate Maria Montessori's method of education, namely her view of the child, the role of the teacher, and the prepared environment, to theologically discern what Christians can and cannot appropriate into a philosophy of education.

To accomplish this goal, this article first considers the background of Maria Montessori with a primary focus on her seminal work, *The Montessori Method*.[3] Subsequently, by using the Inverse Consistency Protocol, Montessori's holistic vision of education is examined with the aim of articulating three central focus areas: her view of the child, the role of the teacher, and the prepared environment.[4] In so doing, this article concludes with several ways

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[2] The Inverse Consistency Protocol is a model developed by John David Trentham in his series of articles: "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 1): Approaching and Qualifying Models of Human Development," *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (2019): 458–475; "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 2): Engaging the Appropriating Models of Human Development," *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (2019): 476–494.

[3] Maria Montessori, *The Montessori Method* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1912). This book is a translation of Montessori's earlier Italian edition, *Il Metodo della Pedagogia Scientifica applicato all' educazione infantile nelle Case dei Bambini*, published in 1909.

[4] Chloë Marshall states, "Central to Montessori's method of education is the dynamic triad of child, teacher and environment" ("Montessori Education: A Review of the Evidence Base," *NPJ Science of Learning* 2, no. 11 [2017]: 1).

that principles of Montessori's educational approach can be appropriated into a Christian philosophy of education.

Background of Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori (1870–1952) was a pioneer thinker, an educational reformer, and a children's advocate. Having first trained as a medical doctor at the University of Rome, Montessori quickly turned her attention to the study of children's diseases. She frequently observed the children in Rome's insane asylums and was influenced by the pedagogical work of Itard[5] and Edward Séguin.[6] Montessori carried out their educational methods for special needs children and later implemented her own ideas in the State Orthophrenic School, which she directed for more than two years.[7]

After successfully educating special needs children through her respect for the child and her didactic learning materials, Montessori began to contemplate whether her method could be used for children without physical or mental disabilities.[8] As a result, in 1907,

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[5] About Itard, Montessori states, "After this study of the methods in use throughout Europe, I concluded my experiments upon the deficients of Rome, and taught them throughout two years. I followed Séguin's book, and also derived much help from the remarkable experiments of Itard. Guided by the work of these two men, I manufactured a great variety of didactic material. These materials, which I have never seen complete in any institution, became in the hands of those who knew how to apply them, a most remarkable and efficient means, but unless rightly presented, they failed to attract the attention of the deficients" (*Montessori Method*, 36).

[6] About Séguin, Montessori writes, "I became conversant with the special method of education devised for these unhappy little ones by Edward Séguin, and was led to study thoroughly the idea, then beginning to be prevalent among the physicians, of the efficacy of 'pedagogical treatment' for various morbid forms of disease such as deafness, paralysis, idiocy, rickets, etc." (*Montessori Method*, 31). She held a different view from her colleagues and concluded that "mental deficiency presented chiefly a pedagogical, rather than mainly a medical, problem" (31). She states, "But the merit of having completed a genuine educational system for deficient children was due to Edward Séguin, first a teacher and then a physician" (34).

[7] Ibid., 32.

[8] Montessori describes the history of methods in chapter 2 of *The Montessori Method*. She writes, "From the very beginning of my work

Montessori opened a school called *Casa dei Bambini* or "The Children's House," where she worked with disadvantaged children (ages 3–6) in the slums of Rome for two years.[9] This school became the backdrop for the clinical observations that she documented in her book, *The Montessori Method.* Throughout her life, Montessori continued to refine her views and ultimately developed her own unified system of education that included her rationale and pedagogy, as well as her careful design of learning materials.[10] Her model

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with deficient children (1898 to 1900) I felt that the methods which I used had in them nothing peculiarly limited to the instruction of idiots. I believed that they contained educational principles *more rational* than those in use, so much more so, indeed, that through their means an inferior mentality would be able to grow and develop. This feeling, so deep as to be in the nature of an intuition, became my controlling idea after I left the school for deficients, and little by little, I became convinced that similar methods applied to normal children would develop or set free their personality in a marvellous and surprising way" (ibid., 32–33).

[9] Montessori states, "This present study deals in part with the *method* used in experimental pedagogy, and is the result of my experiences during two years in the 'Children's Houses.' I offer only a beginning of the method, which I have applied to children between the ages of three and six. But I believe that these tentative experiments, because of the surprising results which they have given, will be the means of inspiring a continuation of the work thus undertaken" (ibid., 30).

[10] This assertion is made by Henry W. Holmes in the Introduction to Maria Montessori's *The Montessori Method*, "But before Montessori, no one had produced a system in which the elements named above were combined. She conceived it, elaborated it into practice, and established it in schools" (xix). Holmes comments, "We have no other example of an educational system—original at least in its systematic wholeness and in its practical application—worked out and inaugurated by the feminine mind and hand" (xvii–xviii).

Several additional notable works by Maria Montessori include: *The Absorbent Mind* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), *The Advanced Montessori Method: Spontaneous Activity in Education* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1917), and *The Secret of Childhood* (Amsterdam: Montessori-Pierson Publishing Company, 2017).

proved effective in the Children's House[11] and her method quickly gained popularity.[12]

After years of observation and experimentation in the Children's House, Montessori combined several ideas to create a unified system that she later refers to as the Montessori method, in her book by the same title. The Montessori Method is unique in that it encapsulates the work of one woman who embedded her philosophy into her principles and practices.[13] The Montessori Method was the product of Montessori and she herself "was her method."[14] Montessori's view of children, their acute stages of development, and how they best learn was cultivated over many years. Montessori sought to promote holistic education and in so doing, began a new era of education that helped children reach their fullest potential in many areas of life.[15] Although Montessori viewed her system as a unified whole, many

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[11] Montessori writes, "The 'Children's House' has a twofold importance: the social importance which it assumes through its peculiarity of being a school within the house, and its purely pedagogic importance gained through its methods for the education of very young children, of which I now made a trial" (*Montessori Method*, 44).

[12] Angeline S. Lillard states, "Montessori's method quickly spread to serve different populations of children. In just five years, Montessori classrooms had opened round the world" ("Playful Learning and Montessori Education," *The NAMTA Journal* 38, no. 2 [2013]: 139).

[13] About this uniqueness, Jaeuk Jeong states, "The genius of Montessori lies in her unified system knitting her philosophy into each of her principles and practices altogether" ("Montessori as a School Reform Alternative Reflecting Biblical Anthropology," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 29, no. 3 [2020]: 311).

[14] Jerome Berryman, "Montessori and Religious Education," *Religious Education* 75, no. 3 (1980): 299.

[15] Ian Moll observes, "Montessori insisted that the method must lead to the realization of a child's full potential in all areas of life ('the whole child'), including health, social skills, physical coordination and all mental aspects (cognitive and emotive)" ("Towards a Constructivist Montessori Education," *Perspectives in Education* 22, no. 2 [2004]: 39).

people have evaluated Montessori's epistemology,[16] metaphysics,[17] and religion[18] to gain a broader understanding of her methodology. Some of her principles have proved universal in scope whereas others were limited to a specific context.[19]

Montessori was a strong advocate for the holistic education of children regardless of socio-economic boundaries. She challenged the traditional classroom model of rote memorization and teacher-directed learning that pervaded the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[20] Despite the challenges for women in the academy, Montessori created a progressive system for child-directed education, leading the child toward independence.[21] She trained teachers to carry

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[16] Emel Űltanir, "An Epistemological Glance at the Constructivist Approach: Constructivist Learning in Dewey, Piaget, and Montessori," *International Journal of Instruction* 5, no. 2 (2012): 195–212.

[17] Patrick Frierson, "Maria Montessori's Metaphysics of Life," *European Journal of Philosophy* 26, (2018): 991–1011.

[18] Berryman, "Montessori and Religious Education," 294–307.

[19] David Elkind asserts that the reception of Montessori's work has been met by two extremes: rejection and unquestioned acceptance. Elkind evaluates Montessori's contributions to the field of early childhood education and proposes change for some practices to reflect the current cultural context of contemporary children. ("Montessori Education: Abiding Contributions and Contemporary Challenges," *Young Children* 38, no. 2 [1983]: 3–10).

[20] Barbara Thayer-Bacon argued that even though Montessori was contemporary with John Dewey (father of pragmatism) and she, too, had much to add to the field of progressive/democratic education, her initial reception in America was short-lived after facing criticism from William H. Kilpatrick (student and colleague of Dewey), who claimed that Montessori's view of the child, role of the teacher, and curriculum proved "inadequate and unduly restrictive" ("Maria Montessori, John Dewey, and William H. Kilpatrick," *Education and Culture* 28, no. 1 [2012]: 15). Thayer-Bacon quoted Rita Kramer (one of Montessori's biographers) who commented that Montessori's "educational techniques were too much at variance with the prevailing American school philosophy, the late nineteenth-century progressive movement that saw schools primarily as instruments of social reform as articulated by Dewey and his followers in the early years of the (twentieth) century" (16).

[21] Montessori states, "An educational method that shall have *liberty* as its basis must intervene to help the child to a conquest of these various

out her method, which ultimately led to the development of Montessori schools and the acceptance of her approach as a viable educational model around the world.[22]

Regarding Montessori's holistic vision of education, her method is built on the premise of the liberty of the child and that if given the correct environment and proper encouragement, the student will learn.[23] As Thayer-Bacon summarizes, "Montessori discovered that preschool-age children have a strong desire to learn, and that they can learn on their own if placed in an environment that allows them the opportunity to do so."[24] This holistic vision of education was to nurture the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual development of children by providing opportunities for them to engage in a prepared

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obstacles. In other words, his training must be such as shall help him to diminish, in a rational manner, the *social bonds*, which limit his activity. Little by little, as the child grows in such an atmosphere, his spontaneous manifestations will become more *clear, with the clearness of truth*, revealing his nature. For all these reasons, the first form of educational intervention must tend to lead the child toward independence" (*Montessori Method*, 95). She continues, "Any pedagogical action, if it is to be efficacious in the training of little children, must tend to *help* the children to advance upon this road of independence" (97).

[22] According to Thayer-Bacon, "In January 1913, Montessori ran her first international teacher training program with students from all over the world (Germany, Switzerland, Ireland, Australia, Africa, India, and England, including 67 students from the U.S.), who went back to their home countries to start Montessori schools" ("Montessori, Dewey, and Kilpatrick," 8). Thayer-Bacon notes that there are now "over 3,000 Montessori schools in over 80 different countries" (4).

[23] Montessori states, "Even so those who teach little children too often have the idea that they are educating babies and seek to place themselves on the child's level by approaching him with games, and often with foolish stories. Instead of all this, we must know how to call to the *man* which lies dormant within the soul of the child. I felt this, intuitively, and believed that not the didactic material, but my voice which called to them, *awakened* the children, and encouraged them to use the didactic material, and through it, to educate themselves" (*Montessori Method*, 37). She continues, "The pedagogical method of *observation* has for its base the *liberty* of the child; the *liberty is activity*" (86).

[24] Thayer-Bacon, "Montessori, Dewey, and Kilpatrick," 7.

environment that supports their natural curiosity and instinctive desire to learn.[25]

An Analysis Using the Inverse Consistency Protocol

The way that Christians have approached the social sciences has varied historically. Some have taken the position of integrating the social sciences with theology,[26] whereas others have posited that the secular sources of the social sciences must be rejected before any integration may be attempted.[27] Through the Inverse Consistency Protocol, Trentham proposes a third option that appropriates aspects of the social sciences upon careful evaluation and biblical reflection. Trentham summarizes, "This perspective reads social scientific literature with the presumption that a discerning interpretation will typically align neither with full commendation nor full condemnation."[28] The Inverse Consistency Protocol is therefore a

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[25] Montessori states, "The child is a body which grows, and a soul which develops, – these two forms, physiological and psychic, have one eternal font, life itself" (*Montessori Method*, 104). Montessori later writes, "Certainly here is the key to all pedagogy: To know how to recognize the precious instinct of concentration in order to make use of it in the teaching of reading, writing and counting and, later on, of grammar, arithmetic, foreign languages, science, etc. After all, every psychologist is of the opinion that there is only one way of teaching, that of arousing in the student the deepest interest and at the same time a constant and vivacious attention" (*The Child*, 3rd ed. [Adyar, Madras 20, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1961], 24).

[26] A spectrum outlining the various integration models is found in chapter two of James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim, *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology & Human Development* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 45–46.

[27] David Powlison, "Cure of Souls (and the Modern Psychotherapies)," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 25, no. 2 (2007): 5–36. Powlison establishes three epistemological priorities for Christians to consider: (1) to articulate positive biblical truth, (2) to expose, debunk, and reinterpret alternative models, whether secular or religious, and (3) to learn what we can from defective models (13–14).

[28] Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 2)," 482.

mediating position that allows for the Christian educator to appropriate principles and insights from the secular social sciences.[29]

The goal of employing the Inverse Consistency Protocol is, as above, appropriation. About this, Trentham writes:

> Christians who approach and engage social scientific models must do so with a keen sense of their distinctive doctrinal commitments and theological bearings, and also with an interest in being sharpened for more faithful service in God's kingdom. The purpose of identifying and employing a guiding hermeneutical principle is to serve the end of constructive, faithful appropriation.[30]

The inverse consistency protocol includes four phases for the Christian to evaluate human development models. The interpretive steps and aims are as follows:

> Step one: Envision redemptive maturity. *Develop a thoroughgoing confessional-doctrinal vision and imagination for human development unto Christlikeness.*
> Step two: Read for receptivity. *Gain a deep and thorough understanding of the proposed paradigm, with intellectual honesty and precision.*
> Step three: Employ reflective discernment. *Interpret the paradigm from a critically-reflective and charitably-reflective perspective.*

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[29] Trentham defines the principle: "Social science models of human development are typically oriented unto counter-biblical ideals, even while they may describe modes and means of growth that reflect authentic patterns of personal maturity" ("Reading the Social Sciences Theologically [Part 2]," 483). Typically, the social sciences will operate from a secular paradigm in opposition to biblical realities. However, due to preservation of the *imago Dei* in all humans as well as common notions and common grace, unbelievers can recognize God's truth and "observe reality with legitimacy" (483). Therefore, Christians can critically engage with the social sciences and integrate aspects of these models into Christian thinking.

[30] Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 2)," 487.

Step four: Identify appropriative outlets. *Carefully identify the various contexts and processes in which the model may be utilized to inform or enhance the practice and administration of Christian education.*[31]

By using the Inverse Consistency Protocol, Christians can responsibly engage with the task of interpreting the social sciences while still holding fast the faithful word (Tit 1:9).

In the pages that follow, these four steps are implemented in providing a theological analysis of the Montessori Method: (1) The Christian Holistic Vision of Education, (2) Montessori's Holistic Vision of Education, (3) A Christian Evaluation of Montessori's Holistic Vision of Education, and (4) A Christian Appropriation of Montessori's Holistic Vision of Education.

Step One: The Christian Holistic Vision of Education

Before considering Maria Montessori's holistic vision of the child, the Christian must develop an educational vision based on the biblical view of humanity. From the creation narrative recorded in Genesis 1–2, all humans were made in the image of God (*imago dei*) (Gen 1:27). As created image bearers, humans were to mirror and represent God. However, this image was distorted with the fall of mankind (Gen 3) and as such, humans are not able to completely reflect God's image as had been intended. Ultimately, the way for the image of God to be fully redeemed is through the person and work of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:21). Through the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, the believer takes part in a continual process of renewal through the work of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18; 4:16). The full restoration and completion of the image of God will take place in the life to come (Rom 8:29–30; 1 John 3:2).[32]

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[31] Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 2)," 488.

[32] George R. Knight states, "As a result, part of the educative function of redemption is to restore individuals to health in each of these aspects and in their total being. Restoration of the image, therefore, has social, spiritual, mental, and physical ramifications, as does education" (*Philosophy & Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective* [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews U P, 2006], 208).

Foundational to the many aspects of biblical anthropology is the concept of the individual as a holistic being made in the image of God.[33] Scripture describes humans as whole and unitary beings, complex yet one in personhood (e.g., Matt 10:28; 1 Cor 5:3; 3 John 2). As Anthony Hoekema states, "One of the most important aspects of the Christian view of man is that we must see him in his unity as a whole person."[34] Although the Bible does seem to draw a distinction between the physical and nonphysical aspects of humans, these are still understood as inseparable elements (Deut 6:5; Matt 22:37). Hoekema asserts that the human is best viewed as a unitary being and the human person must be understood as an "embodied soul" or a "besouled body."[35] Various theologians arrive at similar conclusions. For example, Lewis Sperry Chafer writes, "Divine revelation makes it clear that man is a unity—one being,"[36] and Charles Ryrie asserts that man is a bipartite unity or "material and immaterial combined to produce a single entity."[37] In a similar vein, Gregg R. Allison asserts,

> We human beings are not made in a piecemeal way and put together, like the many pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Rather, in our humanness, we are constructed holistically with a wholeness and completeness that

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[33] Knight makes these assertions, "First, the Bible treats individuals as holistic units" (ibid., 208). He continues, "The whole person is important to God. Whatever affects one part of an individual affects the whole. Balance among the spiritual, social, physical, and mental aspects of a person is the ideal as it is seen in the development of Jesus (Luke 2:52)" (208).

[34] Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 203.

[35] Ibid., 216. Hoekema proposes psychosomatic unity where humans have both a physical and mental/spiritual side that cannot be separated. He states, "Though the Bible does see man as a whole, it also recognizes that the human being has two sides: physical and nonphysical" (217).

[36] Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology: Volume II—Angelology, Anthropology, Hamartiology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary P, 1947), 146.

[37] Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 223.

does not allow us to be divided into this part or that part. We are human beings in our entirety . . . created in the image of God.[38]

These theologians point to the fact that humans are holistic beings. Humans are composed of both material and immaterial aspects; they have a physical as well as a spiritual side (John 4:23–24). Both aspects are important for human persons to interact with and relate to God, others, and the world around them. If this is the case, then it corresponds that humans likewise learn best in a holistic manner, where the teacher seeks to engage not only the mind, but also the emotional and spiritual aspects of the student.

Having a solid biblical understanding of humans is essential before examining the various social sciences and their views of humanity. As Knight astutely observes, "It makes a great deal of difference in education if a student is viewed as Desmond Morris's 'naked ape' or as a child of God."[39] The Bible values children as individuals created in the image of God.[40] Children are holistic beings with both physical and nonphysical aspects (spiritual, emotional, cognitive, etc.). Children are created for relationship, with purpose, and intrinsically have potential (Ps 139:13–18; Eph 2:10). Jesus himself was quite clear about the value, dignity, and importance of children (Matt 18:2–5, 10, 14; 19:13–14).

Step Two: Montessori's Holistic Vision of Education

Montessori's vision of education was shaped through her eyes as a scientist. In many ways, her classroom served as her laboratory. There she was able to observe the children and their various developmental stages which she later termed "sensitive periods."[41] During these "periods of sensibility or sensitive periods," the child develops rapidly and if given the right opportunities, can accomplish

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[38] Gregg R. Allison, "Humanity, Sin, and Christian Education," in *A Theology for Christian Education*, ed. James Riley Estep, Jr., Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison (Nashville: B&H, 2008), 180.

[39] Knight, *Philosophy & Education*, 20.

[40] Knight comments, "Therefore, although people are twisted and lost as a result of the Fall, they are still human. They still have godlike potentials and characteristics" (ibid., 205).

[41] Montessori, *Absorbent Mind*, 96.

age-appropriate activities.[42] Montessori discovered that under certain circumstances ("a prepared environment") and nurturing guidance and care from the teacher (whom she referred to as the "directress"[43]), the child could realize his or her true potential. Ian Moll summarizes,

> Careful, systematic observation of young children led Montessori to conclude that they realized their potential in an ongoing way through purposeful activity. Thus, the method that she developed is based on the principle that young children learn best in an environment that is nurturing and supportive, and that makes available to them materials providing experiences that are developmentally appropriate and demanding self-directed, independent learning. Montessori insisted that the method must lead to the realization of a child's full potential in all areas of life ("the whole child"), including health, social skills, physical coordination and all mental aspects (cognitive and emotive). This notion of a holistic curriculum is central to Montessorian thinking, and leads to its emphasis on the ultimate integration of carefully sequenced exercises of practical life.[44]

In this way, Montessori advocated a holistic education that was based firmly upon her empirical classroom observation.[45]

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[42] Ron Miller states, "One of the guiding principles of Montessori pedagogy, the concept of 'sensitive periods,' expresses her observation that young children move through periods of development during which they are especially attuned to particular characteristics in the environment" ("Nourishing the Spiritual Embryo: The Educational Vision of Maria Montessori," *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice* 17, no. 2 [2004]: 18).

[43] Anne H. Adams notes, "The word, 'teacher,' was deliberately not employed by Montessori" because she believed that the teacher's main task was not to teach, but to direct" ("Selected Principles and Methodology of Maria Montessori," *Educational Horizons* 48, no. 4 [1970]: 125).

[44] Moll, "Towards a Constructivist Montessori Education," 39.

[45] Montessori writes, "The method of observation is established upon one fundamental base — *the liberty of the pupils in their spontaneous manifestations*" (*Montessori Method*, 80).

Montessori's View of the Child

Montessori placed a high priority on the child and viewed children as separate from adults.[46] She compared the child to a caterpillar and the adult to a butterfly when she writes, "In the same way, the caterpillar and the butterfly are two creatures very different to look at and in the way they behave, yet the beauty of the butterfly comes from its life in the larval form, and not through any efforts it may make to imitate another butterfly."[47] This view was especially unique to Montessori during the age of industrialization. In this way, she went against the dominant culture's perspective of children and viewed them within their own specific stage of development, not merely as "little adults."[48] In a time when the study of early childhood education was not yet established, she viewed this specific stage in a child's life important to their present and long-term growth.[49] She

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[46] Montessori states, "The child was only a 'future-being'. He was not envisaged except as one 'who is to become,' and therefore he was of no account until he had reached the stage in which he had become a man. Yet the child, like all other human beings, has a personality of his own" (*Child*, 7).

[47] Montessori, *Absorbent Mind*, 194.

[48] Adams notes the fundamental difference between a child and an adult. She concludes, "A child is not molded prematurely into the form of an adult; he is treated as a developing person rather than as one expected to behave and reason on a mature level" ("Principles and Methodology of Maria Montessori," 124).

[49] Montessori asserts, "The discovery that the child has a mind able to absorb on its own account produces a revolution in education" (*Absorbent Mind*, 28). She also states, "We all know that the age of development is the most important period of the whole life. Moral malnutrition and intoxication of the spirit as fatal for the soul of man as physical malnutrition is for the health of his body. Therefore, child-education is the most important problem of humanity" (*Child*, 10). In *The Child*, she continues, "We must now be content with a much more modest role, that required by the interpretation that Emerson gave of the message of Jesus Christ: Infancy is the eternal Messiah, which continuously comes back to the arms of degraded humanity in order to entice it back to heaven. If we consider the child in this light, we shall be forced to recognize, as an absolute and urgent necessity, that care must be given to childhood, creating for it a suitable world and suitable environment" (10).

sought to let the child develop naturally and to see life as a child would, still untainted by the norms of traditional school.[50]

The Role of the Directress

Whereas traditional educational philosophies centered on the teacher's role as the sole dispenser of knowledge, Montessori proposed an alternative role.[51] In Montessori classrooms, the directress serves as the guide who assists the children in their own innately driven quest for knowledge.[52] As such, the directress is not to interrupt the children in their work.[53] The directress is not a dispassionate observer,[54] but rather the one who sets the scene so that

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[50] Montessori describes public school education during her time, "In such a school, the children, like butterflies mounted on pins, are fastened each to his place, the desk, spreading the useless wings of barren and meaningless knowledge which they have acquired" (*Montessori Method*, 14).

[51] Adams states, "The teacher in the early century in Europe was considered to be a stern dictator, given to lecturing and to frequent use of the rod" ("Principles and Methodology of Maria Montessori," 125). As such, Montessori writes, "Actual training and practice are necessary to fit for this method teachers who have not been prepared for scientific observation, and such training is especially necessary to those who have been accustomed to the old domineering methods of the common school" (*Montessori Method*, 88).

[52] About the directress in a Montessori classroom, Montessori states, "In our system, she must become a passive, much more than an active, influence, and her passivity shall be composed of anxious scientific curiosity, and of absolute *respect* for the phenomenon which she wishes to observe. The teacher must understand and *feel* her position of *observer*: the *activity* must lie in the *phenomenon*" (*Montessori Method*, 87).

[53] Miller summarizes Montessori's approach and states, "'All beings develop by themselves' and adults 'cannot do better than not to interrupt that development'" ("Nourishing the Spiritual Embryo," 19).

[54] About the role of the directress, Montessori states, "But here a very important principle must not be forgotten—giving freedom to the child does not mean to abandon him to his own resources and perhaps to neglect him. The help that we give to the soul of the child must not be passive indifference to all the difficulties of its development. Rather we must second it with prudence and affectionate care. However, even by merely preparing with great care the environment of children, we shall have

the children can succeed on their own.[55] Just as an adult continually learns through experience and their own "work" (often "vocation" or "occupation"), children learn through their own work (often "play").[56] In this way, children learn best and develop skills most rapidly through playful learning.[57] The teacher is not merely one who supervises the child, but rather the one who facilitates learning by means of guiding, helping, and encouraging the child as needed.[58]

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already done a great task, because the creation of a new world, a world of the children, is no easy accomplishment" (*Child*, 11).

[55] Montessori describes the directress, "She can not understand that her new task is apparently *passive*, like that of the astronomer who sits immovable before the telescope while the worlds whirl through space. This idea, that *life acts of itself*, and that in order to study it, to divine its secrets or to direct its activity, it is necessary to observe it and to understand it without intervening" (*Montessori Method*, 88). She continues, "The teacher has thus become a *director* of the spontaneous work of the children. She is not a *passive* force, a *silent* presence" (371).

[56] David Elkind notes Montessori's conception of play was derived from nineteenth-century philosopher, Cesare Lombroso, who stated, "Play is for the child an occupation as serious, as important, as study is for the adult; play is in his means of development and he needs to play, just as the silkworm needs continually to eat leaves" (qtd. in "The Role of Play in Religious Education," *Religious Education* 75, no. 3 [2006]: 284). Elkind also writes, "The conception of play, then, which was in vogue when Montessori wrote, held that it was the natural activity of the child and that its function was to prepare the child for adult life" (284).

[57] Lillard defines playful learning as "child centered, constructivist, affectively positive, and hands-on" ("Playful Learning and Montessori Education," 138). Playful learning falls in between free and guided play. Lillard determines what aspects of a Montessori education relates to playful learning (overall structure, use of small objects for learning, individualized lessons, free choice, peer involvement, fun, and lack of extrinsic rewards) and what does not (having a specific set of materials, less free choice in interacting with materials, calling children's activity 'work,' and lacking any pretend play" (163).

[58] Adams comments, "The Montessori directress is the passive partner, and the child is the active partner, the link between the directress and the child being the planned environment. The directress must encourage the child, yet not spoil him with too much praise. Furthermore, she is responsible for enforcing the boundaries of the planned environment and

The Prepared Environment

In a Montessori classroom, the setting plays a significant role in assisting the child in becoming an active and independent learner. This is referred to as the "prepared environment," about which Montessori writes, "The first aim of the environment is, as far as it is possible, to render the growing child independent of the adult."[59] Anne H. Adams describes this prepared environment as "a world in miniature, a created and tailored environment in which the child lives and grows."[60] The Montessori classroom is intentionally designed as a home for children and is complete with child-sized furniture and practical life materials.[61] There are numerous "shelf activities" that encourage a progression of learning where children develop autonomy as they freely choose their materials according to their interest.[62] Montessori prioritizes the prepared environment to foster the child's autonomy, creativity, and love for learning.[63] In addition, these materials are intended to develop the child's fine and gross

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for insuring the freedoms which this environment contains" ("Principles and Methodology of Maria Montessori," 125).

[59] Maria Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood* (Amsterdam: Montessori-Pierson Publishing Company, 2017), 267.

[60] Adams, "Principles and Methodology of Maria Montessori," 125.

[61] About this, Adams states, "The Children's House is a home of new dimensions where the adult world has been displaced in favor of the child's world" (ibid., 125). Montessori comments, "The principal modification in the matter of school furnishings is the abolition of desks, and benches or stationary chairs" (*Montessori Method*, 81).

[62] Lillard describes the process: "Working materials, kept on shelves and freely available to the children, are organized into topics such as language, math, and so on. The materials are designed so that if children make mistakes, they can see and correct them without close teacher supervision or intervention" ("Playful Learning and Montessori Education," 139).

[63] Montessori asserts, "Let us therefore discard our role of prison warden, and let us instead preoccupy ourselves with preparing an environment in which as far as possible we shall try not to harass him by our supervision and by our teaching. We must become persuaded that the more the environment corresponds to the needs of the child, the more limited becomes the activity of the teacher" (*Child*, 11).

motor skills while simultaneously providing the opportunity to gain sensory and practical life experiences.

In summary, through Montessori's unique perspective on the child, the role of the directress, and her approach regarding the classroom as a prepared environment, Montessori sought to nurture the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of children.[64]

Step Three: A Christian Evaluation of Montessori's Holistic Vision of Education

In some respects, Montessori's holistic vision of education has stood the test of time and has proven effective in the world's eye among secular circles and international communities. Upon further examination from a Christian perspective, though, the question must be considered as to what aspects of Montessori's vision can be appropriated into a Christian philosophy of education. Montessori's holistic vision of education was built upon her view of children and was founded on her devout Roman Catholic beliefs.[65] Jaeuk Jeong, in his article, "Montessori as a School Reform Alternative Reflecting Biblical Anthropology," asserts, "The Montessori system was built upon the Christian theological anthropology that the main source of failure in our education is humanity's original sin and sins preventing us from fulfilling the Imago Dei."[66] Jeong's assertion is that Montessori's biblically-based anthropology of children stands in

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[64] Montessori states, "Humanity shows itself in all its intellectual splendour during this tender age as the sun shows itself at the dawn, and the flower in the first unfolding of the petals; and we must *respect* religiously, reverently, these first indications of individuality. If any educational act is to be efficacious, it will be only that which tends to *help* toward the complete unfolding of this life" (*Montessori Method*, 87–88).

[65] Jeong states, "Though Montessori's worldview is devout Catholic Christian, she counterpoises her languages so deftly as to be acceptable to those with other religious background" ("Montessori Reflecting Biblical Anthropology," 312). Similarly, Miller notes, "It is significant that her teachings have been respected and even revered by people of many cultures and faiths, including Jews, Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists" ("Nourishing the Spiritual Embryo," 16).

[66] Jeong, "Montessori Reflecting Biblical Anthropology," 315.

stark contrast to other progressive educational models.[67] He concludes, "Though she didn't use Christian theological jargons, what she highlights in the child is the Imago Dei, the center of the child's whole being created after God's image."[68] This holistic understanding of the child is evident in Montessori's educational practices.

Although Montessori was a scientist, she did not shy away from spirituality. Her method was a blend of the sacred and the secular, drawing from special revelation revealed in God's Word and general observations found in the laws of nature.[69] In this sense, Montessori integrated multiple sources to create her own approach. Throughout her writings, she focused on the holistic nature of children by combining the psychological and spiritual with the physical aspects of development. In this way, Montessori's holistic approach to education is quite similar to a biblical perspective. Just as Montessori viewed the child as a holistic being, so does the Christian. Furthermore, just as Montessori believed children have potential and intrinsic value, again, so does the Christian. This is not to say that Montessori held entirely to historic orthodox Christianity; she certainly did not. Yet when it comes to her holistic vision of education, her ideas align closely and are actually quite orthodox.

In addition to Montessori's view of the student as a holistic being, two impactful aspects of her method are the role of the directress and the classroom setting as a prepared environment. Montessori sought to encourage spiritual formation in addition to physical and intellectual development of children.[70] She did this through self-

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[67] Miller comments, "Montessori saw children growing from the inside out, from a spiritual source, where Dewey saw the human being developed through dialogue and negotiation with the social environment" ("Nourishing the Spiritual Embryo," 20).

[68] Jeong, "Montessori Reflecting Biblical Anthropology," 313–314.

[69] Miller notes that Montessori's work, though resting on medical/psychological/biological insight which was ahead of her time, is also "laced with Biblical imagery and religious fervor. This respected physician/scientist would unflinchingly refer over and over again to God, Christ, Scripture, and various saints" ("Nourishing the Spiritual Embryo," 15).

[70] Montessori states, "We have been mistaken in thinking that the natural education of children should be purely physical; the soul, too, has

directed activities and sensorial learning materials within the prepared environment. Miller states, "Montessori frequently commented that the child creates the adult—not, as our modern common sense has it, the other way around."[71] In her approach, the directress serves as a guide who assists children in their own process of learning.[72] This is an aspect of Montessori's method that warrants careful consideration from a biblical perspective.

Although the Christian educator understands that the teacher has multiple roles such as that of an instructor, encourager, equipper, guide, advocate, and mentor, one point of concern is that the child cannot construct his or her own reality.[73] Since Montessori's method is constructivist in nature, it assumes the intrinsic goodness of children and that they construct their own education.[74] Fisher notes

its nature, which it was intended to perfect in the spiritual life, —the dominating power of humane existence throughout all time. . . . If physical care leads the child to take pleasure in bodily health, intellectual and moral care make possible for him the highest spiritual joy, and send him forward into a world where continual surprises and discoveries await him; not only in the external environment, but in the intimate recesses of his soul" (*Montessori Method*, 375–376).

[71] Miller, "Nourishing the Spiritual Embryo," 18.

[72] In discussing the spirit of the teacher, Montessori states, "From the child itself he will learn how to perfect himself as an educator" (*Montessori Method*, 13).

[73] About this, Montessori asserts, "Each one of them perfects himself through his own powers, and goes forward guided by that inner force which distinguishes him as an individual" (ibid., 374).

[74] Montessori states, "The children work by themselves, and, in doing so, make a conquest of active discipline, and independence in all the acts of daily life, just as through daily conquests they progress in intellectual development. Directed by an intelligent teacher, who watches over their physical development as well as over their intellectual and moral progress, children are able with our methods to arrive at a splendid physical development, and, in addition to this, there unfolds within them, in all its perfection, the soul, which distinguishes the human being" (ibid., 375). Additionally, she writes elsewhere, "The most difficult thing is to make the teacher understand that if the child is to progress she must eliminate herself and give up those prerogatives that hitherto were considered to be the sacred rights of the teacher. She must clearly understand that she cannot have any immediate influence either upon the formation or upon the inner

that Montessori believed, "No human being is educated by anyone else. He must do it himself or it is never done."[75] Similarly, Miller comments,

> It is the environment that educates, not the teacher directly; more precisely, it is the child's inherent formative energies, finding material in the environment to act upon purposefully, that calls or brings forth … the child's true nature. The educational process starts with the individual, with self-formation.[76]

Although the practice of self-directed learning is a valuable method in education for student autonomy, it does not translate well for the Christian's view of life and reality, especially when it comes to teaching biblical truth. As fallen and sinful people (Eph 4:18), humans—including children—are unable to grasp the mysteries of the gospel message (1 Cor 2:14). According to Scripture, the child will not arrive at a knowledge of the gospel message without someone teaching it to them (Rom 10:14; Acts 8:31). As such, the Christian educator is an integral part of the educational process. In contrast to Montessori's approach, the Christian educator seeks opportunities to actively teach rather than passively guide.

Step Four: A Christian Appropriation of Montessori's Holistic Vision of Education

With these considerations in mind, the Montessori Method can be carefully incorporated into a Christian educator's philosophy of education, given the above caveat. As Knight astutely comments:

> It is a part of the task of the Christian educator to evaluate the assumptions underlying these theories in the light of Christian philosophy, and then to build a personal educational theory that utilizes, where helpful, the discoveries of the educational philosophers and theorists. That conclusion does not imply the wholesale adoption

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discipline of the students, and that her confidence must be placed and must rest in their hidden and latent energies" (*Child*, 25).

[75] Dorothy Canfield Fisher, *The Montessori Manual* (Chicago: W. E. Richardson Co., 1913), 19–20.

[76] Miller, "Nourishing the Spiritual Embryo," 20.

> of a theory, but rather the building of a theory of Christian education upon a Christian philosophic position.[77]

In contrast to many educational theorists, Montessori's holistic vision of education is not all that far from what the Christian educator readily embraces. The major distinction is that the Christian educator will not accept Montessori's view that the child constructs his or her own reality. The Christian will reject Montessori's assertion that children are capable of learning—especially the gospel message—completely on their own, without the active teaching of an adult (or at the very least, a peer). In this way, Montessori's overarching holistic vision can be applied, while still rejecting this principle.[78]

Montessori's overarching holistic vision of education can be appropriated in a variety of settings. Jeong asserts, "The Montessori Method can be proposed as one of the most feasible school reform alternatives."[79] Perhaps most simply, Montessori's holistic vision can be incorporated into early childhood and elementary education classrooms. However, it is not a far step to propose that her approach can be incorporated into a variety of Christian settings: church education,[80] secondary education, as well as higher education. The

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[77] Knight, *Philosophy & Education*, 146.

[78] It is certainly true that some of Montessori's principles will not apply to culture today. Miller comments, "In assessing Montessori's vision . . . it is useful to separate the *principle* that the growing child requires a spiritual home that enables the true self to develop from the *prescription* of what that environment must entail" ("Nourishing the Spiritual Embryo," 20).

[79] Jeong, "Montessori Reflecting Biblical Anthropology," 323.

[80] Holly Allen discusses five models of church-based children's ministry in her chapter, "Curriculum and Children's Ministry," in *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church*, ed. James Riley Estep, Karen Lynn Estep, and M. Roger White (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2012), 239–252. What she describes as the Contemplative Approach aligns with Montessori principles and practices. Allen states, "This more contemplative approach gives children space—space to think, space to listen, space to be" (245). Examples of authors who use varieties of what Allen calls the Contemplative Approach include Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May, *Listening to Children on the Spiritual Journey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010) and Jerome Berryman, *Godly Play: A Way of Religious Education*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991). Others

holistic nature of the Montessori Method—although originally focused on children—is broadly applicable to many settings since adolescents and adults, like children, are holistic beings. Two specific ways in which this holistic vision of education can be applied are the role of the directress and the prepared environment.

Regarding the role of the directress, Christian educators would do well to prioritize student-centered learning. Although this looks different depending on the context, the Christian teacher can employ various projects and self-directed learning activities in the classroom. Some possible examples include actively encouraging students to find what interests them most, treating students as fellow image bearers, and providing opportunities for playful learning. As Christian educators facilitate learning by means of guiding, helping, and encouraging, they simultaneously embrace Montessori's holistic vision of education as well the biblical mandate to care for children as made in the image of God.

Regarding the role of the prepared environment, Christian educators can set the scene in such a way to maximize a child's learning potential. By using resources such as child-sized furniture and sensory learning materials, the teacher provides an atmosphere that encourages the enjoyment of learning. Simple steps such as adjusting the classroom lighting, providing practical life materials, and offering shelf activities that align with the student's interest and ability levels provide meaningful experiences for children to thrive. By providing an intentionally prepared environment, the Christian educator treats children in a way that encourages their independence, autonomy, creativity, and love for learning.

who have incorporated the teaching of Montessori in religious education include Sophia Cavelletti and Gianna Gobbi, *Teaching Doctrine and Liturgy: The Montessori Approach*, 2nd ed. (Staten Island: Alba House, 1964); Gianna Gobbi, *Listening to God with Children: The Montessori Method Applied to the Catechesis of Children* (Loveland, OH: Treehaus Communications; 2000), and Jeannine Schmid, *Religion, Montessori, and the Home*, 2nd ed. (New York: Benzinger, Inc., 1970).

Conclusion

Maria Montessori sought to provide a revolutionary approach to childhood education. Through her holistic vision of education—focused on physical, social, emotional, and spiritual development—Montessori provided opportunities for children to naturally develop their passion for learning. This holistic vision of education undergirded all aspects of Montessori's method, principles, and practices. Although little has been written regarding a biblical analysis of the Montessori Method, this article has attempted to analyze her method on a small scale using Trentham's Inverse Consistency Protocol. Specifically, this article has proposed that Montessori's holistic vision of education can be appropriated into a Christian philosophy of education. Despite Montessori's constructivist approach, her method provides key insights for the Christian educator, especially regarding the role of the directress and the prepared environment. As the Christian educator continually seeks to refine his or her approach to teaching, Montessori provides much-needed clarity on the importance of student-centered learning.

An Examination of Different Interpretive Approaches to False Prophecy in Jeremiah

Joel Thomas

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to identify the criteria different biblical scholars use to determine true versus false prophecy. This article will examine six different approaches. The first approach examined is the historical critical method. The second, third, and fourth approaches examined are the canonical approaches of Brevard Childs, James A. Sanders, and James E. Brenneman respectively. The fifth approach examined is the socio-scientific approach. The last approach examined is the contextual approach. Jeremiah 28 is used as a test case for how each approach attempts to identify true and false prophecy. It is the argument of this study that antecedent revelation available to the prophet's audience is key to the identification of the criteria for determining true versus false prophecy and that this is only possible using the context method.

Keywords: Canon, Prophecy, False Prophecy, Historical Critical, Jeremiah, Deuteronomy

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Introduction

The purpose of this article is to identify the criteria different biblical scholars use to determine true verses false prophecy. This is an incredibly important issue because it bears on the ability of people to be able discern truth versus falsehood, specifically how an audience can know that a prophetic message is from God. Sheppard eloquently summarizes the significance of the topic when he states, "Discerning true from false prophecy is presented in

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scripture as a matter of life and death. It lies at the heart of any claim of divine revelation within Judaism and Christianity."[2]

Before moving on to the identification of criteria for distinguishing true versus false prophecy, it important to define prophecy. Overholt defines the core concept of a prophet as being a religious intermediary who mediates messages between humans and deities.[3] This definition is a good starting point and clearly defines what a prophet does. On the other hand, the definition does not really help determine if/how it would be possible for the original audience who heard the prophecy to discern true from false prophecy.

This study will proceed in the following manner. First, this study will survey six different approaches that attempt to define criteria for discerning true from false prophecy. Jeremiah 28 will be used as a test case for how each approach attempts to determine true versus false prophecy. Finally, the criteria for determining true versus false prophecy that were available for use by the original audience will be delineated. It is the argument of this study that antecedent revelation available to the prophet's audience is key to the identification of the criteria for determining true versus false prophecy.

Prophetic Criteria: Determining True from False Prophets

Historical Critical Approach

Like a great deal of OT scholarship, the critical study of prophets/prophecy began with Julius Wellhausen and his popularization of Graf's thesis that the Pentateuch came after the prophets.[4] Wellhausen was not original in this idea. He was

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[2] Gerald T. Sheppard, "True and False Prophecy with Scripture," in *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. Gene M. Tucker, David L. Petersen, and Robert W. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 262.

[3] Thomas W. Overholt, "Prophet, Prophecy," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1086.

[4] Rolf Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology*, trans. Margaret Kohl, 1st English language ed., Overtures to Biblical Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 57.

dependent on his teacher Ewald's scholarship.[5] Blenkinsopp explains the implications of this idea very well when he states:

> The critical approach to biblical prophecy also broke with the traditional Jewish view according to which the prophet was essentially a tradent of law, both written and oral. Since, according to this view, everything necessary for Israel's life had been revealed at Sinai, the prophetic message could not contain anything new. At most, it could spell out what was only implicitly contained in the Sinaitic revelation.[6]

This does not mean the prophets created their messages out of thin air. Virtually all critical scholars accept some dependency on traditional materials. There is, however, a consensus among critical scholars that continues to today that the proposed P and D sources were not part of that material and that they in fact came after the prophets.[7]

Form criticism is another tool used in the historical-critical approach. The two primary names associated with form criticism of prophetic literature are Hermann Gunkel and Claus Westermann.[8] Form criticism attempts to identify the life situation of originally oral units that compose a text.[9] Gunkel correctly points out that the primary means that prophets used were oral, and that in order to interpret the prophets correctly, these speech units need identification and delimitation.[10] Westermann expands on this idea when he argues

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[5] Walther Zimmerli, *The Law and the Prophets: A Study of the Meaning of the Old Testament*, trans. R. E. Clements (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 19.

[6] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel: Revised and Enlarged* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 17.

[7] Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, trans. John Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1885), 392–393.

[8] David L. Petersen, "Ways of Thinking About Israel's Prophets," in *Prophecy in Israel: Search for an Identity*, ed. David L. Petersen, Issues in Religion and Theology, ed. Douglas Knight and Robert Morgan, vol. 10 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 3–4.

[9] John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 31.

[10] Hermann Gunkel, "The Prophets as Writers and Poets," in *Prophecy in Israel: Search for an Identity*, ed. David L. Petersen, trans. James L.

prophetic speech is generally characterized by the messenger formula that was common in other ANE cultures such as Mari. This messenger formula is characterized by the commissioning of the messenger by God, the transmission of the message to the speaker, and finally the delivery of the message.[11] The only way the historical-critical approach can work for distinguishing between true and false prophecy is if the tradition the prophet used for his message can be identified with a high degree of certainty. This would involve using form criticism to identify the *Sitz im Leben* of a prophetic oracle in order to ascertain the tradition. This identification is at the very least difficult and most likely impossible. In addition, there are also many problems with the identification and dating of sources. The late dating of Deuteronomy and the priestly source to the time after the prophets is based on many assumptions that have not been proven. Because of these caveats, it seems very unlikely that the historical-critical method could derive any criteria for determining whether a prophet is true or false. This premise will be tested by examining the interpretation of Jeremiah 28 by James L. Crenshaw.

Crenshaw argues that the distinction between true and false prophecy is based on the different prophets using different traditions. In the case of Jeremiah 28, he believes Israel's election tradition is the central conflict between Jeremiah and Hananiah.[12] An excellent example of how historical-critical scholars see these traditions developing can be seen in von Rad's volume II of his *Old Testament Theology*.[13] Crenshaw believes that Hananiah was a preserver of the traditions exemplified by Israel of God as being deliverer. He helpfully points out that the narrative is clear that Hananiah believes God has given him the message. Crenshaw also believes Jeremiah does not know if he is actually a true prophet when Hananiah

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Schaaf, Issues in Religion and Theology, ed. Douglas Knight and Robert Morgan, vol. 10 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 24–25.

[11] Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, trans. Hugh Clayton White (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 101.

[12] James L. Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict: Its Effect Upon Israelite Religion*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, vol. 124 (New York: de Gruyter, 1971), 71.

[13] Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: Volume II: Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1965), 23, 30, 32, 74, 117, 239, 308.

confronts Jeremiah. The confrontation triggered an existential crisis for Jeremiah who has to go away and receive confirmation from God before proceeding.[14] The problem with existential interpretation is there is no evidence in the passage of any kind of psychological reaction in text. The exegete would need to look at other texts such as Jeremiah 11:18–12:6; 15:10–21; 18:18–23; and 20:7–18. These passages clearly show Jeremiah was at times in psychological anguish. The texts indicate a desire for vindication by the people, not any uncertainty about the message.[15] The most likely explanation is that Jeremiah went away to verify he had received the proper response from God. It was not that Jeremiah doubted the message, but that because of the dramatic actions of Hananiah he wanted to make sure he got the response right in order to reinforce his original message.[16] This is clear in the yoke of iron response in Jeremiah 28:13–14. Jeremiah 28:11 simply says that Jeremiah left.

This methodology only allows for a restricted way of determining true versus false prophecy. Gerhard von Rad has a very helpful statement: "The falsity cannot be seen either in the office itself, or in their words themselves, or in the fallibility of the man who spoke them. It could only be seen by the person who had true insight into Yahweh's intentions for the time, and who, on the basis of this, was obliged to deny that the other one had illumination."[17] Crenshaw believes that this inability to define criteria for true versus false prophecy led to the decline, and finally the extinction, of prophecy, which was replaced by the wisdom and apocalyptic genres. He thinks the lack of historical claims (an intrinsic part of prophecy) in both wisdom and apocalyptic literature allowed those genres to continue to address the concept of divine justice during the decline and after the end of prophecy in Israel.[18]

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[14] Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 72–73.

[15] R. W. L. Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine, ed. Daniel W. Hardy, vol. 14 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge U P, 2006), 107n14.

[16] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Jeremiah: Grace in the End*, The Bible Speaks Today Old Testament, ed. Alec Motyer (Nottingham, England: InterVarsity, 2014), 286.

[17] Gerhard von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1967), 179n13.

[18] Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 103–109.

There are a couple of considerations in evaluating the historical-critical model of false prophecy. The first consideration is how does the general agreement that Jeremiah 28 is recounting an actual event from the life of the prophet Jeremiah affect their argument?[19] It is logical that if the critical scholars accept the historicity of the event, they should assume that Jeremiah and Hananiah both would have expected their audience to not only understand their message but they would also expect their audience to be able to evaluate the truthfulness of their message.

The second consideration is that according to this model, the exact nature of the historical scene cannot be ascertained from the existing redacted text; therefore the only criteria that can be adduced according to the final redactor of Jeremiah is the Deuteronomistic true/false prophecy criteria of fulfilled prophecy.[20] The best this analysis can do is to argue that the final redactor believed that the only valid criteria for determining false and true prophecy was whether the prophecy came true. This argument tells us nothing about how the original audience would have judged between the claims of Hananiah and Jeremiah. The reasonable conclusion is that there must have been some background context/information available to the witnesses of the confrontation that would allow them to determine the truthfulness/falsity of the prophetic message. Scholars of all backgrounds have recognized the connection between Deuteronomy and Jeremiah.[21] This seems likely to be the best place to look for background information especially since the Deuteronomistic prophetic criteria is included in this passage. The problem with this for the historical-critical view is that while the Deuteronomistic information would have been available for the author/redactor of Jeremiah, it would not have existed for the original audience who witnessed the actual event because of their dating assumptions. The logical conclusion of this conflict is that their model does not allow

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[19] William Lee Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 26-52*, Hermeneia, ed. Paul D. Hanson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 127.

[20] Robert P. Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant: Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 187.

[21] Walter C. Kaiser and Tiberius Rata, *Walking the Ancient Paths: A Commentary on Jeremiah* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019), 9.

for the existence of criteria for true/false prophecy that would have been available to the witnesses of the original confrontation.

Canonical Approaches

Brevard Childs

Brevard Childs pioneered a new approach to biblical interpretation, which centered interpretation on the final form of the text and the canonical context.[22] Central to Child's canonical interpretive approach is the idea that both theological and historical dimensions characterize the canon. Childs explains this idea well:

> The formation of the canon of Hebrew scriptures developed in a historical process, some lines of which can be accurately described by the historian. Semler was certainly right in contesting an exclusive theological definition of canon in which the element of development was subsumed under the category of divine Providence or *Heilsgeschichte* of some sort. Conversely, the formation of the canon involved a process of theological reflection within Israel arising from the impact which certain writings continued to exert upon the community through their religious use.[23]

Childs sees the formation of the canon as a process that includes redaction of Scripture all the way up to the fixing of the final form of the text.[24] This is significantly different from the traditional orthodox Christian view that the canon was a process of recognition by the Jews and the church of the books that manifested evidence of divine inspiration for the Hebrew Bible and New Testament.[25] The previous quotation demonstrates that Childs's ultimate criteria for canonicity was the usefulness to the Jewish people and/or the NT church, not any sort of divine revelation. This provides the background necessary

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[22] G. T. Sheppard, "Childs, Brevard (1923–2007)," in *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 304–305.

[23] Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 58.

[24] Ibid., 59.

[25] F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 16–17.

for examining how Childs applied his methodology to the question of true versus false prophets.

Childs emphasizes in his interpretation the analysis of how the final editor shapes the various pieces of tradition. Sheppard concludes Childs believes that God has validated the prophets (specifically Jeremiah) because the message of the prophets came true.[26] Sheppard also concludes Childs wants to maintain a degree of continuity between the original context and the canonical context but that the "application of older prophetic traditions goes beyond the original situation."[27] Childs does not believe the reworking of traditions in the canonical process extends to our contemporary culture, only to the final textual form. Childs states,

> No one should underestimate the great attraction which such a rendering of the Bible has for the contemporary generation. Especially for those who have grown weary of a sterile, historicist reading of the Bible, this classic move of liberal Protestant theology continues to evoke a widespread and immediate acceptance. Needless to say, I am highly critical of this theological position for a variety of reasons. I do not think that the canon ever functioned in this way in the church prior to the Enlightenment, nor do I believe it to be a correct way of doing biblical theology. The initial assumption of seeing a simple analogy between the prophet's function and ours subverts the essential role of the canon which established theological continuity between the generations by means of the authority of sacred scripture. We are not prophets nor apostles, nor is our task directly analogous.[28]

Childs definitely helped to pull interpretation back from the granular interpretive approach of the historical-critical method to a central focus on the canonical text. This is good because it forces interpretation back to what we have, rather than conjectured background/historical materials. In addition, Childs is very skeptical that emulating how the prophets and apostles canonically shaped

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[26] Sheppard, "True and False Prophecy with Scripture," in *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation*, 263.

[27] Ibid., 264.

[28] Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 137.

Scripture is helpful for contemporary interpretation. Childs thinks the canonical shaping process, and how it resulted in the text, is only helpful for understanding the final canonical form of the text. The major problem with Childs's approach is that he does not exclusively use the canonical form of the text for interpretation. Childs posits sources and editorial activity when arguing for his interpretations.

Helpful for the purposes of this study is Childs's interpretation of true versus false prophecy in Jeremiah 27–29.[29] Childs begins his interpretation by attempting to establish the relationship between chapters twenty-seven and twenty-eight. He thinks those chapters are part of a larger thought unit that goes from Jeremiah 23:9 to Jeremiah 29. Childs also argues that chapters twenty-seven and twenty-eight have the same overall structure. He divides chapter twenty–seven into three sections: verses 1–11, an oracle to the nations; verses 12–16, an oracle to the Judean king Zedekiah; verses 17–22, an oracle to the priests and people. All three of the oracles have the same structure: serve Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 7, 12, and 18), do not listen to other prophets because they are lying (vv. 9–10, 14, and 16), and if you continue to be disobedient you (and the temple vessels) will be taken into exile (vv. 11, 15, and 22).[30]

Childs points out clear parallels between chapters twenty–seven and twenty–eight. Childs states,

> We next turn to ch. 28, which records the incident of the confrontation between Jeremiah and Hananiah (vv. 1–11). In v. 12 Jeremiah receives a divine word to address Hananiah. His oracles (vv. 12–16) follow the exact same pattern of ch. 27 with again closely paralleled vocabulary: (a) v. 14, the nations shall serve Nebuchadnezzar; (c) v. 15, Hananiah has spoken a lie; (d) v. 16, I will remove you from the earth. The variation in the pattern, especially respecting the missing (b) element, is clearly related to the preceding historical situation, and the addressing of the judgment oracle to Hananiah personally.[31]

Childs concludes that the final editor of the book of Jeremiah placed the two sections together in order to have chapter twenty–eight serve as an illustration of a confrontation with a false prophet. Childs

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[29] Ibid., 135–140.
[30] Ibid., 137–138.
[31] Ibid., 138.

deals with the issue in Jeremiah 28:5–9 where Jeremiah seems to doubt his prophecy when confronted by Hananiah. He argues against any kind of existential interpretation where Jeremiah actually doubted that he was a true prophet. In contrast, Childs argues Jeremiah was not willing to put God in a box and assume God would not relent and give mercy. Jeremiah departs and then returns with the conviction that his prediction of destruction is correct and that Hananiah is lying and not communicating a message from God (see Jer 23:25ff). Childs believes the text indicates the ultimate confirmation of a true prophet occurs when God acts and confirms the prophecy.[32] Childs makes his point when he states,

> However, the major point to be made is that the present canonical form of the book of Jeremiah has rendered an interpretation of true and false prophecy and thereby provided a new criterion by means of its collected scriptures for distinguishing between the two. Through the canonical process Jeremiah's oracles were collected and treasured in the period following the destruction of Jerusalem, and the original criterion of Jeremiah for prophetic truth was applied. Jeremiah had been vindicated in Israel's history. God's judgment did fall on the nation, as Jeremiah had said. God had demonstrated by his action that Jeremiah was a true prophet. It was from this theological conviction in the exilic and post-exilic period that Jeremiah's words were collected and edited. In their canonical form they served the community of faith as an authoritative means for discerning the will of God and as a norm for distinguishing the true prophet from the false. If there had been confusion during Jeremiah's lifetime, there need be no longer.[33]

Child's argument suffers from the same problem as that of the historical-critical method.[34] Childs cannot provide convincing evidence for how the original audience of the historical event could

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[32] Ibid., 139.

[33] Ibid., 140–141.

[34] This differentiation of the actual historical event versus the event as recorded is discussed in the previous section on pages 12 and 13. It is pointed out in that section that the underlying historicity of the event is not in dispute. This author is convinced there must have been something in the actual message that the audience could use to judge the authenticity of the message. This author will provide his solution in the final section of this article.

have differentiated between the rival prophets. This defeats the purpose of the prophecy, which was to motivate to action. It is logical that any speaker would want to give their audience sufficient reasons to accept their arguments. Childs does not explain why Jeremiah would have assumed his audience would accept his prophecy.

James A. Sanders

Sanders's view is similar to Childs's view in many ways. Sanders agrees with Childs that the formation of the canonical Scripture was a process by which editors worked with sources to the produce the final form of the various books, but he believes there is more to using canon for interpretation than simply identifying the final form of the text.[35] Sanders defines canon criticism in the following way:

> Canon criticism focuses on the function of authoritative traditions in the believing communities early or late. It is not uninterested in literary structure and does not denigrate those disciplines which focus on structure, such as form criticism, redaction criticism, and structural analysis, or which focus on the final form of the text. Close attention to textual structure may indicate proper function. But, in consonance with later emphases in tradition criticism and especially comparative midrash, canonical criticism stresses what the function of a tradition, in whatever form it is found, had when called on for his or her community by a trident. What authority or value did the trident seek in the tradition? How did he or see use it?[36]

The main concern of Sanders is the understanding and use of a piece of tradition throughout the process of canonization. This is not very surprising in and of itself, and is similar to the view of Childs, but unlike Childs, Sanders believes this process continues all the way up to our modern context. Sanders conceives of this process as a triangle. The bottom left-hand point of the triangle is the tradition/text. This corner represents anytime "the tradition or text being called upon, recited, alluded to."[37] This includes the entire

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[35] James A. Sanders, *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 24–25.

[36] Ibid., 24.

[37] Ibid., 77.

history of development/interpretation from the very first traditions all the way to the modern day.[38] The bottom right-hand point of the triangle is the historical and sociological context. Like the tradition interpretation point, the sociological context goes from the very beginning up to modern times. The purpose of this triangle point is to determine and then exegete the sociological context in addition to the text. This process includes all the relevant tools of historical criticism.[39] The top point is the canonical critical hermeneutical principles, which Sanders believes, will guide the interpreter to correct interpretation. Sanders believes that the interaction of the original context and the modern context can generate different meanings, depending on the combined context. Sanders believes the interpreter needs to concentrate on identifying unrecorded hermeneutical principles, which are discernable by reading between the lines of the text. He asserts that if the interpreter uses these hermeneutical principles along with historical-critical methods the interpreter will identify resignifications. Sanders defines resignifications as contemporary meanings that exist within canonical limits of the text.[40] Sanders's canonical critical process is ultimately a form of reader response interpretation. Sanders does, however, attempt to impose some limits on the interpretation through his analysis of canonical hermeneutics.

Sanders does not write as much as Childs on the situation in Jeremiah 28, but he does give some insight into how he sees true versus false prophecy working. Before getting into the specifics of Jeremiah 28, it seems that it would be good to give the reader a general overview of Sanders's view of false teaching:

> Both those we call the true prophets and those we call the false prophets cited the same Torah tradition: they had the same gospel story of God's gracious acts in the past in creating Israel. The difference was that the official theologians employed a hermeneutic of continuity, while the canonical prophets (the "true" prophets whose books we inherit) employed an existentialist hermeneutic which stressed neither

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[38] Ibid., 77–78.

[39] Ibid., 78.

[40] Ibid.

continuity or discontinuity but rather on the basis of the Torah, raised the probing question as to Israel's true identity.[41]

This is important to note because Sanders does not believe the difference between the true and the false prophets was a difference in their overall belief systems. He believes they both were drawing from the same set of traditions, but were using different hermeneutical systems and therefore, reached differing conclusions. In reference to Jeremiah 28, Sanders believes that Hananiah was preaching a restricted message of God as the redeemer and sustainer of his people. Jeremiah accepted this message but also added the truth that God is also the sovereign creator who has the right and ability to judge his people. This judgment goes all the way up to removing them from the land he had given them. Sanders sees the primary difference between Jeremiah and Hananiah as the idea that the false prophet did not acknowledge God as the sovereign creator (even over Israel's enemies). Sander saw the false prophets as denying the canonical monotheizing process, which was the process by which Israel developed a monotheistic belief system and how any sort of polytheism was unacceptable. Sanders believes that by not preaching this the false prophets were risking people falling back into polytheism in order to attribute the bad things happening to another god rather than to Yahweh. This is what made them false prophets.[42]

The problem with Sanders's position is that it depends on the idea that the Israelite religion developed in a slow process from polytheism to monotheism. This only works if this process actually occurred. Sanders simply assumes and asserts this as happening. More importantly, there is no evidence in the context that Hananiah denied God's sovereignty over creation. In fact, it could be argued that Hananiah prophesying the return of the exiles was emphasizing God's sovereignty and that Jeremiah was denying that God had control over the pagan nations. This possibility undermines Sanders's

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[41] James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 88.

[42] James A. Sanders, "Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy," in *Canon and Authority*, ed. George W. Coats and Burke O. Long (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 39–40.

approach and means that he is left without viable criteria for determining false prophecy.

James E. Brenneman

James Brenneman's stated goal in his book is to synthesize the work on canonical criticism done by James Sanders with the work of contemporary secular literary critics.[43] The book consists of two parts. The first part of the book evaluates Sanders's work and applies postmodern literary interpretive techniques to it.[44] The second section of the book applies the principles defined in the first part of the book to the issue of true vs. false prophecy in Scripture.[45]

Brenneman wastes no time in laying out his underlying presupposition. He believes that the Bible contradicts itself.[46] Brenneman supports this presupposition by quoting Sanders extensively. One of Sanders's quotations in particular encapsulates the underlying presupposition cogently and comprehensively:

> The fact is that the Bible contains multiple voices, and not only in passages recording differences between disagreeing colleagues (so–called true and false prophets), but between the priestly and the prophetic, between Wisdom and tradition, between the orthodox and the questioning voices of the prophets such as Jeremiah in his confessions, between Job and his friends who represented aspects of orthodoxy, between Qohelet and the Torah, between Jonah and Nahum (both of who addressed God's concern for Nineveh), among varied voices within a book like Isaiah, between Paul and James, and even among the Gospels with their varying views of what God was doing in Christ. And these are only a few of the intrabiblical dialogues one might mention. One needs also to recognize the measure of pluralism in the doublets and triplets of the Bible, the same thing told in quite different ways, making different even contradicting points.[47]

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[43] James E. Brenneman, *Canons in Conflict: Negotiating Texts in True and False Prophecy* (New York: Oxford U P, 1997), 4.

[44] Ibid., 4–5.

[45] Ibid., 7.

[46] Ibid., 13.

[47] James A. Sanders, "The Integrity of Biblical Pluralism," in *"Not in Heaven": Coherence and Complexity in Biblical Narrative*, ed. Jason Philip Rosenblatt and Joseph C. Sitterson (Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1991), 162–163.

Brenneman argues against a "fundamentalist" understanding of the text, including both "religious fundamentalists" and "secular fundamentalists." He is critical of "religious fundamentalist" who attempt to smooth out obvious difficulties because he believes it relieves them of the "hard work" that is necessary to navigate contradictory contexts. By doing so, he discounts conservative evangelical scholarship out of hand. He has more of a problem with what he calls "secular fundamentalists" (historical-critical scholars). He believes that "secular fundamentalists" who attempt to identify multiple sources to get back to the authentic earliest sources are misguided. Brenneman thinks that this is misguided because it does not take into account that community interpretational standards used to define "orthodoxy" are subjective. He does not think it is possible to judge objectively the interpretational standards in any particular community against the interpretational standards of other communities.[48] Brenneman keys in on this idea and expands it throughout the history of the church. He believes (along with Sanders) that the idea of intra-biblical pluralism (contradictions) is the key to contemporary relevance.[49] He attempts to advance this argument by an appeal to intertextuality (from literary theory).[50] He believes that intertextuality guarantees ambiguity of meaning and that any attempt to identify a determinate authorially intended meaning is impossible.[51] Brenneman moves past Sanders's position on the importance of history because Sanders wants to maintain at least some importance of history.[52] Brenneman makes an incredible statement, which sums up his approach to interpretation:

> Such a commitment is not unimportant because to the degree both Iser (literary critic) and Sanders (canonical critic) appeal to the text's determinacy for claims of interpretive constraint (and methodological objectivity), their systems falter. For example, without their dependence

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[48] Brenneman, *Canons in Conflict*, 14.

[49] Ibid., 17.

[50] It is not possible in this limited study to explore the implications of intertextuality. This study will simply accept Brenneman's understanding of it for the sake of argument and explore the implications for biblical interpretation.

[51] Brenneman, *Canons in Conflict*, 25.

[52] Sanders, *Canon and Community*, 19.

on the text's determinacy, they could not say that the reader's activities are constrained by it; they could not say that the reader's activities are constrained by it; they could not, in the same breath, honor and bypass history by stabilizing the structure the text contains; and they could not free the text from the constraints of referential meaning yet say that the meaning yet say that the meanings produced by countless readers are part of the text's potential.

In point of fact, the restraint placed on the reader does not come from a determinate text; rather, it comes from the interpretive community whose norms and interpretive strategy that requires them, therefore neither component can constitute the independent given that serves to ground the interpretive process. In other words, determinacies and indeterminacies are the products of an interpretive strategy that requires them, therefore neither component can constitute the independent given that serves to ground the interpretive process.[53]

Based on the standard described above, this author cannot see how anyone using Brenneman's methodology could arrive at definitive standards for determining true versus false prophecy.

Let us examine how Brenneman deals with Jeremiah 28. Brenneman does not deal with this passage extensively, but what he does say about Jeremiah 28 is significant and reveals a great deal about his approach to prophecy, as well as implications for general biblical hermeneutics. He uses G. T. Sheppard's critique of Childs's interpretation and evaluation of Jeremiah 28 as the basis for his interpretation. Sheppard is generally supportive of Childs's interpretation with some important caveats, which Brenneman wholeheartedly supports.[54] Brenneman thinks that Sheppard is right in exposing the problems of attempting to formulate criteria for determining true and false prophecy. He especially appreciates Sheppard's emphasis on the conflict between Jeremiah and Hananiah as being a political argument between the representatives of two opposing factions.[55] Brenneman concludes from this that the only respective groups to which the prophets belong can judge the truthfulness of the opposing positions. This can be seen clearly, when

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[53] Brenneman, *Canons in Conflict*, 47.

[54] Sheppard, "True and False Prophecy with Scripture," in *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation*, 270.

[55] Brenneman, *Canons in Conflict*, 92.

he states, "In this story of research, as in the biblical accounts themselves, the persuasion models of literary–critical inquiry coincide with the sociocanonical claims regarding power. Both reading groups function without transcendental norms, in keeping with the postmodern reader."[56] Basically, he sees the conflict of true versus false prophecy in Jeremiah 28 as simply being an argument between two opposing groups with no way of determining which is right or wrong because the determination of absolute truth is impossible.

Unlike Sheppard, or any of the rest of the scholars presented so far, Brenneman extends the idea of reading communities determining meaning to the modern reader in a maximalist sense. Brenneman argues that modern readers should evaluate the various prophets contained in the Bible and determine based on the canons of their particular reading community whether a prophet is true or false. The test case he uses is Isaiah 2:4 and Joel 4:10. These two passages use the phrase "beating swords into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks" in a seemingly contradictory manner. He goes to great lengths to show the passages as irreconcilable and contradictory.[57] This author will grant that the two are contradictory for the purposes of this study, although this author is not convinced of his conclusions concerning these two passages. This allows us to examine how Brenneman reaches his conclusion about how to decide which passage is true prophecy and which passage is false prophecy. He states his conclusion concerning these two passages as follows:

> I reject Joel 4:9-17 as true prophecy and would argue that in, if not yet, its voice will become, in functional terms, as canonically marginalized as other "texts of terror" are increasingly becoming (on women) or have already become (on slavery). Could it be that future generations will consider the question of sacred violence in the name of Yahweh as canonically closed, functionally if not formally?[58]

Brenneman is using his personal abhorrence of violence and the community sensibilities of the modern/postmodern culture to dictate the moral acceptability of Scripture. The question this author has is

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[56] Ibid., 92–93.
[57] Ibid., 132–133.
[58] Ibid., 141.

where does this stop and why is his viewpoint any more valid than anyone else's? Why would the view of a radical theonomist who wants to remake the government into a theocratic state not have the right to declare passages like Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 which call for obedience to government as false? For the purposes of this study, Brenneman gives us even less an objective standard than either Childs or Sanders. At least Childs and Sanders both accept after-the-fact validation of true versus false prophecy.

Socio–Scientific Approach

The general idea of this approach is not to simply state what or even why the prophets did certain things and gave certain messages, but to determine the role of the prophet in society. Wilson's comprehensive study examines four areas related to prophecy. The first area examines practices in various modern societies that Wilson believes are analogous to prophecy. The second area examines ANE evidence concerning prophecy. The third area examines what he calls the Ephraimite prophetic tradition (the bulk of the book). The last area examines Judean prophetic traditions both in the writing prophets as well as in the books of Chronicles.[59]

Wilson uses the term *intermediaries* as a non-biased term for different types of people who serve as conduits to the spirit world. Wilson breaks down intermediaries into two broad and general categories, peripheral and central. Wilson describes the two in the following statement:

> In general, peripheral intermediaries are usually involved in advancing the views of the spirits and of the intermediaries' own support groups. The aim is to improve the status of peripheral groups and individuals and to bring about changes in the social order. In contrast, central intermediaries are concerned with maintaining the established social order and with regulating the pace of social change.[60]

The conclusion Wilson reaches is an intermediary's social group makes the ultimate determination of the truth or falsehood of a message. These expectations can include certain actions and/or ways

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[59] Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 19.

[60] Ibid., 88.

of speaking. An intermediary who deviates too far from expectations runs the real risk of being rejected (both the message and personally).[61]

After examining the ANE evidence, Wilson concludes there are distinct similarities between the ANE phenomenon and modern practices and it would be likely that the practices of ancient Israel would be similar.[62]

Wilson's examination of what he calls the Ephraimite prophetic traditions consists of three conclusions. The first conclusion is the Ephraimite prophetic tradition used "stereotypical speech patterns and employed a distinctive vocabulary."[63] The second conclusion is the Ephraimite prophets were identified by certain behavioral practices. The last conclusion is the Ephraimite prophets' societal role seems to have changed over time. Early in Israel's history, prophets such as Abraham, Moses, and Samuel served as central intermediaries. This changed when the monarchy arose (especially after the division of the kingdom) to the prophets becoming peripheral intermediaries who attempted to change the social structure of the kingdoms.[64]

Wilson's conclusions are much sparser concerning the Judean prophetic traditions:

> For the most part, Judean prophets appear to have had fewer stereotypical behavioral characteristics than their northern counterparts, and this may indicate that the Judean had no standard model for prophetic behavior. Although they used the distinctive term "visionary" to characterize their intermediaries and stressed the vision as the normal mode of revelation, the southerners did not associate any distinctive behavior with the visionary, whom they equated with other types of intermediaries, such as the prophet and the diviner. Similarly, we found little evidence that Judean prophets used stereotypical speech as a part of their possession behavior.[65]

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[61] Ibid., 66–67.
[62] Ibid., 133–134.
[63] Ibid., 251.
[64] Ibid., 252.
[65] Ibid., 294.

In contrast to the Ephraimite tradition, the Judean tradition seems to have generally performed a central intermediary function that worked to ensure the passing on of tradition as well as trying to ensure that any societal change took place in an orderly manner. According to Wilson, in spite of most Judean prophets being central intermediaries, some prophets seem to have functioned on the periphery. He thinks some of those prophets, such as Isaiah, seem to have moved back and forth while others seem to have moved permanently to the periphery, possibly under the influence of the Deuteronomistic reform.[66]

Wilson has a brief discussion of the Jeremiah 28 confrontation between Jeremiah and Hananiah. Wilson believes that

> Hananiah's behavior is exactly the same as that of Jeremiah, and both prophets use the same forms of speech. In addition, the conflicting oracles are both rooted in orthodox Yahwistic traditions. Jeremiah's prophecies are informed by the Ephraimite tradition, while Hananiah's words reflect the Jerusalemite theology of the inviolability of Zion (Jer 28:1-4). The incident is thus a clear example of conflicting prophetic claims which cannot be adjudicated on the basis of the prophets' words or deeds. Rather, the observer can decide which of the prophecies to believe only if he has already recognized the authority of one prophet or the other.[67]

Wilson believes the author/editor of this section was a follower of the Ephraimite prophetic tradition. In light of this fact, Wilson believes the author/editor's decision of which of the participants was the true prophet was obvious. In the author/editor's mind, Jeremiah was clearly a prophet like Moses and had a direct connection to the word of Yahweh. Jeremiah's response shows the connection clearly. Jeremiah claimed he was a true prophet because his message was going to come true. In addition, Jeremiah argues there were many previous prophets who predicted judgment that came true, but the salvation prophets like Hananiah left the people waiting for salvation that never comes. Wilson thinks the editor believed Yahweh reaffirmed his judgment to Jeremiah who then pronounced judgment

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[66] Ibid., 294–295.
[67] Ibid., 250.

on Hananiah. These actions demonstrated to the author/editor that Jeremiah was the true prophet.[68]

The key issue concerning this interpretation is that Wilson bases his judgment about which is the true and false prophet on the idea that this is a conflict between two different prophet social groups (interpretational communities). According to Wilson, the only way someone in the audience could determine which of the participants was the true versus the false prophet was through the interpretational framework that their prophetic social group provided. This is in many ways very similar to the previous canonical approaches with the additional idea of there being a peripheral/central intermediary sociological conflict.

Ultimately the most important problem with this approach is it does not do justice to the actual message and whether one or both actually conform to the received tradition. It is a big assumption that both messages actually correspond to the received tradition. In addition, there was no analysis of the broader context of the narrative.

Contextual Approach

There is almost universal agreement amongst OT scholars that there are verbal parallels between the book of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. In 1895, Driver noted there are sixty–six passages (used at least eighty–six times) in Deuteronomy that are referenced in Jeremiah.[69] The only question is the direction of the influence. All of the previous interpretational approaches would accept this data and that there is some sort of relationship between the two books. Those approaches would view Jeremiah as coming first in time, based on acceptance of source-critical dating assumptions that do not allow Deuteronomy to be the source of Jeremiah's teachings. Mackay sums up this idea well:

> Deuteronomy is no longer of Mosaic provenance, and may only have been written just before it was 'discovered'. Furthermore, the historical narrative found in Joshua–2 Kings also exhibits the same Deuteronomic style, and so there developed the view that a scribal school arose in exilic and postexilic times that was responsible for the Deuteronomic

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[68] Ibid., 250–251.

[69] S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 3rd ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), xciii.

history (Joshua–2 Kings) and also for the passages in Jeremiah which exhibit similar stylistic tendencies.[70]

This would mean that no antecedent revelation would be available to Jeremiah. This is the ultimate reason that previous interpretational styles were unable to provide any useful criteria for evaluating true versus false prophecy. On the other hand, if Deuteronomy precedes Jeremiah, it could serve as the background for the book. This would allow the identification of criteria for distinguishing between true and false prophecy based on the content of Deuteronomy. Mackay gives another interesting point concerning why this is likely:

> From a conservative point of view there is little problem. Centuries earlier Moses wrote Deuteronomy, and the influence of the founder of the nation and his book on the subsequent thinking and religious vocabulary of the people may be taken for granted. Furthermore, if Deuteronomy constituted part or the whole of the scroll found in the Temple in 622 BC, then it would have been natural for the style of that work to be copied by others. What we are observing is the shared literary style common to authors in that age.[71]

The finding of the law during the reign of Josiah was a ground-shaking event that clearly influenced the culture in significant ways. This helps to explain similarities between Jeremiah and the historical corpus consisting of Joshua to 2 Kings because they were both composed at a time when there was a significant common literary influence on the society. If nothing else, the effects on Josiah (as seen in 2 Kings) and his reforms demonstrate the effects of finding the book of the law had on Judean society.

This contextual method (also know a literal grammatical-historical method) would not accept a late dating for Deuteronomy unless there were overriding evidence. Even among historical–critical scholars, there is no consensus on dating the various sources posited for the Pentateuch. As far as this author can ascertain, the only historical-critical dating consensus for the Pentateuch is the final form from the postexilic period. Since the contextual interpretational

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[70] J. L. Mackay, *Jeremiah: Chapters 1-20* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2004), 29.

[71] Ibid.

approach would not accept the late dating of the Pentateuch, it would see Deuteronomy as being the primary background context for the book of Jeremiah. Therefore, Deuteronomy will be a helpful guide going forward in determining criteria for true versus false prophecy.

The first step in defining criteria is to determine any thematic elements from Deuteronomy that Jeremiah is utilizing. The second step will be to compare these thematic elements with the content of the messages of Jeremiah and Hananiah in Jeremiah 28 to determine the criteria for true versus false prophecy.

The idea that Deuteronomy utilizes the form of a Hittite suzerain/vassal has been proposed by many scholars and is potentially significant to this study.[72] There is a consistent form for these treaties, which corresponds closely to Deuteronomy. This structure includes a preamble, historical prologue, stipulations (general and specific), deposition in the vassal's temple of the treaty along with stipulated periodic readings of the treaty, blessings/curses, and witnesses.[73] This type of treaty structure was prevalent during the second millennium BC and had a standard form. On the other hand, the treaty structure used during the first millennium BC was markedly different.[74] The structure of Deuteronomy follows the suzerain/vassal treaty form closely. The preamble is found in Deuteronomy 1:1–5. The historic prologue is found in Deuteronomy 1–4. The covenantal stipulations are found in Deuteronomy 5, 12–26. The provision for deposition and periodic reading is found in Deuteronomy 31:9–13, 26. The blessings and curses are found in Deuteronomy 27–28.[75] The witnesses' section does exist in a slightly modified form. This was because the absolute monotheism of ancient Israel did not have any other gods to serve as witnesses. In the case of Deuteronomy, it is possible that heaven and earth stand in as witnesses for the non–

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[72] Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, NAC*,* ed. E. Ray Clenenden, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 29–30.

[73] George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 17, no. 3 (1954): 58–60.

[74] K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1966), 92–96.

[75] Jack R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 20–21.

existent gods of heaven and earth in Deuteronomy 30:18, [76] alternatively, simply because heaven and earth will always be around to serve as witnesses.

There are two clear implications for use of this treaty type. The first implication is that this treaty is clearly conditional. The second implication is there are clear consequences for breaking the treaty. These implications provide two clear characteristics of false prophets in Jeremiah. The first characteristic is that false prophets preach a false sense of security by not preaching the conditionality of God's covenant.[77] The second characteristic is that the false prophets are "those who do not warn the people to flee immorality and idolatry; those who make predictions in spite of their theological ignorance."[78] Chisholm sums up the message of a true prophet best when he sums up the overall theology of the book of Jeremiah:

> God's judgment would fall on Judah because she had broken His covenant. The people worshiped other gods, and the religious and civil leaders were hopelessly corrupt. Sword, plague, and famine would devastate the land and many would be carried into exile. However, God would also judge the arrogant nations and eventually restore His people to their land. He would establish a new covenant with the reunited Northern and Southern kingdoms and replace the ineffective kings and priests of Jeremiah's day with an ideal Davidic ruler (Messiah) and a purified priesthood.[79]

Prophets who did not preach this message were false because they were not proclaiming to the truth of God's revealed word and calling the people to covenantal repentance. In terms of Jeremiah 28,

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[76] Edward J. Woods, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011), 296–297.

[77] Thomas W. Overholt, *The Threat of Falsehood: A Study in the Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 16, 2d series (London: SCM P, 1970), 1.

[78] Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 316.

[79] Robert B. Chisholm Jr., "A Theology of Jeremiah and Lamentations," in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck, Eugene H. Merrill, and Darrel L. Bock (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 341.

Hananiah was a false prophet because he is not preaching the conditionality of God's covenant with Moses and was presenting at best an incomplete picture of how God related to Israel. This can be seen in Jeremiah 28:8–9 where Jeremiah argues that the primary role of a prophet is to warn the people of doom for their actions, not to proclaim good news.

Several places in Jeremiah clearly refer to the covenantal obligations of Deuteronomy. Jeremiah 3:3 (also seen in Joel 1:17–20 and Amos 4:7–8) ties the consequences of idolatry (spiritual adultery) to God's judgment of famine in the land, which is an allusion to Deuteronomy 28:20–24.[80] Another passage in Jeremiah that brings out the idea of covenantal obligations is Jeremiah 11:1–17. God instructs Jeremiah in Jeremiah 11:1–17 to preach to the people the consequences of obedience/disobedience to the covenant. There are allusions in this passage to the covenant blessing and curses in Deuteronomy 27:14–26.[81] A final passage, Jeremiah 34:8–14, talks about the consequences that God is bringing on them for not observing the sabbatical year and freeing slaves/canceling debts. The entire basis for this passage is Deuteronomy 15:1–6.[82]

It is also true that false prophets' predictions were destined to fail (Deut 13:1–5) and that the punishment for failure was death.[83] This provided the ultimate confirmation of true versus false prophecy, but it did not give the recipients of the actual prophecies any way of knowing whether a message was true when the prophet gave the message. Deuteronomy, on the other hand, provides clear criteria for how to discern true prophecy. True prophecy calls God's people back to covenantal obedience so that they could avoid the covenantal curses.

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[80] F. B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, NAC, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 16 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 71.

[81] John M. Bracke, *Jeremiah 1-29*, Westminster Bible Companion, ed. Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2000), 105.

[82] Kaiser and Rata, *Walking the Ancient Paths*, 9.

[83] Earl S. Kalland, "Deuteronomy," in *Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version, ed. F. E. Gaebelein, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 97–98.

Conclusion

This study examined various interpretational options to see if they could be used to identify criteria for false prophecy. The contextual approach was the only method that could identify criteria for false prophets/prophecy that the recipients of the prophecy could have used to determine whether it was true or false. The best the other interpretational options could offer was to point out who was the false prophet after the fact. There are various reasons why these methods failed. All of them, except for contextual approach, accept certain document dating assumptions that limit their interpretational options. All of the interpretation methods (with the exception of contextual) to one degree or another are also invested in a modern and/or postmodern worldview, which do not allow for absolute truth claims. This leads them to argue that the determination of meaning is based on the specific reading/interpretational community of a prophet. The most extreme form was Brenneman who rejects Micah as a prophet because Micah's message does not fit his contemporary interpretational community. Ultimately the way true versus false prophecy is determined is by comparing the message of a prophet to antecedent revelation. This type of comparison will reveal the truth of the message and the messenger.

Hebrews 1:1–4 as the Interpretive Guide for the Book of Hebrews

Eric McConnell

Abstract: The exordium in the Book of Hebrews (1:1–4) stands as one of the most exceptional examples of Koine Greek in the entire New Testament. A careful study of these four verses is warranted, not only because of their brilliant literary construction, but because the exordium serves as an interpretive guide for the rest of the book. Seven statements about the Son are presented in the exordium, and these Son statements preview the major themes discussed throughout Hebrews. This article utilizes discourse analysis of the Greek text to evaluate the construction of the exordium. Alongside the discourse analysis, this article demonstrates the connection between the themes found in the exordium and the main arguments found throughout the rest of the book.

Keywords: Slavery, Mosaic Law, Redemptive Movement Hermeneutic, Anti-slavery, Gentiles

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Introduction

Tf a The Book of Hebrews opens with an e*xclamation mark!* This vivid opening, also known as *the exordium* (1:1–4), arrests the attention of the reader with lofty statements that create a resounding picture of the excellence of the Son. In these magnificently weighty verses, the Son is presented as the pinnacle of God's communication with mankind and the completion of God's redemptive plan; he is presented as the Creator and the Redeemer, and his superiority over even the angels is declared. The vivid exaltation of Christ that is presented in these opening four verses

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serves as a springboard for rich theological truths that continue to be unpacked throughout the entire book. Hebrews presents the Son as the fulfillment of all Messianic hope, and it demonstrates the superiority of the Son above all things.

Hebrews is profound in its doctrinal truth, and it is compelling in its practical call to faithfulness to God. It is written as a homily, as expressed by the author in 13:22, and the theological arguments of the author are masterfully intertwined with words of exhortation that are presented throughout the letter. Bruce describes the theme and practicality of Hebrews in a succinct but profound manner: "... this is the book which establishes the finality of the gospel by asserting the supremacy of Christ…. More than any other New Testament book it deals with the ministry which our Lord is accomplishing on his people's behalf now. In a day of shaking foundations, it speaks of the kingdom which cannot be shaken."[2] The scope of the theological and practical exhortations of the book are immense, yet the root of the major arguments of the book can be traced back to the four short verses of the exordium. The exordium may be appreciated for its compelling literary beauty, its high view of the Son, and its function in capturing the reader's attention. However, the exordium's value transcends its immediate context, as it serves as the *program guide*, or interpretive key, for the entire book.[3] The exordium opens with a comparison of God's former method of communication with the final means, which is through His Son (1:1–2a). The exordium continues by detailing seven truths concerning the Son (1:2b–4); these seven

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[2] F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), xii.

[3] The idea that Hebrews 1:1–4 introduces the major themes found throughout the epistle is expressed by many authors, including Rick Boyd, "The Role of Hebrews 1:1-4 in the Book of Hebrews," *The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies*, 4, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 155–181; David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, NAC (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 95–96; Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 86–87; David Alan Black, "Hebrews 1:1-4: A Study in Discourse Analysis," *Westminster Theological Journal* 49, no. 1 (1987): 175–194; George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*: *A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972) 3–10; Dana M. Harris, *Hebrews*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek NT (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019).

statements are theologically robust, and the concepts found within these statements are explored in greater detail throughout the book.

Hebrews 1:1–4 as an interpretive key to the book is not an idea unique to this paper. However, this paper will offer a unique contribution by testing this common suggestion with an evaluation of the connection between the seven themes presented in these four verses and the manner in which these seven themes are discussed and expanded throughout the book. The methodology utilized in this paper will include a discourse analysis (DA) of the exordium.[4] These four verses compose one highly structured sentence in the Greek text and exploring the linguistic structure of the sentence will demonstrate its prominent components, as well as the sentence's connection with the rest of the chapter and the rest of the epistle. Each clause within the exordium will receive a detailed explanation within the discourse analysis, and an evaluation of the major themes of the book will be discussed in light of the discourse analysis.

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[4] The discourse analysis [DA] presented in this paper follows a format based on Clark's methodology utilized in his DA of 3rd John in David J. Clark, *Analyzing and Translating New Testament Discourse* (Dallas: Fontes P, 2019), 217–219. Other works on discourse analysis in Hebrews include Cynthia Long Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning*, *vol. 11,* The Library of New Testament Studies (London: T&T Clark, 2005); Black, "Hebrews 1:1-4," 175–194; and L. L. Neeley, "A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews," *OPTAT* 1 (1987): 1–146. Westfall breaks the book into three separate sections: Jesus the Apostle of our Confession (1:1–4:10), Jesus the High Priest of Our Confession (4:11–10:25), and Partners in a Heavenly Calling (10:19–13:25). Her DA recognizes an overlap in the discourse themes of her second and third sections in 10:19–25. Neely's discourse analysis deals with the entire book, and it presents a chiastic structure of the entire epistle. David Alan Black's analysis focuses primarily on the exordium, and he places particular emphasis on these four verses as a colon consisting of sixteen items.

Discourse Analysis of Hebrews 1:1–4

¹Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι
[S]ὁ θεὸς[S] λαλήσας τοῖς πατράσιν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις

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²ἐπ᾽ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων
ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν [VIP]υἱῷ[VIP],

ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων,
δι᾽ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας·

³ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ
τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ,
φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως
αὐτοῦ,
καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος
ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν
ὑψηλοῖς,
⁴τοσούτῳ κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων
ὅσῳ
διαφορώτερον παρ᾽ αὐτοὺς
κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα.

Translation: ¹God, who long ago, in various seasons and in various ways, spoke to the fathers by the prophets, ²has in these last days spoken to us by the Son, whom he appointed heir of all (things), by whom also he made the universe; ³He is the radiance of his glory and the exact representation of his substance, and he upholds all things by the word of his power. After making a cleansing for sin, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. ⁴Having become so much greater than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name than theirs.

A Detailed Discourse Analysis of 1:1

¹Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι
[S]ὁ θεὸς[S] λαλήσας τοῖς πατράσιν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις

Translation: *God, who long ago, in various seasons and in various ways, spoke to the fathers by the prophets,*

The opening to the book describes the previous forms of communication that were employed by God in past times. Three adverbial modifiers to the aorist active participle λαλήσας head the sentence, and these modifiers begin alliteration of the *p* sound in verse 1.[5] The first two modifiers, πολυμερῶς and πολυτρόπως, are hapax legomena, and they express a temporal aspect and a modal aspect, respectively, and the third modifier, πάλαι, gives an additional temporal detail.[6] The subject of the participial phrase in verse one, as well as the primary clause of the sentence, found in verse two, is ὁ θεὸς, as indicated by the superscript [S] in the DA. Concerning the structure of the sentence (1:1–4), Ellingworth writes, "Grammatically, this carefully composed opening sentence consists of a participial phrase (v. 1), the main clause (v. 2a), and two subordinate clauses (v. 2b), all with God as their subject, followed by two subordinate clauses (vv. 3, 4) having the Son as subject, and each including further participial phrases."[7]

The exordium explores the manner of communication that God has used to speak to his people. Verse one begins by describing the previous forms that were used to communicate; they were varied in their essence and in their time. This communication was also varied in messengers and recipients, as πατράσιν and προφήταις are both plural. While verse 1 stresses the multiplicity of God's revelation in past times, verse 2 describes the culmination of God's message.

A Detailed Discourse Analysis of 1:2a

²ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων
<u>ἐλάλησεν</u> ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ,

Translation: "*has in these last days spoken to us by the Son,*"

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[5] Allen wrote, "The author's use of rhetorical techniques such as alliteration, meter, rhythm, phonetic and semantic parallelism, syntactical/semantic repetition, and chiasm are all evidenced in this sentence" (*Hebrews*, 95).

[6] Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000), 847, 850.

[7] Paul Ellingworth, *Commentary on Hebrews*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 89.

The statement ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων, *in this last days*, is a point of departure from the statement made in verse one.[8] The phrase, *last days*, was common in Jewish apocalyptic literature, but its form, *in these last days*, is distinctive in Hebrews. Ellingworth commented, "Hebrews' distinctive (not Septuagintal) addition of τούτων indicates that the last days have begun. τούτων should be taken with the whole phrase: 'in these days which are the last days,' not 'at the end of these days.'"[9] This point of departure distinguishes the previous dispensations described in verse one from the current dispensation in which the readers of the letter, which includes the recipients of the letter, as well as today's readers, reside. The order of this adverbial modifier that begins the verse is significant, as the verb-initial order is considered the "default pragmatic order in New Testament Greek, regardless of the discourse genre."[10] About the departure from this typical order, Levinsohn notes, "The presence of adverbial or nominal constituents before the verb in individual sentences is then viewed as a marked order, motivated by the desire to establish the constituent concerned as a point of departure or in order to focus on or emphasize that constituent."[11] Thus, the statement "in these last days" may be understood as a point of departure from the previous clause, as noted by the dashed lines in the DA. This point of departure sets the stage for the following statement, which explains the present form of communication utilized by God.

ἐλάλησεν

The sentence contains the aorist active indicative 3s ἐλάλησεν (λαλέω), translated *has spoken*. About the place that this verb occupies within the wider structure of the exordium, Allen comments, "The structural weight of the entire 72 words in Greek rests upon a single finite verb *elalesen* and its subject *ho theos*: 'God...has

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[8] Cynthia Long Westfall, "Hebrews" in Todd A. Scacewater, *Discourse Analysis of the New Testament Writings* (Dallas, TX: Fontes P), 548.

[9] Ellingworth, *Commentary on Hebrews*, 93.

[10] Stephen Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 2012), 17.

[11] Ibid.

spoken."[12] A contrast may be seen between this verb and the participle λαλήσας in the preceding verse: while various means and methods were used by God to communicate in times past, the Son is the means of communication in "these last days." This contrast demonstrates both the *continuity* and the *discontinuity* between the former mode of revelation described in verse one and that which is described in verse two. Dana Harris writes,

> Together with v. 1, this clause highlights both continuity and discontinuity in divine revelation. λαλήσας and ἐλάλησεν stress God's consistent self-revelation with speaking vbs. (e.g., λαλέω, λέγω), not writing vbs. (e.g., γράφω), as in Pauline epistles. Discontinuity includes: (1) God's former (πάλαι) revelation and his speaking 'in these last days'; (2) the 'fathers' vs. the pres. audience (and subsequent readers); (3) *many* prophets vs. the *one* Son; and (4) the many forms, times, and ways of God's previous revelation vs. the definitive, final revelation in the Son.[13]

Continuity is demonstrated by the use of the aorist form of λαλέω in both clauses; it is evident that across the various dispensations, God has demonstrated his intention to communicate with his people in a direct manner. Hebrews sees the communication in this dispensation as the completed revelation from God in comparison to former modes, because this communication comes through the Son. A distinct aspect of God's communication, as described in Hebrews, is the description of God speaking to his people, rather than a focus on his written Word, as in Pauline literature. This distinction does not discount the written Word; rather, it emphasizes the idea that God speaks with a loud voice through a number of manners, including that which has been written.

God *speaking* is a distinct form of revelation that is explored in Hebrews. Often in Pauline literature an appeal is made to the Scriptures, or that which has been written aforetime for the reader's admonition. However, in Hebrews, an appeal is made to the Hebrew understanding that God speaks to his people, i.e., "Thus says the Lord." Having understood that God has spoken to his people, it may

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[12] Allen, *Hebrews*, 95.

[13] Dana M. Harris, *Hebrews*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019), 13–14.

be demonstrated that the people are expected to hear his voice. This is a common motif that is found throughout the OT Scriptures. In Deuteronomy 6:4, the people were commanded to *shema* (hear or listen). Their willingness to *hear* God's voice would be a marker of their willingness to obey God's voice, as evidenced in the following passages: In Judges 2:2 the people of God were rebuked by the angel of the LORD with the charge "you have not obeyed my voice,"[14] and in Zechariah 1:4, the prophet offers an evaluation of the preceding generations, as he issues the warning "Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.' *But they did not hear* or pay attention to me, declares the Lord" (emphasis added).

This motif of hearing God's voice (i.e., obedience) is referenced in the exordium with the acknowledgment that God has spoken. In 2:1, the author challenges the reader to take heed to things that have been heard. This theme is further explored in Chapter 3, as the reader is cautioned against hardening one's heart in a manner similar to their ancestors. Hebrews 3:15 reads, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." This cautionary theme continues in the last of the five "warning passages" in Hebrews, as a pointed reminder about the gravity of hearing and obeying the voice of God is issued: "See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven" (12:25). A contrast is made in this passage between the gravity of the words of Moses the earthly messenger, and the gravity of the words of God, who speaks from Heaven through his Son. Hebrews begins by referencing the fact that God has revealed himself by speaking to his people, and the author offers exhortations and warnings throughout the letter in order to motivate the audience to hear and obey God.

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[14] Aside from the author's original translation of Hebrews 1:1–4, all Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

The Son (ἐν υἱῷ)

The Son is first introduced in Hebrews within an adverbial prepositional phrase modifying ἐλάλησεν in 1:2. An interchange of prepositions may be seen in this phrase, as ἐν is utilized rather than διά, which would normally be the expected preposition for this phrase.[15] The object of the preposition, υἱῷ (Son), functions as a dative of means, describing the medium of communication, or *how* God has finally spoken. The introduction of *the Son* in this verse is the introduction of the main character or topic of consideration in the book. As Levinsohn puts it, the Son is the salient participant, or the "global VIP" of the book.[16] The prominence of the Son as the global VIP is referenced in the DA by the [VIP] tag.

Ellingworth observes that, distinctive from other NT writers who use the title "Son of God," Hebrews is unique in that the absolute title "Son" is employed.[17] The article is not present in the Greek text, yet *Son* is often translated with the article. Rienecker noted that the absence of the article suggests that the meaning of υἱῷ within this phrase is "in one who is a son." He comments, "The absence of the article fixes attention upon the nature and not upon the personality of the mediator of a new revelation. God spake to us in one who has this character that He is Son."[18] Taking a similar perspective concerning the lack of the article, Wallace comments,

Although this should probably be translated "a Son" (there is no decent

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[15] Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 35.

[16] Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, 136. Black notes the emphasis on the Son as the focal point of 1:1–4: "God is identified in nominal form only twice, though he is marked as the subject four times and by a pronoun once, but Christ is identified by nominal forms three times, by pronominal forms four times, and as the subject six times. It is also relevant to note that in three of the four verbal elements which have God as subject, the Son is involved either as agent or object (items 1, 9, and 10). Thus the Son is not only dealt with in the larger section of the colon but is also the culminating point of the colon" (Black, "Hebrews 1:1-4," 184).

[17] Ellingworth, *Commentary on Hebrews*, 94.

[18] Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, ed. Cleon L. Rogers II (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 663.

way to express this compactly in English), the force is clearly qualitative (though, of course, on the continuum it would be closer to the indefinite than the definite category). The point is that God, in his final revelation, has spoken to us in one who has the characteristics of a son. His credentials are vastly different from the credentials of the prophets (or from the angels, as the following context indicates).[19]

Allen also wrestled with the various choices that are present in translating this anarthrous word, but he concluded that including the article in one's translation is the best way to express the force that is found in this phrase.[20] It may be observed that the construction of this phrase indicates the stark distinction that is made between the Son and all created beings, both heavenly and earthly, in relation to his attributes, work, and medium of divine communication; i.e., only *this One* functions as a Son.

Although the lack of the article creates somewhat of a grammatical puzzle for the translator, it may be observed that this construction, ἐν υἱῷ, possesses thematic significance within the exordium. Concerning the connection of this construction with the wider themes explored in the exordium, Allen comments, "Most commentators conclude that the absence of the article focuses on the character and nature of the Son as compared to the prophets. Furthermore, given the scope of the prologue, the lack of the article likely indicates that the revelation in the Son includes his incarnation, death, resurrection, and second coming."[21]

The first part of the exordium, 1:1–2A, serves as a brief introduction to the grand subject of the book, the Son. The author appeals to a motif that was very relatable to the recipients of the letter, a description of the ways that God had previously spoken to their ancestors. This communication took place via a number of different means, and it spanned multiple generations. The author punctuates the shift that took place in this current dispensation; communication from God has reached its fullest expression, which is God speaking

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[19] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 245.

[20] Allen, *Hebrews*, 105.

[21] Ibid., 104–105.

through the Son.[22] The second part of the exordium serves to identify *Who* the Son is.

A Detailed Discourse Analysis of 1:2b–4:
Seven Descriptions of the Son

Beginning in the second half of verse two, the author launches into an extensive and magnificent description of the Son. This is done by a series of clauses that refer back to υἱῷ, the Son. In the discourse analysis of this passage, each one of these clauses are subordinate to the noun υἱῷ, as they illustrate the following seven details about the Son: [23]

1.   The Son is the Heir of All Things
2.   The Son is the Creator of All Things
3.   The Son is the Reflection of the Father
4.   The Son is the Sustainer
5.   The Son is the Great High Priest
6.   The Son is Seated
7.   The Son is Greater than the Angels

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[22] Commenting on the contrast between the two methods of God's communication discussed in the exordium, Black wrote, "The basic assumption of the author is that God has spoken to men. But God, in his speaking, expressed himself in two different ways, one in an earlier and preliminary revelation (items 2–5), the other in a final and definitive revelation (items 6–8). The earlier speaking, presented in multifarious ways (polumerōs kai polutropōs), cannot compare with the later…" (Black, "Hebrews 1:1-4," 177).

[23] There is not a consensus on the number of statements about Christ in this passage. Allen states that the number may be between six and eight, and he sets the number at eight on semantic grounds (*Hebrews*, 109). Dana Harris numbers the list of statements about Christ in 1:1–4 at seven (*Hebrews*, 14), which is the view presented in this paper.

First and Second Statements about the Son:
The Son is the Heir of All Things and
The Son is the Creator of All Things

ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων,
δι᾽ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας·

Translation: "whom he appointed heir of all (things), by whom also he made the universe;"

The first two statements concerning the Son in 1:2 will be dealt with together due to their close connection concerning their respective topics, as well as their unique order. Discourse analysis of these two relative clauses demonstrates a close connection; the second clause in the pair includes what Runge describes as a *thematic addition*, which is indicated using an adverbial καὶ "to create a connection between two things, essentially 'adding' the current element to some preceding parallel element. Thematic addition is generally translated in English using 'also' or 'too.'"[24] Both of these relative clauses, as well as the following clauses through 1:4 give additional information concerning *the Son*. The clauses refer back to the Son using pronouns. The omission of proper nouns or titles after the initial identification of the Son, as well as the use of relative pronouns, is a general discourse feature; according to Levinsohn, there is a tendency "for references to the VIP to be *minimal*, once he or she had been activated."[25] These first two clauses refer back to the Son by way of relative pronouns. The first relative clause in 1:2 is linked to υἱῷ by the accusative relative pronoun ὃν, while the second relative clause in 1:2 is linked by the genitive relative pronoun οὗ, which is the object of the preposition δι᾽. This preposition and its object express agency, i.e., that God used the Son to make the universe.

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[24] Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010) as cited in Constantine Campbell, *Advances in the Study of Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 188.
[25] Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, 143.

The First and Second Statements about the Son:
Their Connection with the Rest of the Book

Consummation and creation are important themes that are explored beginning with the opening of the book (1:2). The order of these two subordinate clauses is important; one would expect the Son's creative acts to occupy the initial spot, but instead, the author initially looks to an eschatological theme. There is purpose in the order, as Harris observed, "By placing the eschatological first, Hebrews indicates that the Son is the ultimate goal of creation."[26] This consummation-creation phrase is a marked word order that is also observed in 2:10: "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the originator of their salvation through sufferings" (NASB).

Seeing a link between the purpose of inheritance as a component of creation, Allen comments,

> What is unusual is the order in which they appear: consummation first, then creation … . The Son made it all and he inherits it all, but the order of these clauses and then the repetition of the root in *kekleronomeken* in v. 4 at the end of the paragraph indicates that the author's thought really moves from the eschatological to the protological and then back to the eschatological. The Son inherits all he has made.[27]

Moffatt also notes the link between the Son's creative acts and his inheritance; he notes the grammatical and thematic link between these two relative clauses by commenting, "the καὶ especially suggests a correspondence between this and the preceding statement; what the Son was to possess was what he had been instrumental in making."[28] The consummation-creation word order is a theme consistent with the emphasis on eschatological themes in Hebrews. For example, the link between Jesus Christ's past activities with his future actions may be seen in 13:8: "Jesus Christ is the same

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[26] Dana Harris, *Hebrews*, 14.

[27] Allen, *Hebrews*, 114.

[28] James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Hebrews* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1924), 5.

yesterday and today, and forever" (NASB). As Ellingworth observed, "... no NT writing preserves a better balance than Hebrews between the past, present, and future aspects of God's work in Christ. Within the opening, programmatic statement, Christ's future possession of all things by God's gift (1:2, κληρονόμον πάντων) is given a degree of prominence by being mentioned, somewhat unexpectedly, before Christ's role in creation."[29] Thus, the marked order demonstrates an emphasis on consummation-creation that is demonstrated throughout Hebrews.

The concept of the Son as *heir* fits into the metanarrative of the book; the Son/heir is greater than Moses (3:5–6). The comparison between Moses and the Son is significant in terms of the very idea of Sonship because the Son is greater than Moses simply because of his status as Son. The divine identity and superiority of Christ has at its foundation the idea of Sonship in Hebrews. The believers addressed in Hebrews are of the same house as this heir (3:6). In comparison, Moses rejected his earthly sonship, which included regal identity, because "he considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt" (11:26, ESV). From Moses' viewpoint, according to Hebrews, being an earthly heir to the greatest of earthly kingdoms was worth renouncing in order to be a part of the Son's kingdom (cf., 12:25–29).

The Third Clause: The Son is the Reflection of the Father

ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ,

Translation: "He is the radiance of his glory and the exact representation of his substance"

The discourse analysis presented in this paper contains a line break between verse two and verse three to indicate a shift in subject. While God was the subject of the first two relative clauses, the third relative clause marks a shift in subject, as the Son is the subject of the last five clauses of the paragraph. This third statement is used to describe the essence of the Son, i.e., the intention of the author is to inform the reader just *who* this Son under discussion truly is, as evidenced by the present active participle ὢν (from εἰμί). The

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[29] Ellingworth, *Commentary on Hebrews*, 77.

previous two clauses contained aorist active verbs, but this third clause, as well as the subsequent clause, contain present active participles. The KJV and NKJV render these words as participles in their translations; the NIV renders the first with the force of a present active, while the second is rendered as a participle; and the ESV and NASV render both participles with a present active force, which is the manner employed in this paper.

The identification of the Son in this clause includes two hapax legomena that function as predicate adjectives of the relative pronoun ὃς. The first predicate is ἀπαύγασμα, radiance.[30] The second predicate is χαρακτὴρ, which is "a mark or impression placed on an object - of coinage **impress, reproduction, representation**" (emphasis his).[31] This statement about Christ indicates the splendor and glory of the Son; authority and deity are inherent with one who is described in such compelling terms. Neither of these two predicates appear with the article, but they are translated definitely. Hoyle comments,

> Surely, given the whole focus of Hebrews on the uniqueness of Jesus, we are to understand that Jesus is not simply *an* heir, *a* radiance, and *a* representation, but *the* heir, *the* radiance, and *the* representation. Anarthrousness here, I posit, is to mark the comment as salient, by presenting it as if it were NEW (even though, presumably, the recipients of Hebrews knew these facts).[32]

This statement about the Son is sandwiched between two former modes of communication from God to his people; the prophets are referenced at the beginning of the exordium as a former mode of communication, while the angels (messengers) are referenced in the last of seven statements about the Son in 1:4. The Son supersedes the prophets, and even the angels, because of His divine nature. His deity is evidenced by the radiance and character of God that beams from the Son. Dods comments on the ramifications of this form of

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[30] William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 83.

[31] BDAG, 1077–1078.

[32] Richard A. Hoyle, *Scenarios, Discourse, and Translation: The Scenario Theory of Cognitive Linguistics, its Relevance for Analysing New Testament Greek and Modern Parkari Texts, and its Implications for Translation Theory* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 2008), 716.

revelation:

> This revelation was final because made by one who in all He is and does, reveals the Father. By uttering Himself He expresses God. A Son who can be characteristically designated a son, carries in Himself the Father's nature and does not need to be instructed in purposes which are also and already His own, nor to be officially commissioned and empowered to do what He cannot help doing.[33]

The third statement concerning the Son, that he is the reflection of the Father is an indication of his deity, a truth that is explicitly declared in 1:8. This divine distinction elevates the Son above the angels, and it demonstrates that within himself, the Son possesses a divine imperative due to his very nature.

The Fourth Statement about the Son:
The Son is the Sustainer

φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ,

Translation: "*and he upholds all things by the word of his power.*"

Similar to the rendering of the aorist active participle in the previous statement, φέρων, a present active participle, is translated with the force of a present active indicative verb. This clause is linked with the preceding clause by τε, which is a marker of connection between coordinate phrases or clauses.[34] The Son as the Creator has already been established by the second statement in this series. The statement in this clause builds off of the idea of creation, and even the final idea of consummation, both of which are executed by the Son, a concept further explored in 1:10–12. The fourth statement in 1:3 indicates that between creation and consummation, the Son is actively upholding all things with the same method that was employed in creation, with his very word. God's sustaining power in light of the coming consummation of all things is an idea that is referenced in 12:25–29. Christ's activity in the past, present, and future is possible,

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[33] Marcus Dods, "The Epistle to the Hebrews" in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. IV (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 249.

[34] BDAG, 993.

as evidenced by the statement concerning his immutability in 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

The duration of the Son's work of sustaining all things is explored in 12:25–29, which references the consummation of all things. In this passage, an exhortation is made to listen to the one who will shake the heavens and earth; Hebrews 12:26 reads, "At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.'" The Son's work in sustaining all things is a display of his omnipotence, an attribute that is equally on display when he purposefully ceases his sustenance of the heavens and earth, and shakes them. Although the created realm will be changed, as evidenced in 1:10–12 and 12:26–27, the exhortation in 12:25–29 includes the comforting statement, "let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken." Thus, above the temporary upholding of the created realm, the Son's permanent sustenance of the kingdom is held out as a word of encouragement to sustain and challenge the reader.

The Fifth Statement about the Son: The Son is the Great High Priest

καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος

Translation: "After making a cleansing for sin,"

Discourse analysis of this passage will recognize that this clause contains a marked form of the verb. Rather than following the verb-initial pattern that is typically present in Greek, the direct object of the verb has been fronted in this clause, perhaps to emphasize the offering or cleansing that was made or accomplished by the Son's redemptive acts. The discourse analysis presented in this paper links this clause with the following clause, a link that may be seen by the absence of punctuation in the UBS and NA editions of the text. This close link is present because the aorist participle ποιησάμενος functions in a *temporal* manner, indicating the completion of the Son's redemptive work that precedes the aorist active indicative verb found in the subsequent clause. In addition to functioning in a temporal manner, this participle also functions in a causal manner, as noted by Wallace: "To sit down at God's right hand meant that the

work was finished, and this could not take place until the sin-cleansing was accomplished."[35]

The Fifth Statement about the Son:
Its Connection with the Rest of the Book

While the exordium contains several themes that are referenced in great detail throughout Hebrews, no theme is explored in greater detail than the Son's redemptive work as the Great High Priest. This title is first given to the Son in 2:17, and the significance of his work as the High Priest continues to be unpacked by the author in great detail through Chapter 10. The very possibility of the Son making an offering for sin is discussed in 2:9–19. In fact, the entire purpose of the incarnation entails redemptive purposes, i.e., he was born so that he could suffer and die for man's sin. Not only did the frailty that the Son subjected himself to in the incarnation enable him to die as a sacrifice, it also enabled him to show empathy for man's weakness, and it enables sustenance from the High Priest for those who flee to him for refuge (2:17–18 and 4:15–5:3). The distinction between Christ's priesthood and the Levitical priesthood is presented as a study of contrasts in Hebrews. The following list presents four major areas that distinguish the Son's priesthood from the Levitical priesthood:

a)   The Class of the Son's Priesthood: Melchizedkian

   Jesus is from the tribe of Judah, a fact mentioned in Hebrews 7:14. A lack of Levitical lineage would cause a conundrum for any Israelite desiring priesthood. However, Psalm 110:4, a verse that, in addition to multiple partial references in Hebrews, is quoted directly three times in the book, spoke of a different priesthood altogether, that which was after the order of Melchizedek. According to 5:4–6, both the Levitical and the Melchizedekian priesthoods were commissioned by God, but only the Melchizedekian priesthood was established by the unalterable oath of God (Ps 110:4; Heb 7:21).[36] In comparison, Levi may be seen as inferior because he paid

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[35] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 624.
[36] Allen, *Hebrews*, 427.

tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham according to Hebrews 7:8–10.

b)   The Length of the Son's Priesthood: Eternal

There was a limit that each Levitical priest faced due to the frailty of human life (7:23). Priests died and were replaced. However, Jesus is alive forevermore, and therefore, he is able "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (7:25, KJV).

c)   The Place of the Son's Priestly Service: Heavenly

Hebrews 8:5 describes the tabernacle as a pattern of the heavenly holy place, a theme further explored in 9:1–13 and 9:19–24. The priests under the system instituted by Moses served in the terrestrial realm, as they stood before God on behalf of the people in the earthly tabernacle. However, this earthly tabernacle, along with all of its implements, was patterned after the heavenly things, where Christ appears before God on the behalf of his people (9:23–24).[37]

d)   The Extent of the Son's Priestly Sacrifice: Final

Hebrews 10:1–18 contrasts the Levitical sacrifices with the ultimate sacrifice of Christ. The Levitical sacrificial system was not capable of freeing man from the grip of sin; if it were capable of doing this, the repetition of the sacrifice would be unnecessary. The continual Levitical sacrifices, made by priests who were standing daily to attend to their duties, were merely a shadow of the final sacrifice yet to come. In contrast, Jesus would offer His own blood once, and sit down. The finality of Christ's sacrifice is further detailed in 13:10–13; Jesus made a sacrifice with his own blood in order

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[37] Allen notes that there are nine views concerning what the term *heavenly things* describes (ibid., 485).

to sanctify his people and provide them permanent access to himself.

The Sixth Statement about the Son:
The Son is Seated

ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς

Translation: "he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high."

The discourse analysis of this passage places this aorist active indicative verb ἐκάθισεν to the left of the preceding participles in verse three, distinguishing it as a mainline verb. Conversely, in David Allen Black's DA of the exordium, he sets the preceding clauses from verse 3, as well as the subsequent clause underneath and subordinate to this sixth statement about the Son.[38] While this clause is prominent in this portion of the exordium, it is best to retain the order of the clauses from the text in one's DA for sake of clarity and thematic order. Dods notes that the relative pronoun at the beginning of verse three is the subject of this verb *seated*; he writes, "The relative **ὃς** finds its antecedent in **υἱῷ**, its verb in **ἐκάθισεν**; and the interposed participles prepare for the statement of the main verb by disclosing the fitness of Christ to be the revealer of God, and to make atonement" (emphasis original).[39] Dods is correct, at least in relation to the first participial clause in verse three that describes his reflection of the Father's radiance. However, the subsequent participial clauses describe the actions of the Son, both finished and ongoing, which occasion his position of being seated. While the first two participial clauses in verse three are linked together by the enclitic conjunction τε, the preceding participial phrase, "having made a cleansing for sin," is linked to this clause, as indicated by the lack of punctuation in the UBS and NA texts. The preceding phrase may be seen as an adverbial modifier for the verb ἐκάθισεν, describing the occasion that preceded the Son's action of sitting, which was His action of making a cleansing for sin. The verbal combination in this clause is what Hoyle describes as a verbal *end stage*; in this instance, a main verb follows an aorist participle to describe a completed action. Hoyle

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[38] Black, "Hebrews 1:1-4," 178.
[39] Dods, "Epistle to the Hebrews," 250.

translates this phrase/clause combination as "having made purification for sins he sat down."[40]

The Sixth Statement about the Son:
Its Connection with the Rest of the Book

Christ as the seated redeemer is an important motif in Hebrews (1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2).[41] This motif conveys the completion of His priestly work. After offering one sacrifice for sin, The Son is now seated in the position of honor, at God's right hand (10:11–12). The exordium introduces this motif, and it is described in further detail in 1:13 with a direct quote from Psalm 110:1. Commenting on the role that this motif has in Hebrews, F.F. Bruce wrote, "Psalm 110 provides the key text of this epistle, and the significance of Christ's being a *seated* high priest is explicitly set forth in the following chapters, especially in 10:11-14, where he is contrasted with the Aaronic priests who remained standing because their sacrificial service never came to an end."[42] While the Levites would continually stand for their service, the Son is seated. His being seated has nothing to do with exhaustion or a needed recuperation due to the work on the cross; instead, it is a picture of the completion of redemption.[43] Barclay described the personal ramifications that apply to those who know the Son, "To Jesus belongs the mediatorial exaltation. He has taken His place on the right hand of glory; but the tremendous thought of the writer to the Hebrews is that He is there, not as our judge, but as the one who makes intercession for us, so that, when we enter into the presence of God, we go, not to hear God's justice prosecute us, but to

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[40] Hoyle, *Scenarios, Discourse, and Translation*, 472.

[41] Hebrew 1:13 is a direct quotation of an OT Passage. Hebrews 1:3, 8:1, and 10:12 are aorist active indicative, while 12:2 is marked, in that it is a perfect active indicative. Campbell notes that "perfect tense-forms often end up depicting a state," which is the usage of the tense in 12:2. See Constantine Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 106.

[42] Bruce, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 50.

[43] Paul Ellingworth and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Letter to the Hebrews* (London/New York: United Bible Societies, 1983), 11.

hear God's love plead for us."[44] In addition to the intercessory work of the Son, the seated nature of the Son is used as a focal point and motivation for those who are running their race (12:1–3); Christ's finished work is used as a motivation to press on rather than becoming weary or fainting during the race.

The Seventh Statement about the Son:
The Son is Greater than the Angels

τοσούτῳ κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων
ὅσῳ διαφορώτερον παρ᾽ αὐτοὺς κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα.

Translation: "Having become so much greater than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name than they."

In 1:4, the author uses the demonstrative pronoun τοσούτῳ, which is a dative of measure or dative of degree of difference, a rare use of the dative.[45] This pronoun indicates that this verse is furnishing further information about the Son, specifically in comparison with the angels. The correlative pronoun ὅσῳ, another dative of degree of difference, is used to justify the author's statement concerning the Son's superiority to the angels. It is followed by the comparative adjective διαφορώτερον. Köstenberger notes that the author of Hebrews utilized comparative adjectives and adverbs 45 times, more than any other NT author.[46] This comparative clause explains that the Son's superiority is based on his inheritance of a greater name than theirs.

The prominence of the Son's inheritance is referenced in both 1:2 and 1:4, which is indicative of a chiastic structure within the exordium; the first of the seven statements about the Son states that the Son has been appointed as heir (κληρονόμον) of all things, and the verbal form of this cognate (κεκληρονόμηκεν) is used in the seventh statement about the Son, stating that he has inherited a

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[44] William Barclay, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew P, 1960), 6.

[45] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 166.

[46] Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Jesus, the Mediator of a "Better Covenant": Comparatives in the Book of Hebrews," *Faith and Mission* 21, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 30–51.

name.[47] The verb in this clause, κεκληρονόμηκεν, is a perfect active indicative, as indicated in the DA by being placed left of the preceding participles. The placement of *name* within the clause is emphasized, as Ellingworth and Nida observe, "In the Greek, the word name is in emphatic position at the end of the sentence, and the context (especially verse 2 and 5) makes it probable that the name is that of the Son."[48] The statement concerning his name is significant, not just because of the placement, but also because of the concept of the phrase. Ellingworth and Nida explain, "In Hebrew thought, a name was not just a means of identification; it referred to someone's whole nature or personality."[49] The Son's deity is at least hinted, if not explicitly referenced, in this clause, a concept that will be declared in 1:8.

The Seventh Statement about the Son:
Its Connection with the Rest of the Book

From a DA perspective, verse four serves as an important link between the first three verses of the exordium and the rest of the chapter. The rhetorical question that begins verse five serves as a discourse boundary marker.[50] Verses 5–14 contain a series of arguments based on seven OT direct quotations that elucidate the comment that the Son is greater than the angels. This series of arguments concludes with a stronger discourse boundary in 2:1, a hortatory subjunctive unit marked by Διὰ τοῦτο, which serves as a mark of departure. About the shift in 2:1, Greenlee comments, "It indicates the logical connection between theology and practice. It begins a practical exhortation based on the preceding argument."[51] Hebrews 2:1 shifts to a practical application of the theological arguments from the preceding chapter, as the author demands that the reader make a reflection on his or her obedience to God based on the arguments made in Chapter 1. Throughout the book, the author utilizes a similar structure of theology/reflection. Westfall comments on the discourse pattern evident in 1–2:1 and the rest of the book; she

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[47] Allen, *Hebrews*, 114.

[48] Ellingworth and Nida, *Translator's Handbook*, 13.

[49] Ibid., 13.

[50] Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, 282.

[51] J. Harold Greenlee, *An Exegetical Summary of Hebrews* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1998), 42.

wrote,

> Most of the hortatory subjunctives provide a conclusion to the preceding unit and the point of departure for the subsequent unit. The author often marks the hortatory subjunctive unit as a conclusion with an inferential conjunction, but also expands the sentence with information that introduces the next unit, so that the hortatory subjunctive units look forward and backwards.[52]

The forward/backward style is a masterful tool utilized by the author to shift to new themes, while calling attention to how the various arguments fit within the metanarrative of the book (i.e., 8:1).

The exordium may be seen as a programming guide for the rest of the book, because, in addition to the aforementioned elements that are explored throughout the epistle, verse four sets a precedence of comparison for the book. The comparison between the Son and the angels is discussed in this verse, and it is determined that the Son is greater because of his inheritance of a name.[53] The word that is used to express this concept is κρείττων, which is defined in BDAG as "pert. to being of high status, more prominent, higher in rank, preferable, better."[54] Hebrews begins a precedence of comparison in the exordium, a comparison between the Son and the great aspects of OT religion, including its angelic messengers, its prominent hero Moses, and its sacrificial system. The Son is seen as *better* or *greater* than these things, a paradigm of comparison that is made throughout the book. If expressed in a simple formula, the argument made by the author in this passage and throughout the book could simply be expressed in this manner: The Son > all things.

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[52] Westfall, "Hebrews," 565.

[53] The word ὅσῳ indicates *the degree of correlative extent* between the two clauses (BDAG, 729). Rather than functioning as independent clauses, the second clause, *as he has inherited a more excellent name than they*, furnishes a single argument as to why the Son is greater than the angels.

[54] BDAG, 566.

Conclusion

"*Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum*:" (Heb 8:1, KJV)

The exordium is a literary masterpiece that is packed with theological content. Its themes are so rich that the author spends 13 chapters unpacking many of the truths within these four verses. Using discourse analysis, the structure of the exordium was evaluated in this paper, and it was demonstrated that the exordium is made up of two major sections. In 1:1–2a, the author distinguishes between God's former means of communication, and his final form of communication, which is through his Son. The second section of the exordium (1:2b–4) delineates seven profound statements concerning the Son that reference his magnificent identity, his completed and ongoing work, and his eternal inheritance. Allen writes, "That so much could be said in the confines of four verses is a testimony to the author's theological ability. God's protological, eschatological, and soteriological purposes, otherwise undisclosed, are now revealed in his Son."[55] There is much more that could be said concerning the significance of Hebrews 1:1–4, but time would fail us to discuss these things. This article presents a short synopsis of the grandeur of the exordium, as well as making a case for the necessity to deal with the exordium thoroughly in one's exegesis of the chapter, as well as one's exegesis of the rest of Hebrews.

The details contained within the exordium are too important and too grand to merely gloss over. Hebrews 1:1–4 is much more than a fancy introduction to a lesser-known book in the New Testament. These verses would not make a good introduction to a sermon on Chapter 1; rather, these four verses demand thorough exploration in their own right. Perhaps a seven-part sermon series that exalts the person of Christ could be delivered from merely the exordium! A careful study and delivery of this short passage of Scripture, and by extension, the wonderful Epistle to the Hebrews in its entirety, would greatly enrich any pulpit ministry.

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[55] Allen, *Hebrews,* 115.

The Messianic Intercessor: A Biblical Theology of Psalm 2

Donald McIntyre

Abstract: This paper will seek to perform a Biblical Theological analysis of Psalm 2 through employing a rigid methodology. Through a structured analysis the mediatorial role of the Israelite king will become apparent showing the intercessory role of the Israelite king as a conduit of the Abrahamic blessing. This psalm will also show, through an intertextual analysis, that suffering of the righteous King, serves a mediatorial role and is only temporary until the valiant return of the king to inflict judgement upon the nations should they not repent. As such, it will encourage the church to pray for wicked governments repentance, knowing the God answers prayers of His people, and to persevere in hope knowing that God's plan cannot be thwarted.

Keywords: Kingship Psalms, Psalm 2, Biblical Theology, Psalter, Messiah.

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Introduction

Biblical theology is a disputed discipline in disarray where practitioners do whatever is right in their own eyes.[2] This dilemma has significantly affected the field of OT theology. While this could be a deterrent to Biblical theological inquiries, the Old Testament asserts God's revelation and therefore the Old Testament is a legitimate field for theological inquiry.[3] The goal of

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[2] D. A. Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 91.

[3] Ben Ollenburger, "Discoursing Old Testament Theology," *Biblical Interpretation* 11, no. 3 (2003): 617–628.

this inquiry is to determine the theological message of Psalm 2 throughout the biblical corpus. This will be accomplished through the employment of a stringent methodology composed of exegetical and subsequent concentric theological analyses beginning with the Psalm in its original context and then progressing to its theological contribution to the understanding of the Psalter, and lastly the whole Bible. Finally, after a whole Biblical theological analysis, an application for the contemporary church audience will be provided.

Methodology and Definitions

Ken Gardoski describes three basic steps to doing theology: exegesis, biblical theology, and systematic theology. Biblical theology makes attempts at "Placing the Biblical Data in their Historical Context," which is entirely derivative of, and logically preceded by, sound exegetical work.[4] The exegetical method practiced below will employ a "consistently literal hermeneutic" seeking to interpret the data in a way that is cognizant of the author's single intended meaning as could have been discerned by the original audience, and only be found within the confines of the text (avoiding the intentional fallacy).

Köstenberger and Patterson define biblical theology stating, "Biblical theology is the theology of the Bible. That is Biblical theology is theology that is biblical—derived from the Bible rather than imposed upon the Bible by a given interpreter of scripture . . . grounded in the historical setting and the narrative context, and is inductive in nature."[5] Mead similarly defines biblical theology as seeking "to identify and understand the Bible's theological message, that is, what the Bible says about God and God's relation to all creation, especially to humankind."[6] This article will proceed by defining biblical theology as the study of God within its own diverse array of literary contexts solely within the canon. This type of theology differs from systematics which seeks to group theological

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[4] Ken Gardoski, "Steps to Doing Theology." Unpublished class notes from Doctoral Seminar TH1: Seminar in Theological Methods at Baptist Bible Seminary, Clarks Summit, PA, Fall 2020.

[5] Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *For the Love of God's Word* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2015), 368.

[6] James K. Mead, *Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes* (Louisville: John Knox, 2007), Kindle loc. 59.

content by themes.[7] As such, there will be no integration of any extrabiblical sources of theology.

Old Testament Contextual Interpretation

A brief exegesis of the passage is mandated before proceeding to a theological synthesis. This exegesis will seek to offer a contextual interpretation through employing the historical-grammatical method of exegesis, consisting of translation discussion of literary and historical context of the psalm to the best of the interpreter's abilities given the absence of certain critical elements. The will be done through supplying a commentary on the psalm's contents, analyzed in stanza divisions found in the contextual study.

Translation

Below is the author's original translation derived from the text of the BHS with the aid of the HALOT and BDB lexicons. It has been presented in a table and broken up into stanza divisions to be defended thereafter for ease of reference.

Translation	
Why rage the nations and the countries plot vanities? Taking their stand, the kings of the earth, and the dignitaries found/establish together against the LORD and against his anointed one. The dweller of the heavens laughs, the lord mocks them. This will he speak to them in his wrath, And with his fury he will terrify them;	I will tell of the announcement, "The LORD said to me, My Son are you, I, this day, have brought you forth. Ask from me, and you will I give the nations as your inheritance, And as your property the ends of the earth. You will smash them with a rod of iron, As the vessel of a potter you will break them to pieces." So now you Kings be wise,

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[7] Cited in ibid., Kindle loc. 409.

| "But I have set my king upon Zion

    the mountain of my
        holiness." | Be instructed you judges of the earth!
Serve the LORD with fear,
    And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the son, lest he be angered,
    And you perish in the way
    Because kindled as quickly is his wrath,
Blessed are all who take refuge in him. |

Context

The authorship and dating of Psalm 2 are unknown from the text of the Old Testament. New Testament claims of authorship, and an appropriately derived date, will be examined under the New Testament section. Claus Westermann has argued convincingly that all psalms fall under two main genre categories, praise and lament, and are further subdivided by their individual or corporate nature.[8] Gunkel has argued for a different categorization system which is useful and will serve as a form of sub-genre classification. As such, this psalm should be considered a lament of the people, with its sub-genre being a kingship psalm, particularly a "prayer of the king."[9] It is important to understand that the king as a representative of the nation, in a culture of corporate solidarity, is viewed as speaking on behalf of the nation in his individual prayers. As goes the king, so goes the nation.[10]

Laments have a clearly defined structure: "address, lament, confession of trust, or assurance of being heard, petition, vow of

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[8] Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 33–34.

[9] Hermann Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, ed. Joachim Begrich, trans. James D. Nogalski (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998), 109.

[10] Gunkel, *Introduction*, 112, 120.

praise."[11] This psalm is particular in the fact that there is no petition proper. A cursory reading of the entire psalm would leave one to believe that the petition is implied in the nations' rage, but discounted by the king as vain and futile because the king has received dominion from the almighty over-lord. The turn from lament to confidence is found in verses 4–6 where God speaks and terrifies the nations. An assertion of confidence is made by Zion's king concerning his divine right to rule. The psalm ends with a call for the nations to submit to God's rule through submitting to the lordship of Israel's king.

Structure

The structure of this psalm is clearly denoted by the changes between the speaker and the audience.[12] The first stanza division runs from verses 1–3, where the psalmist is presumably addressing the LORD, describing the rebellion of the nations and questioning their reason. There is a change in speakers in verses 4–6 where the LORD answers the question of the psalmist. The psalmist then continues his role as the primary speaker in verses 7–9 where he describes a revelation previously received from the LORD, and ends with the speaker addressing the raging nations on how to respond appropriately to God's revelation in verses 10–12.

Commentary

Stanza 1

Why rage the nations
    and the countries plot vanities?

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[11] Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 64; see also Gunkel, *Introduction*, 94; even though Gunkel calls this a royal psalm, its parts follow that of the "Individual Complaint Songs" namely, "address, complaint, petition, perhaps the certainty of having been heard, and the vow of a thanksgiving offering" (94).

[12] See David L. Petersen and Kent Harold Richards, *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 60–61. "The term 'stanza' is most frequently understood to be a semantic unit, that is, a unit of meaning . . . stanzaic style does not appear in Hebrew poetry. Groupings occur within the constraints of parallelism, rhythm, and other stylistic devices." These constraints can be grammatical or semantical and "signal the reader that units external to the bi-colon, . . . hold lines together and separate them" (60–61).

Taking their stand, the kings of the earth,
  and the dignitaries found/establish together
  against the LORD and against his anointed one.
Let us tear to pieces the fetters
  and throw from us their branches

Verse 1

The prayer opens with a question posed to the deity in verse one. The verse exhibits explanatory parallelism describing how the nations rage, namely through plotting worthless vanities. Nations גוים is a theologically loaded word referring particularly to "pagan peoples."[13] This term is often translated as "Gentiles," Though the term was originally denotive of nations "in general" it "came to mean specifically 'nations other than Israel.'"[14] The DBI notes that this term should be understood as one of a few "serious words indicating a distinction between God's people and the other peoples. One of the most basic divisions in Hebrew thought (as in many other cultures) was that of 'us' and 'them.' *Heathen* has the particular connotation of those who are different and religiously offensive."[15]

Verse 2

Verse two is connected to verse one via explanatory parallelism, explaining the outcome of the nations' conspiracy—they rebel by taking their stand. The next lines of verse two is also explanatory. The nations of the earth take their stand by working together, and by contrastive parallelism, shows that they are working against the LORD and his anointed one. It is important to note the connection between the LORD and his anointed one. The HALOT defines the משיח as "the anointed one" and then provides multiple biblical examples such as, "the king of Israel, Saul, David and his descendants . . . 2. Cyrus Is 45:1 . . . 3. priest הַכֹּהֵן הַמָּ the anointed priest . . . 4. the patriarchs . . . 5. 'Messiah' . . . but not an eschatological saviour in OT."[16] VanGemeren describes the special relationship between these messiahs and the LORD stating, "The act of anointing not only

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[13] Willem VanGemeren, ed., *NIDOTTE* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1:131.
[14] Ibid., 1:369.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Koehler et al., *HALOT* (Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000), 645.

initiated a person or an object into a new form of service, it also set that object or person apart from other forms of service or uses. . ... Not only did the anointing presuppose special obligations, it also was considered to convey special status; this was the Lord's anointed (2 Sam 23:1). To touch this person was in some sense to touch the Lord himself."[17]

Verse 3

The poem continues its explanatory function, linking verses 2–3, reporting the direct speech of the Gentile kings forming an unholy alliance.[18] Here one can see that the Gentile kings are working together through the first-person plural pronoun attached to a cohortative verb form. There is a progressive parallelism seen between the lines of verse 3, as they seek to tear off the bonds which the LORD has placed upon the nations and shows the kings seeking to throw off his dominion over them exerted through the "branch." The term for branch is another term that has become theologically significant. Here it functions as a metaphor, meant to give the poem symbolic imagery. Ryken et al. describe the symbolism:

> Branches provide a rich array of symbols in the Bible. In a land with regions where trees were a relative rarity, a healthy tree with strong branches readily became a symbol of strength and prosperity. If leafy, fruit-bearing branches indicate a prospering olive, vine or fig tree, they readily become a symbol for a human family: "Joseph is a fruitful

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[17] VanGemeren, ed., *NIDOTTE*, 2:1124–1125.

[18] For a brief introduction on parallelism and its relationship to Hebrew poetry, see Robert Bruce Chisholm, *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000); Samuel T. Goh, *The Basics of Hebrew Poetry: Theory and Practice* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017); and David M. Howard Jr. "Recent Trends in Psalms Study," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, ed. David W. Baker and Will T. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 329–368. For a more in-depth discussion of parallelism see Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 2011); Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1998); and Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, trans. G. Gregory (1839; repr. Elibron Classics, 2005).

bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; his branches run over the wall" (Gen 49:22 RSV). Nations too, and especially their rulers, are referred to as trees.[19]

As such, the Gentile rulers are seeking to overcome the rule of the LORD, by casting off the leadership of his anointed king. Though this may seem a stretch from the poetry, such bondage to foreign rulers often entailed worship of their gods, coerced, or otherwise, as seen throughout the biblical account from the judges throughout the monarchial period. It is safe to assume there would have been a chance for countertransference during the monarchial period when this psalm was written to the chagrin of the foreign rulers who were loyal to their own gods and religiously motivated ethics, as well as geo-political and economic aspects that such fealty to the Israelite monarchy would necessarily entail.

Stanza 2

The dweller of the heavens laughs,
   the lord mocks them.
This will he speak to them in his wrath,
    And with his fury he will terrify them;
"But I have set my king upon Zion
   the mountain of my holiness."

Verse 4

The second stanza division is warranted by a change in the subject and speaker. Whereas the previous stanza includes the psalmist's report of the direct speech of the nations, this second stanza reports the direct speech of the LORD as a reaction to the plans of the wicked rulers. There is a contrastive parallelism linking verses 3–4, where the speech of the Gentile kings is contrasted to the speech of God, as he laughs and mocks them. There is progressive parallelism within verse 4 where God moves from laughter to mocking.

Verse 5

Verse five displays intensifying/progressive parallelism from verse 4 to verse 5 where the LORD moves from laughter and mocking to wrath. Verse 5, employing explanatory parallelism shows God's

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[19] Ryken et al., *Dictionary*, 116.

wrathful speech, describing the effects of his wrath leaving the nations terrified.

Verse 6

There is a contrastive relationship between verses 5–6, where the subject moves from the nations which the LORD has chastised, to the anointed one, now specified as the king whom the LORD has set upon Zion. God reassures the Israelite king that the goal of the heathen nations was vain because the LORD was responsible for the placement of the Israelite king. There is descriptive parallelism between the lines of verse 6 where Zion is specified as the place where the LORD has set his anointed king and Zion is described as the mountain of the LORD's holiness. The term קדוש is described in adjectival form as "adj. holy, causing anxiety, separated, ordained for."[20] The idea of causing anxiety is particularly appropriate considering the fear that has been invoked upon the gentile kings at the word of the LORD in the previous verse. The idea is that Zion was holy because it was the LORD's special possession given to his anointed king, and an attack on the anointed King (1 Sam. 9:16–17, 16:12; 2 Sam. 7:12–16), in the ordained location, without God's prior sanction would ultimately be an attack on God himself (see conversation above on משׁח), his promises and plan.

Stanza 3

I will tell of the announcement,
 "The LORD said to me, My Son are you,
 I, this day, have brought you forth.
Ask from me, and you will I give the nations as your inheritance,
 And as your property the ends of the earth.
You will smash them with a rod of iron,
 As the vessel of a potter you will break them to pieces."

Verse 7

The third stanza is denoted again by a change in speaker and subject. Where the LORD was speaking to the gentile kings in stanza two, the LORD now turns his attention to the Israelit king, speaking to him directly. This verse should be identified as the beginning of "the oracle" where God "promises the ruler what the prayer desired

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[20] VanGemeren, ed., *NIDOTTE*, 3:877.

for him."[21] There is specifying/descriptive parallelism between verses 6 and 7, linking the third stanza to the second. Where the LORD has asserted His installation of the Israelite king upon Zion in verse 6, verse 7 describes the decree elevating the Israelite king over other nations. There is descriptive parallelism between the lines of verse 7 where the LORD announces that the king is his son, and how this sonship was brought about– through the son's receipt of the kingdom. The use of the term *son* had political significance. It was common for equal kings to refer to each other as brothers, and inferior/superior relationships to be addressed as father/son.[22] This became common terminology for ANE kings to refer to themselves as sons of their respective deities, receiving kingdoms at the behest of their divine benefactors.[23] This idea harkens back to the Davidic covenant where the LORD promises,

> And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. (2 Sam 7:10–14, ESV)

The war time machinations of the Gentile kings' coupe attempt would be antithetical to the Davidic covenant apart from God's direct intervention. Since the king was in a special relationship to the LORD, to move on the king without divine sanction was to move

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[21] Gunkel, *Introduction*, 111.

[22] Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East, ca. 3000-323 BC*, Blackwell History of the Ancient World, 3rd ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2016), 107, Kindle ed.

[23] Allison Thomason, "The Materiality of Assyrian Sacred Kingship," *Religion Compass* 10, no. 6 (June 10, 2016): 133–148, https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12201. See also Nicole Brisch, "Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Religion Compass* 7, no. 2 (February 4, 2013): 37–46, https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12031.

against the LORD Himself. Gunkel rightly notes the extent of such a relationship: "The first rule of this state religion in Israel, as in all nations of antiquity which lived under kings, was that the prince stands in an especially close relationship to the God of the people. . . the court singer praises the prince quite highly, but do not forget that YHWY is above him."[24] As zealously monotheistic as Israel was, and given the cultural usage of the term at the time of composition, it is unlikely that the author, or the redactor after him, would have viewed this psalm as referring to a future divine king figure such as that seen in the NT person of Jesus—though this text does not preclude such typological fulfillment.

Verse 8

There is developmental parallelism between verses 7–8 where verse 7 announces the receipt of the kingdom by the son, and verse 8 describes the receipt of gifts which are the king's due. The receipt of gifts upon royal ascension was normative in the ANE, and a royal ascension being denoted by the phrase "this day," has archaeological support. [25] It was common for kings to receive gifts from other kings, even greater kings, upon coronation. In Jewish thought, God was the King of the whole earth, and it was common for greater kings to acknowledge lesser kings as their sons, bestowing gifts upon these lesser kings at coronation.[26]

Verse 9

Verse nine explains how this coronation gift would be achieved, describing the process by which the new king would receive the inheritance of the other nations: war. In the ANE, a king had to prove

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[24] Gunkel, *Introduction*, 112.

[25] See Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 2nd ed., WBC 19 (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2004), 67, where he notes "'Today' points to the fact that the words were announced on the coronation day, the day on which the divine decree became effective." See also Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Psalms*, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (THOTC) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), Kindle ed. Grogan notes, "At his enthronement ('today') he has been adopted as God's son (cf. 2 Sam 7:14), for his rule is God's gift and he accords him fatherly protection" (45).

[26] Van De Mieroop, *History of the Ancient Near East*, 148.

himself as worthy of kingship through military prowess. [27] It would be through this war, fought with divine sanction, that the son would receive the inheritance. This command seems to serve as a divine commission to conduct wars. Kitchen notes, "Often in antiquity, war leaders sought, or were granted, an act of commission before going to war — and for other major actions such as building temples. Joshua had a visionary visitor (5:13-15); others had their experiences."[28] Since the land of Canaan is consistently referred to in Deuteronomy as an inheritance (cf. Deut 1:38; 10:9; 12:9–10; 15:4; 16:20; etc.) and that book functions as a preparatory speech before a prolonged military campaign (Deut 1, esp. vv. 34–38), there can be little reason to reject this interpretation for a similar event.

There is intensifying parallelism between the cola of verse 9 where the king smashes the nations with a rod, resulting in their breaking like clay pottery. This imagery should not be lost when viewed within the previous context of the first stanza where the nations conspire for rebellion. It was common for covenants to be inscribed on clay tablets, and preserved through baking in a kiln, such as you would find at a potter's house. Braschler points out, "Ancient covenants included where archival copies of the agreement were to be stored on clay tablets, a list of witnesses, a description of the blessings and curses if the covenant was honored or violated, and perhaps an affirming oath and a final ceremony."[29] For the covenant documents to be broken and shattered would be a symbolic act, seen as early as Moses breaking the tablets of the Ten Commandments.[30] Here one may see poetic imagery of the king of Israel smashing the covenants forged between himself and the heathen kings who are currently under subjection in verse 2 and preparing for war.

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[27] Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox), 269–280, Kindle ed.

[28] K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testam*ent (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), Kindle ed.

[29] James Brashler, "God's Covenant with Abraham," *Presbyterian Outlook*, Sep 04, 2017, https://pres-outlook.org/2017/09/gods-covenant-abraham-september-10-2017/.

[30] Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC 2 (Nashville: B&H, 2006), 677.

Stanza 4

So now you Kings be wise,
    Be instructed you judges of the earth!
Serve the LORD with fear,
    And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the son, lest he be angered,
    And you perish in the way
    Because kindled as quickly is his wrath,
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Verse 10

The fourth stanza shows another change of speaker and audience. In verses 10–12, the psalmist now speaks on his own behalf to the Gentile kings who are now considered his and God's enemies. From stanza 3 to stanza 4 there is a progressive development. Since the covenantal relationship between the Gentile kings and Zion's King was decreed by the LORD any rebellion was doomed to futility signified by broken pottery. The plots of the heathens are in vain due to the LORD's special relationship with His anointed king. The Israelite king then counsels the rebels to act wisely and heed the warning of the psalmist. The Israelite King has heard the word of the LORD and has recounted that word to the rebels, lest they should suffer the judgement of being shattered in war. This verse has nearly synonymous parallelism showing the slightest development; they must act wisely and heed the warning. This wise course of action is found by taking the instruction found in verses 11–12.

Verse 11

Since verse 10 served a preparatory command function, it is connected to verse 11 through explanatory parallelism. Verse 11 supplies the instruction which the kings are to hear, finding the wisdom they were exhorted to receive in verse 10. There is progressive parallelism within verse 11; the Gentile kings should serve the LORD willingly, and then rejoice in the LORD through their service. This idea of serving the LORD cannot be divorced from its religious context. The book of Exodus describes Israel's duty to serve the LORD in Exodus 23:23–25. Service is related directly to worship, and proper service results in God's blessing upon Israel's

conquest of the land.[31] This thought is often passed over by commentators, who simply see this as a geopolitical type of service; however, as will be argued below, Psalm 2 must be read in context with Psalm 1, where Torah is pivotal. This was the problem of the heathen kings– they were not submitting to YHWH, and by rebelling against YHWH, they also rebelled against his anointed king. The song then progresses to its end via warning and blessing.

Verse 12

The last verse is linked to the preceding by way of specifying parallelism. Verse 12 describes how the kings of the earth can serve God and rejoice with fear and trembling, denoting a proper respect for a powerful monarch. This service is affected through entering into a proper relationship with the son of God who sits on Israel's throne. Failure to come into an adoring relationship with, denoted by kissing the son, will result in peril since the son's wrath is kindled quickly. Discussing the foreign influences on Israelite understanding of monarchy in his *Introduction to the Psalms*, Gunkel notes, "Any subject granted an audience with the king was said to 'look on the king's face,' a phrase repeated among the Israelites. . . . That subject had to bow before the king as before a god and kiss his feet."[32] The last line of verse 12 is an emphatic mono-colon pronouncing a blessing on those who take refuge in the son of God.[33] This

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[31] John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC 3 (Dallas: Word, 1987), 335–336.

[32] Gunkel, *Introduction*, 108.

[33] Samuel T. Goh notes, "The monocolon refers to a colon that 'does not cohere with another colon in the same sub-section of a poem.' It is not very common, but does occur in Hebrew poetry" (*Basics of Hebrew Poetry*, 16). This lack of occurrence can serve as a contrast as David L. Petersen and Kent Harold Richards point out, "The presence of monocola suggests that parallelism is not the only factor in the creation of Hebrew poetry. While a monocolon does not have a direct relationship to another line, it does provide variation to other units—for example, a bicolon—and thus creates contrast with the more frequent parallelistic structures" (*Interpreting Hebrew Poetry*, 23). See also Wilfred Watson, who describes "the structural functions of the monocolon: it can open a stanza . . . it can close a stanza or poem. . . it can segment a poem into stanzas. . . can mark a climax- a function clearly related to its structural functions" (*Classical Hebrew Poetry* [Sheffield: Bloomsbury], 169–170).

relationship is peculiar. Throughout the psalm, there is an intricate relationship between God as the ultimate cause of the nations' futility in war. This war against the anointed, who is God's agent, results in a divine commission for the Israelite king to effect judgment upon rebels with a rod of iron when his wrath is kindled. If one is to be spared from the son's wrath, they must take refuge in him through joyful submission, where they will find blessing.

Describing the imagery associated with refuge, Ryken notes, "A number of Hebrew words in the OT evoke images of refuge—a place of safety from danger, relief after stress, defense from an enemy, protection from the heat of the sun, overall security. These images incorporate both rocks and fortresses on the one hand and houses or homes on the other."[34] All of these associated images are utilized at times for God, but the idea of a house seems most appropriate for a kingship psalm, since it was the promise of a "house" (2 Sam 7:11, 16), elsewhere described as an "enduring house" (1 Sam 25:28) that seems to apply to the Judean kings. Since taking refuge denotes coming under the roof of a house, this image may allude to the idea of finding blessing by the Gentile king coming under the roof of David's house, i.e., submitting to the Israelite king's authority, which is what was in question in verse one.

Theological Implications for Original Audience of the Individual Psalm

Having completed a brief exegesis of the passage, one can now begin to derive theological themes from the text that the original audience would have been able to discern from the text, as received within its historical context. The first thing that the reader will notice is that the psalmist has posed a question. Though the addressee is unnamed, the reply by God through the oracle implies that God was the ultimate addressee. In this case, this psalm is a prayer, particularly a lament. There are theological ramifications to the concept of prayer. If prayer is made and oracles are received as a response to prayer, then there can be little doubt that God is willing and able to communicate with individuals in some fashion. Furthermore, this prayer shows that in some form or fashion, God answers prayers assuring the faithful of His sovereign plan which has been revealed.

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[34] Ryken et al., *Dictionary*, 701.

In this particular case, prayer serves to comfort those who are distressed by the ungodly.

The question that opens the prayer concerns the kings of the nations, asking why they vainly rage against God and his anointed one. This is the central tension of the lament, that heathen rulers persist in the earth and rebel against God's ordained authority structures. There are two aspects to this section of the lament that are important for theology. The first issue is that there are indeed people, and particularly governmental structures, which rebel against God. The rebellion against the LORD is the first concern, and only after God's interest in the rebellion is stated is that qualified in some form through the following dependent clause "against his anointed one." By referring to the king as the LORD's anointed one, the psalm affirmsthat the Israelite king has been given a distinct prominence among the nations, which includes some measure of penultimate authority as the vice-regent of God, the ultimate authority. Though such discussion of an anointed king has caused people to relate this psalm and those like it to the Messiah, which "was the explanation of the synagogues which no longer possessed Kingship. . ." this paper rightly agrees with Gunkel, that "this group of psalms does not relate to a future king, but to the ruling king."[35]

Through the analogy of antecedent revelation, one can see that this psalm assumes the transfer of the Abrahamic blessing to the monarchy so that "those who bless you will be blessed, and those who curse you will be cursed."[36] Though this retributive theme is appropriate, there is evidence of the royal psalmist's concern about the welfare of these heathen nations. The Israelite king who is serving as a mediator of the Abrahamic covenant is responsible for presenting God's blessings to the nations, having a responsibility to pray for the repentance of ungodly governments as seen in verse 1, mediating direct revelation seen throughout stanza 3, and calling upon them to repent and be reconciled to God through obedience in stanza 4. This repentance is necessary because their rebellious machinations are futile and judgement is sure for the unrepentant. The reason for this

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[35] Gunkel, *Introduction*, 119.

[36] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), Kindle ed., Kindle locs. 1881–1883.

futility is found in stanza 2 where God is shown as sovereign over the ungodly governments.

In the ANE, a king had to prove himself worthy of kingship through military prowess. The process is described by Longman in *A History of Israel*:

> The process would look something like this. First, an individual would be designated by some means for a particular leadership role. Next, the new designee would be expected to demonstrate his status and his prowess by engaging in some feat of arms or military action. Finally, having thus distinguished himself and come to public attention, the designee would be confirmed in his leadership office. [37]

Therefore, if God is King over Israel, He must first be their warrior. This happened at the Exodus, (See Exod 15 and the common refrain, "The LORD is a Warrior!"). This motif runs throughout the Old Testament so that Old Testament theologian G. Ernest Wright is forced to discuss God as a warrior saying:

> A most pervasive Biblical motif is the interpretation of conflict in history as owing to the sin of man, against which the cosmic government and its suzerain [READ KING] take vigorous action. Since so much of history is concerned warfare, it therefore must be expected that one major activity of the suzerain will be the direction of war for both redemptive and judgmental ends.[38]

This right to rule, validated through war, is no different for the Israelite King. An Israelite King must prove worthy of Kingship through their utilization of their divinely given office through judging and avenging God's people. With the heathen nations raging against God and against his anointed one, it must be assumed that there was war and rebellion in the air.[39] As such, it was the role of the king to

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[37] Provan et al., *Biblical History of Israel*, 279–280.

[38] Ollenburger, *Old Testament Theology*, 83.

[39] Peter C. Craigie states, "The nations of the world, their warriors and rulers, are gathering together in an act of rebellion against God and the king. Although it is possible to seek an historical background to the rebellious nations (e.g., in the reign of King Solomon), the psalmist is not necessarily referring to any particular event in history. The language reflects primarily all—or any—nations that do not acknowledge the

execute justice on the rebellious and to maintain the safety of his people, proving his right to rule.[40] However, this psalm is clear that this battle would not be the result of the king's prowess as assumed throughout the ANE, but would be the result of God's act on His son's behalf.

Theologically, there is also an element of mercy and justice. Notice in verses 4–5 that there is a progression. The LORD does not immediately judge the nations for their wicked rebellion. Instead, keeping with his character of being "merciful and gracious, longsuffering" (Exod 34:6), He delays his judgment in verse nine until after he has given them multiple forms of warning. This is also why there is an element of warning in the psalmist's reply; there is still time for the rebellious Gentile kings to repent.

Theological Implications for the Original Audience of the Psalter

There has been much discussion about the composition of the book of Psalms.[41] "However, in recent Psalms studies, a new emphasis is being placed on the broader context for interpreting a psalm in connection with other psalms that surround it in order to render a more accurate picture of what the psalmist meant. This new development is a welcome addition to treatment of the book of

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primacy of Israel's God, and therefore of Israel's king. Thus, the verses contain a reflection of the opposite to a theological ideal. The ideal was that of a world in which all nations and kings recognized the kingship of God and his appointed sovereign; the reality was seen anew in each coronation, that such was not the case. Foreign nations would act violently against Israel's king and in so doing would be rebelling against divine rule" (*Psalms 1-50*, 65–66). Grogan alludes to a similar issue, though in the time of David (*Psalms*, 44).

[40] Botha notes this same sentiment as a continued theme throughout the Psalter, particularly in book 4, after the psalmist poses the question in Psalm 94 of "who will oppose the wicked and the evildoers, Psalm 101 offers an emphatic answer. His earthly representative will do it! In this way, he himself will wipe them out through his anointed" (Phillipus J. Botha, "Psalm 101: A Supplication for the Restoration of Society in the Late Post-Exilic Age," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 [August 19, 2016]: 8).

[41] Howard, "Recent Trends," 329–368.

Psalms."[42] Many interpreters have asserted that Psalms 1–2 serve as an introduction to the entire Psalter.[43] However, some like Kaiser, have separated the rest of the contents of book 1 from Psalm 1–2. Instead, it seems preferable to keep Psalms 1–2 with the entirety of book 1, serving a dual-introductory purpose. As such, Psalm 2 should be read in light of Psalms 1 and 2 since in agreement with Palmer Robertson, there must be some sort of "intentional development of order and theme" since there are "deliberate groupings with similar form, substance, or author" which "attest to an intentional arrangement at more than one point during the five-hundred-year history of the creation and collection of the various psalms."[44]

Psalm 1 discusses the two ways, that of the wicked who pursue iniquity and sin, and that of the righteous who meditates on God's law day and night. Psalm 2 serves to evince a contrast between the righteous ruler installed by God, and the wicked rulers, who rebel against God and his ordained governmental structures. Psalm 3 continues this theme by evincing a singularly wicked ruler who ironically came from within David's own house and rebelled like the gentile kings from whom he descended (Absalom's maternal grandfather being Talmai, King of Geshur, 2 Sam. 13:37). As such, Psalm 2 displays God's ultimate sovereignty over the geo-politics of the nations, and his strategic placement of a particular King of Davidic descent so that no rebellion is achievable. Through Psalm 2, the preservation of the anointed King's life is assured against the machinations of wicked would-be usurpers.

This message of preservation would be of critical importance for the audience of the Psalter. It is accepted that the Psalter would have

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[42] Walter C. Kaiser, "The Structure of the Book of Psalms," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 174, no. 693 (January 2017): 3.

[43] Botha states that these two psalms were "composed and edited by exponents of wisdom teaching to reflect two possible responses to the invitation of Wisdom in Proverbs 1. Psalm 1 was composed to represent the correct, positive, and accepting response to the warnings and invitations in Proverbs 1:10 and 15. Psalm 2, on the other hand, in its present form, reflects on the futility of a rejection of this invitation by the rulers of the world and reports on the amused response of Yahweh in the role of a wisdom teacher" (Botha, "Psalm 101," 7).

[44] O. Palmer Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms: Discovering their Structure and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015), 50.

been found in its final form, or closely thereto, before the Hasmonean dynasty and after the exile.[45] In the days of the exile, the Davidic dynasty was removed from rule, as the Israelites were consistently dominated by foreign rule, with no real hope of a Davidic restoration. This lack of a Davidic candidate for Kingship resulted in the general acceptance of the Hasmonean dynasty shortly after the composition of the psalter. By turning to Psalm 2, the post-exilic audience could cast their hope in God's חסד, believing and hoping that he would fulfill his unconditional covenant to David and eventually bring an heir to the throne who would overthrow the wicked nations which had oppressed Israel so violently. When that משח arrived, the nations would do proper obeisance, granting him god-like fealty, or suffer his wrath. However, the goal of Psalm 2 was not simply to raise Israel to a place of political prominence but ultimately to bring these nations under the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant as they blessed the Abrahamic nation, his chosen seed, and by so doing serve the LORD (v. 11). Though this might seem to contradict the early agreement with Gunkel, this is not the case, it is a refinement which distinguishes the author's original intention with that of the final redactor of the book of Psalms and his intended audience.

Synthesis of New Testament Employment

Due to space limitations and the notorious difficulty of defining allusions, this study will limit New Testament employment to those quotes and allusions of Psalm 2 in the Gospels and Acts. The discussion will locate the quote/allusion, and then discuss its rhetorical effect within the story, and the intended effect on the audience.

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[45] Evidence for this being that the kingship psalms continue to be limited to a Davidic ruler and not the Hasmoneans. See Gunkel, *Introduction*, 99, 112, and 119. Certain Psalms such as 89 and 137 are clearly exilic or post exilic. For agreement to this assessment, see Kaiser, "Structure," who argues for a purely messianic referent from the Davidic line.

Synoptic Employment

The synoptic gospels have limited references to the second psalm in the NT by way of direct quotation. However, the employment of these quotations seems to be quite emphatic since both instances come directly by way of the audible command of the Father concerning the Son to an audience. The first instance of Psalm 2's employment is found in the passage that describes Christ's baptism (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; and Luke 3:22). All three of these biblical narratives, describing the same event, show the Father publicly recognizing Jesus as his son. While Matthew seems to have a different wording for the direct speech, Luke and Mark align more closely with the direct speech of the Father being directed to Jesus instead of the crowd by using Σύ instead of Οὗτος as in Matthew. This makes little difference in the meaning of the text, since the semantic effect, due to an audible proclamation in a public setting, still leaves the crowd with an authoritative divine witness to Christ's unique relationship to the Father before the start of his public ministry. This divine approval and authorization is something Christ will refer back to in his disputations with the Pharisees (see John 5:32–37). The entirety of the quotation seems to have conflagrated two distinct OT passages, Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. Discussing this effect, Blomberg notes, "The conjunction of the two allusions is especially significant inasmuch as at least a segment of pre-Christian Judaism apparently took both as messianic (cf. 4Q174 1 I, 10–14 with Tg. Isa. 42:1). Together they reflect the heavenly Father's understanding of Jesus' dual role: one day a kingly messiah, but for now a Suffering Servant—both appropriate to his unique identity as the divine son."[46]

The second allusion in the synoptics appears at the transfiguration (see Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; and Luke 9:35). Blomberg notes well the similarity in semantic function when he describes this passage by commenting that, "As at Jesus' baptism (see Matt. 3:17), a heavenly voice refers to him by alluding to Ps. 2:7 and Isa. 42:1, combining allusions to his roles as messianic king and Suffering Servant (17:5b)." However, Blomberg goes too far when he asserts that, "The

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[46] Craig Blomberg, "Matthew," in G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 14.

additional charge, 'Listen to him,' alludes to Deut. 18:15 on heeding the prophet like Moses."[47] Though this allusion to Deuteronomy may not be inappropriate, Blomberg should have also noted how the phrase "Kiss the Son lest he be angry" found in Psalm 2 denotes the same type of obeisance owed to the divine son-king as was noted above in this papers commentary on verse 12. This section is especially pertinent considering this comes between Jesus' first and second passion prediction in all three synoptics. This conflagrated quotation, twice repeated at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (baptism) and a new stage in his ministry (after public confession of Messiahship by the disciples in Matthew 16:21–33, Luke 9:18–22, and Mark 8:27–33) seems to then serve as an introduction of the nature of Christ's ministry in the first instance (baptism) and a correction to the disciple's common messianic expectations in the second instance (transfiguration). These messianic expectations are evinced through Peter's chastisement of Christ for the first passion prediction, (see again Matthew 16:21–33, Luke 9:18–22, and Mark 8:27–33). It has been well documented that second temple Judaism expected a conquering Davidic Messiah, and not a suffering Messiah, and this divine validation should have served as confirmation of Christ's understanding to his ill-informed disciples.[48]

Acts Employment of Psalm 2

The writer of Acts quotes Psalm 2 twice and provides some necessary insight into Psalm 2, which is absent from the original text. It is especially noteworthy that both quotations (Acts 4:25–26 and 13:33) appear in evangelistic contexts, once by Peter praying for boldness when the authorities attempted to silence his witness, and once by Paul, at the beginning of his public preaching ministry to the Gentiles.

The first quotation appears in Acts 4:25. Before this section, the Spirit has descended upon Christ's disciples, empowering them for ministry, and the church was growing in drastic proportions. A short time later, Peter and John were walking into the temple, where they were conducting their regular Jewish duties and their Christian

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[47] Ibid., 55.

[48] Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 411–412, 419–420.

preaching ministry, when they encountered a lame man. Peter healed the lame man and began preaching Christ to the witnesses. Upon seeing this healing and preaching, the Pharisees were upset, and they arrested Peter and John and they took counsel together. Luke recounts the event, where the Pharisees took counsel together concerning their next steps at the trial asking each other, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name" (Acts 4:16–17). Peter and John returned to the disciples and explained the day's events, causing the believers to pray. Luke recounts the situation:

> And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,
>
> "'Why did the Gentiles rage,
> and the peoples plot in vain?
> The kings of the earth set themselves,
> and the rulers were gathered together,
> against the Lord and against his Anointed'? (Acts 4:24–26)

As the disciples pondered their next steps, seeking counsel together, they began to do so by prayer. This is something noticeably absent from the Jewish high council which immediately preceded this pericope. This implicit contrast should probably be more discussed than it has to date. It should also be noted that this is the first occurrence of the church proper praying the psalms, a practice still employed with benefit to this day, and to be heartily commended.[49] Nevertheless, it is apparent that the NT church saw the psalms as a source of comfort among tribulation, and a book to be utilized in prayer.

This employment of the second psalm is actually quite ironic when compared to the second psalm in isolation from the psalms

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[49] N. T. Wright. *The Case for the Psalms* (New York: HarperOne, 2013), 1, Kindle ed.

surrounding it. This passage does a better job in the English version of pointing out the identity of the rebellious participants in Psalm 2. The rebels were Gentiles, whom Luke goes through great pains to show as being a source of contention in the early church due to Jewish national identity during the second temple period. But here, it seems that the disciples have placed the Jewish leadership in the same category as the Gentiles because of their raging and plotting against Christ through the crucifixion and subsequent actions. Though the second psalm in isolation seems to imply that it is Gentile nations that would reject the son, a canonical-contextual reading of the psalter will actually show the same irony in the movement from Psalm 2 to Psalm 3. God hears the prayer of the disciples, and answers it affirmatively, granting them their petition for boldness; this would seem to agree with the context of the second psalm that was not quoted. In Psalm 2, the psalmist turned to the Gentiles after receiving his oracle from God and counseled them to fear God, and to submit to the Davidic ruler. This is the same situation that will be lived out for the rest of the book of Acts; God has heard their prayer, responded with an oracle (particularly the shaking of the room and filling of the Holy Spirit in v. 31), and allowed them to continue "to speak the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

Theological Implications for New Testament Audiences

As the NT writers found Psalm 2 in the original documents, some 20–30 years after the facts, they were reading a piece of literature that was interpreting history through the lenses of theology.[50] Each of the Gospel writers wrote for a specific audience, whether it was Matthew seeking to disciple a Jewish audience from the Scriptures of Christ's status, Luke's attempt to affirm the testimony which Theophilus had heard, or Mark's goal to deliver a gospel to those suffering persecution that they might continue to defend the faith that was entrusted to them.[51] These unbelievers

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[50] Köstenberger and Patterson, *For the Love of God's Word*, 198.

[51] For Matthew's Jewish audience, Carson and Moo use the term "catechize" for Mark's audience's struggles with Jewish persecution (*An Introduction to the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005], Kindle ed., Kindle locs. 3327 and 3466. Luke's audience, explicitly named in the text, does not need substantiation in this author's view, but to

were in need of seeing Christ's status as a way of invoking them to faith. Psalm 2 served the purpose of historically attesting to the divine affirmation of Christ's status in the gospel in the presence of witnesses, many of whom were named and known. Since Christ was revealed to be the divine Son and the ultimate Messiah of prophetic annunciation, though admittedly different than second temple expectations, then the readers had only one reasonable response, "kiss the Son lest he be angry and consume you in his wrath."

For the at-risk believer, perhaps Theophilus, and most assuredly much of Mark's audience, the psalm served a different purpose, like that of Peter's need in the Gospel. They needed a corrective lens that would allow them to see that suffering precedes exultation as part of God's divine economy. Psalm 2's affirmation of Christ's sonship, bracketed by predictions of his suffering, would have told the fledgling church that suffering in this life does not negate the plan of God or diminish the status of his servants.

The book of Acts was completely limited to Theophilus, presumably a high-ranking Gentile official (though this is debated). By seeing the ironic employment of Psalm 2 in Acts, and reading the rest of Luke's argument, he could begin to see how the Jewish nation had now turned into the heathen rebels which they had long counted the Greeks. He would also learn from the context of Psalm 2 that there was hope for Gentile rulers just like him if they would submit to the divine authority of the Son of God. However, should one choose not to submit there was an implicit dire warning, He would return, and there would be violence. The day was, and indeed is still yet, coming when the Davidic King Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Son of God, will rule over all of the earth, and that this rule will be brought about through violent ends. Until the day of Christ's return, his followers like Matthew, Mark, Luke, Peter, and Paul must busy themselves commanding the rebels to act wisely through serving God through submission to Jesus Christ.

As the king of the universe, God is worthy of service.[52] God as King has appointed humans to serve as vice-regents over creation,

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validate the likelihood of Theophilus being a high-ranking official, see Carson and Moo, Kindle loc. 4783.

[52] Kaiser describes Psalm 2 noting that "rebelling against Yahweh's kingship is an exercise in futility" ("Structure," 6).

and within the human race, other authority structures have been given for man's good. Goldingay notes this well when he shows how the Gentile authorities must react wisely to God's revelation when he says, "First, they will serve Yhwh with reverence. It does not come naturally to leaders to serve —indeed, it is a contradiction. How can a leader be a servant? But leaders have to see themselves as standing in a chain of command in which they are not at the top. They serve God, and thus they lead with reverence."[53] Jesus exhorted the same sentiment among his followers in Matthew 20:26.

Any form of rebellion like that offered by the kings is vanity, worthless, futile, and invites the chastisement of God which will strike like an iron rod. We best serve God through submitting to the authorities he has ordained, in a hierarchal structure. This includes both the Davidic ruler God has sent in Jesus Christ, but also those governmental authorities whom Christ's representatives have charged the Christian with submission to since there be no authority except that which is appointed by God (Rom 13).

Theological Implications for the Church

The world continuously rages against the Davidic ruler, now revealed as Jesus Christ. Historical and current events make this painstakingly apparent.[54] Christians are consistently martyred and imprisoned in communist and Muslim countries,[55] and are increasingly censored in the Western world for what is deemed exclusivist hate speech.[56] Jesus warned his disciples of this very

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[53] John Goldingay, *Psalms: Volume 1, Psalms 1-41*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, ed. Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 102.

[54] Historical events can be seen from instances such as the Roman empire's persecution of Christians until Constantine, and again after the fall of the empire when Augustine was forced to write the *City of God*. For discussion on early events such as these see Everett Ferguson, *Church History.*

[55] For a discussion of persecution amongst believers see *The Voice of the Martyrs* at http://www.persecution.com/.

[56] One example includes Kim Watterson, Reed Smith, and Catherine Roper, "Preacher Prosecuted for Anti-Homosexuality Speech," *ACLU Pennsylvania,* July 22, 2019, https://www.aclupa.org/en/cases/preacher-

thing (John 15:18–20). The rebels have taken counsel together in attempts to cast off the dominion of the Messiah in the past and will continue to do so by various means throughout the future (see Rev 16). Furthermore, through the ironic placement of Psalm 3 and the similar ironic employment in Acts 4, one can see that the rebellious raging heathens are no longer limited to ethnic distinctions, but will arise from Gentile and Jew alike (see Rom 9:6). As such the Christian walks in a world that is hostile to Christ, and his servants, and they should pray to find comfort, find hope in the coming restoration of the Davidic kingdom in the eschaton, and seek to turn the rebels towards repentance.

The reason that the Christian is able to find hope is because the machinations of the wicked are ultimately vain. God is in sovereign control, and as the ultimate sovereign, he has delivered the kingdom over to Christ (see Matt 28:16–18; 1 Cor 15:24–28; Rev 20:1–15, etc.).[57] A time of reckoning is coming when Jesus the Messiah will reign from Mount Zion.[58] Upon Christ's return and the consummation of the kingdom, he will set up his rule and reign, smiting all the wicked for their rebellion in a violent display of justice.[59] This element of justice is often passed over in Christian circles as Ollenburger has pointed out:

> Since so much of history is concerned warfare, it therefore must be expected that one major activity of the suzerain will be the direction of war for both redemptive and judgmental ends. That is the major function of the suzerain will be understood to be his work as Warrior. Yet in our time no attribute of the Biblical God is more consciously and almost universally rejected than this one. The reason is that theologically we are unable to keep up with our emotional attitudes toward war. The latter are so shocked by the savage horror of war that it is most difficult to see any positive good in this type of conflict. . . .

prosecuted-anti-homosexuality-speech; others include the common workplace restraints against proselytizing.

[57] Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 605.

[58] For Zion as a referent to Jerusalem, see Grogan, *Psalms*, 44. For Jesus' future reign from Jerusalem, see Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 1129.

[59] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1058.

As a result, the Bible on this subject is simply dismissed, or at best treated in the most simplistic and superficial manner. Jesus and the New Testament portray love and the God of love, while the God of the Old Testament, especially the God of Joshua is another deity altogether, or at least a lower, more primitive understanding of deity.[60]

Though the thought may be uncomfortable, the warfare of God has been on full display throughout the biblical account from the judgment upon the wicked, whether it be Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19), the original inhabitants of Canaan (Joshua, *passim*), the revenge promised up Edom (Obadiah), the judgment effected upon Assyria (Nahum), and even the chastisement set upon God's own covenant people which the final compiler of the Psalter understood all too well (Numbers; 2 Chron 36:15–21). This same element of war is promised in Revelation 19. Though it makes some uncomfortable, wishing to see only the "meek and lowly" Jesus of love, to make Christ into our own likening, as opposed to that which he has revealed himself in Scripture, is to form an idol. Do not be fooled, for "the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise . . . not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (1 Pet 3:9); therefore his people should act like the psalmist encouraging the rebellious to find blessing by taking refuge in the King. By properly divulging this essential truth, one may find their evangelism more effective since Jude says that the Christian must seek to "save some with fear" (Jude 23). Those who have taken refuge in Jesus, however, will receive the divine blessing promised beforehand, and it is to that end that the Christian hopes (Rev 22:12–14).[61]

Conclusion

Psalm 2 has had its message and contents analyzed repeatedly. This particular Psalm seems inexhaustible for purposes of Christian edification, and this treatment was a limited sampling of the value that can be gleaned by studying the Psalms theologically. As such, it should be noted that sound exegesis must proceed theology, and theology should be done methodologically, starting from the text, and moving in ever increasing concentric circles (clause, sentence,

[60] Ollenburger, *Old Testament Theology*, 83.

[61] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1952.

pericope, etc.).[62] This article has sought to show how a biblical theology of the Psalm can be derived by practicing a strict method moving from the Psalm, to the Psalter, to the Old Testament, and finally to the entire Christian corpus. By practicing this methodology, it is believed that some value was found in seeing the irony employed in the canonical shape of the psalter, as well as the employment in Acts, and the rhetorical effect in the Gospels. By moving through the process one step at a time, and not simply imposing a Christian interpretation on the text, the reader should have been able to glean more theological nuance than offered through an alternative method. Particularly, the psalm showed the intercessory work of the Davidic King in light of political oppression and offered grace through repentance to the rebels as a result of the king's prayers.

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[62] Walter C. Kaiser and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), Kindle ed., Kindle loc. 6791.

The Comfort of the Cross: Romans 8:31–39 and the Religious Problem of Evil

Jared Twigg

Abstract: Romans 8:31–39 reveals a critical part of the biblical answer to the suffering Christian who feels abandoned by God. Although a believer may logically understand God's all-powerful and all-loving nature, personal suffering can leave the believer feeling as though God does not care. However, when a believer comprehends the depth of God's love as demonstrated at the cross, he can feel comforted knowing that the God who loves the believer enough to give his own Son will never abandon him. Paul highlights this truth through a combination of compelling rhetorical devices and skillful structuring of the text, notably the often-overlooked chiasm in Romans 8:35–39. These elements of Paul's writing, when properly understood, allow greater access to the comfort he points to in the cross.

Keywords: Problem of Evil, Romans, Chiastic Structure, Psalm 44, Suffering

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Introduction

Kenneth Boa and Robert Bowman identify what they suggest is the greatest challenge laid against Christianity by unbelievers: "Ask ten non-Christians at random to give two objections to the Christian faith, and very likely nine of them will mention what is known as the problem of evil: How is it that there is evil in the world created by an all-powerful and all-loving God?"[2]

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[2] Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith,* 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 43. Though Boa and Bowman claim this question appears as only one of six major questions facing apologetics, they

The occurrence of inexplicable and seemingly preventable evils appears to disprove the existence of the Christian God by creating a logical quandary that presents an obstacle to faith. This struggle is often viewed as intellectual in nature, a logical problem attempting to affirm two ideas that appear mutually exclusive. Christians, recognizing such biblical doctrines as man's sin nature and creation's corruption, may seem impervious to the doubt-fueling power of this "problem of evil." They possess a very logical answer to a very logically oriented problem. However, the power of the believer's logical answers appears to wane when the question of suffering becomes personal to him. Though "having all the answers," a Christian personally experiencing pain and suffering faces tremendous emotional struggles, sometimes resulting in serious questions regarding God's nature and character.

But why is this so? If there are good explanations for why evil exists—if the biblical answers to the problem of evil allow one to logically maintain belief in a good God—why, then, do the logical solutions to the problem of evil often fail to help the Christian facing personal suffering? Why does a reminder of creation's curse seem to do so little to soothe the grief of a believer who has lost a loved one? Why does a reminder of the fall fail to dull the pain of a Christian finding himself the victim of another's sin nature?

"The" Problem of Evil

It is because the specific problem of evil the suffering Christian is facing is not a *logical* problem requiring an explanation: it is an *emotional* problem requiring comfort. That is to say, the problem of evil is multi-faceted. This observation about the multi-faceted nature of the problem of evil is a central focus of the thought-provoking volume by John Feinberg entitled *The Many Faces of Evil*. As a man quite capable of reciting the biblical truths addressing the *logical* problem of evil, Feinberg discovered the multi-faceted

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suggest, "This is probably the number one objection to the Christian faith." The other challenging questions by unbelievers that are highlighted in their volume include: "Why should we believe in the Bible?" "Don't all religions lead to God?" "How do we know that God exists?" "Aren't the miracles of the Bible spiritual myths or legends and not literal fact?" and "Why should I believe what Christians claim about Jesus?" (ibid., 42–44).

nature of "the" problem of evil when his wife received an unexpected and devastating medical diagnosis. In his volume, Feinberg recalls how this painful event moved him to a more nuanced view of "the" problem of evil:

> I came to what for me was a very significant realization. All my study and all the intellectual answers were of little help because the religious problem of evil [Feinberg's term for the problem of evil when suffering becomes personal] isn't primarily an *intellectual* problem. Instead, it is fundamentally an *emotional* problem![3]

The so-called "religious problem of evil" takes place on a personal level. While the logical problem can be abstract and distant, the religious problem is concrete and near, resulting from one's own personal experience with suffering. As Feinberg helpfully explains, the religious problem of evil "arises from a particular instance of suffering and evil that someone is actually experiencing. Faced with such affliction, the sufferer finds it hard to reconcile what is happening with his beliefs about God's love and power."[4] In other words, the religious problem of evil is not when a person questions belief in God's existence in light of the existence of evil (i.e., the logical problem of evil); the religious problem of evil is when a person is faced with the emotional aftermath of personally experiencing some sort of evil in his own life. This emotional aftermath can come in the form of grief, confusion, despair, resentment, anger, a sense of abandonment, and a host of other emotional responses as the believer struggles with the pain that comes from facing personal suffering.

However, just as Scripture provides intellectual answers to the *logical* problem of evil, Scripture also sufficiently provides comforting reassurance to those facing the more personal *religious* problem of evil. This is an important observation to make: biblical truths addressing the logical problem of evil will do little for the

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[3] John S. Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil,* rev. ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 454 (emphasis added).

[4] Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 21.

Christian dealing with the religious problem. Scripture responds to the logical problem of evil by offering the theological resources necessary to provide an *explanation*; Scripture responds to the religious problem of evil by offering the theological resources necessary to bring *comfort*. This article explores one key text's contribution to the comfort Scripture offers suffering Christians facing the religious problem of evil. Romans 8:31–39 offers comfort to believers by exploring fresh perspectives on their suffering that are made possible by the cross.

Romans 8:31–39 and the Religious Problem of Evil

Suggesting that Romans 8:31–39 contributes to the biblical solution to the religious problem of evil may come as a surprise. It is natural to simply view this passage as Paul's concluding thoughts on his grand exposition of the gospel of Christ. Of course, Paul himself makes it clear that the thoughts of 8:31–39 are part of the preceding discussion of the gospel. In the opening verse of this unit (8:31), Paul uses the demonstrative "these things" (ταῦτα) in a rhetorical question ("What shall we then say to these things?") to logically connect 8:31–39 to the gospel exposition coming before. While commentators readily recognize this logical connection between 8:31–39 and the preceding context, the question of just how much of the preceding exposition Paul has in mind when referring to "these things" in 8:31 has produced some debate. As Moo points out, some have seen the pronoun as referring only to the immediately preceding verses (perhaps 8:28 or 8:29–30) while others suggest that ταῦτα reaches back to the beginning of the letter.[5] Moo himself takes a position between these two extremes, suggesting that the language and content of 8:31–39 are so similar to that of 5:1–11 that these final verses of chapter eight therefore represent Paul's conclusion of the section of his argument spanning 5:1–8:39.[6] Schreiner agrees, suggesting that

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[5] Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 537–538.

[6] Ibid., 538. Specifically, Moo points to the themes of "the love of God in Christ for us and the assurance that that brings to us; of the certainty of final vindication because of the justifying verdict of God; and of how these great forces render ultimately impotent and unimportant the tribulations of

the similar language between chapters five and eight forms an inclusio in Paul's argumentation.[7] Seeing Paul's "these things" of 8:31 as a more sweeping reference, Dunn suggests "8:31–39 serves to sum up the *whole argument* to this point."[8] He continues, "It is not simply that there are a number of echoes and verbal allusions to the earlier chapters … but vv 31–34 in effect bring us back to the point reached at the beginning of chap. 3: there the heavenly trial scene with God's faithfulness to Israel having to be defended; here the same trial scene with God's faithfulness to his own being celebrated."[9] The interconnectedness of Paul's logical movements from the opening of the letter up through chapter eight supports Dunn's more inclusive identification of the referent for ταῦτα. The "these things" of 8:31 are, therefore, the "gospel things" Paul has been discussing from 1:16 onward. Seeing Romans 8:31–39 as the conclusion to Paul's grand exposition of the gospel from 1:16–8:30, therefore, is an accurate reading of the logical progression of Paul's letter up to this point.

However, while Romans 8:31–39 does indeed continue Paul's focus on the theme of the gospel, it also focuses on the additional subject of the religious problem of evil. Throughout most of chapter eight, Paul continually makes reference to the subject of evil and the

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this life." There is no doubt that strong thematic ties exist between chapters 5 and 8.

[7] Thomas S. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 458. Even if the argument presented by Moo and Schreiner could provide certainty that Paul considers 8:31–39 as specifically concluding the segment begun in chapter five, the very fact that chapter five begins with the inferential conjunction οὖν indicates that the division between 4:25 and 5:1 is soft at best. Demonstrating this unbroken flow of thought between chapters four and five, Dunn comments that 5:1 "is clearly Paul's recapitulation of the exegetical conclusion, reached in 4:22, and its extension to all who believe, in 4:23–24" (James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*. WBC, 38A [Dallas: Word, 1988], 262). In other words, chapter five is so integrally connected to what precedes it that the conclusion in chapter eight still obtains some level of logical connection with chapters 1–4, even if 5–8 is seen as a distinct unit.

[8] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 499 (emphasis added).

[9] Ibid.

suffering resulting from it.[10] Paul addresses how the believer suffers with Christ (8:17), how Christian suffering does not compare with the hope of future glory (8:18), how the Fall subjected the world to suffering-producing corruption (8:20), how the believer suffers while anticipating the future redemption of his body (8:23), how the Spirit aids the believer in his suffering (8:26), and how God uses all of the believer's experiences, including suffering, to conform him to the image of Christ (8:28–30). While Romans 8 continues Paul's thematic emphasis on the Gospel of Christ, the chapter also thoroughly explores the theme of suffering (i.e., the problem of evil).

The theme of suffering so prevalent in Romans 8 is carried through to the final unit of the chapter, the passage being examined

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[10] It has been suggested that Paul's focus on the problem of evil in Romans does not begin in chapter eight but instead permeates his discussion of the gospel from a much earlier point in the letter. Erwin Ochsenmeier, in his thesis entitled "Mal, Souffrance et Justice de Dieu selon Romains 1–3: Étude Exégétique et Théologique," (*Tyndale Bulletin* 59, no. 1[2008]: 153–154) seeks to demonstrate that the problem of evil pervades the whole of Paul's letter to the Romans. Ochsenmeier correctly observes that "through the centuries, many who have dealt with the issue of evil and suffering have at some point interacted with the Epistle to the Romans (Augustine, Leibnitz, Moltmann, Ricœur, etc.). But such dialogue is often limited to parts of the Epistle after Romans 4" (Ochsenmeier, "Mal, Souffrance," 153). This limitation, argues Ochsenmeier, is a mistake as evil and suffering are introduced from the very outset of the book's argument (ibid., 154). It is quite possible that the neglect of the problem of evil in the early chapters of Romans is due to the tendency to oversimplify the problem of evil. As mentioned in the introduction to this article, the problem of evil is complex and presents *several different* problems, not just one. It could be that a consistent failure to recognize this complexity has prohibited readers of Romans from seeing just how prominent the problem of evil is within this letter. At first glance, for example, the problem of moral evil (evil committed by mankind) is strikingly prominent in the opening chapters of Romans, whereas the problem of natural evil (evil resulting from creation's curse) does not receive Paul's attention until chapter eight. To truly discover all that the Bible addresses regarding "the" problem of evil, Feinberg's observations regarding the multi-faceted nature of "the" problem of evil must first be recognized.

in this article, Romans 8:31–39. That suffering is still on Paul's mind in this final section of the chapter is evident by the second rhetorical question opening the passage: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (εἰ ὁ θεὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, τίς καθ' ἡμῶν;). Paul's raising the possibility of an adversary, one who is "against believers," indicates that his focus on the problem of evil continues. As the passage progresses, this continued focus on suffering and the problem of evil becomes even more evident through Paul's vivid vocabulary. Words like θλῖψις ("affliction"), στενοχωρία ("distress"), διωγμός ("persecution"), λιμός ("hunger"), γυμνότης ("nakedness"), κίνδυνος ("danger"), μάχαιρα ("sword"), and θάνατος ("death") indicate that 8:31–39 serves as more than just Paul's concluding thoughts on the subject of the Gospel of Christ—Paul wants to talk about the problem of evil too.

The question then arises, how is the subject of Christian suffering a fitting conclusion to Paul's exposition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? How do these topics of the Gospel and suffering relate? Addressing suffering in the conclusion of his Gospel exposition hints at Paul's anticipation of a question facing the believer confronted with the religious problem of evil: "If I am the object of God's love, what am I to make of the suffering that fills my life?" Having just expounded on God's loving provision for man's salvation, Paul focuses his conclusion on addressing this glaring paradox between his theological claims and his readers' practical experience. Rather than soften his theological claims, Paul reiterates them, demonstrating a crucial connection between Christ's death on the cross and the Christian's suffering. As Seifrid points out, "The structure of [Paul's] argument shows, the gospel speaks *especially* to believers in their sufferings" (emphasis added).[11] Far from creating an intellectual problem for the believer ("If God loves me, then what of suffering?"), it is the cross event, specifically, that provides the emotional resources necessary to confront the religious problem of evil brought on by personal suffering.

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[11] Mark A. Seifrid, "Romans," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 633.

The emotional comfort offered by Paul in Romans 8:31–39 centers on his affirmation of the believer's security resulting from Christ's substitutionary death on the cross. Paul's exposition of the gospel here culminates in the assurance the believer can enjoy regarding his relationship with God. This, of course, is a necessary comfort since suffering confronts the believer with the religious problem of evil and can raise questions in his mind regarding his standing with God (e.g., the question noted above, "If I am the object of God's love, what am I to make of the suffering that fills my life?"). Scholars consistently recognize the comforting theme of the believer's security—a security resulting from the cross—as the thematic focus of this textual unit. Moo calls Romans 8:31–39 a "beautiful . . . celebration of the believer's security in Christ"[12] while Hullinger extends this point, claiming that the Christian's security is the entire chapter's "great theme."[13] Bruce summarizes the passage as affirming that "nothing can come between [God's people] and his love–not all the trials and afflictions which they have experienced or may yet experience."[14] And Dunn, more poetically, says Paul "sustains the crescendo [of 8:26–30] in a purple passage of praise that what God has already done in and through Christ has established a bond of love which cannot be broken."[15] Security, inseparability, and an unbreakable bond are just some of the ways scholars have described this paragraph where Paul offers comfort to the suffering believer on account of the cross.

As mentioned above, Romans 8:31–39 offers comfort to believers by exploring fresh perspectives on their suffering that are made possible by the Cross. First, Paul explains that the cross provides objective evidence that God does not withhold any good thing from believers (8:31–32). Second, the cross gives believers confidence that despite suffering in this life their future is secure

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[12] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 537.

[13] Jerry M. Hullinger, *New Testament Life & Belief: A Study of History, Culture, & Meaning* (Winston-Salem, NC: Piedmont International U, 2014), 361.

[14] F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 169.

[15] Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 497.

(8:33–34). And third, the cross assures believers that seasons of suffering are not indicators of God's abandonment (8:35–39). Each of these perspectives will be explored in turn.

God Does not Withhold any Good from Believers (8:31–32)

Paul first comforts believers experiencing suffering by reminding them that God's gift of his own Son provides objective evidence that God does not withhold his goodness from believers. This comforting truth is an elaboration on Paul's basic point in 8:31–39 that "God is for the believer" (8:31b). This "for-ness" is proven in the cross which itself demonstrates the amazing extent of God's "for-ness." Paul helps his readers understand that God has already demonstrated his limitless love by giving his own Son. Thus, if God has already given the supreme gift of his own Son, will he withhold any other (lesser) good thing from believers? This comforting question is raised in the opening two verses, Romans 8:31–32.

The overarching point of Romans 8:31–39 is introduced in the form of a compound question: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν πρὸς ταῦτα; εἰ ὁ θεὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, τίς καθ᾽ ἡμῶν;). The first half of this question transitions the argument of Romans 1–8 to a conclusion. Paul uses the deliberative future verb ἐροῦμεν to ask his reader what else, considering the beauty of the Gospel just expounded (1:16–8:30), needs to be said regarding the gospel of Christ.[16] The second half of this compound question explains Paul's logic: what else needs to be said since "God is for us" (ὁ θεὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν)? With this compound question, Paul transitions his exposition of the gospel to this concluding unit and introduces the unit's primary thought: since God is for us, no one can succeed against us.

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[16] The deliberative future, according to Wallace, "asks a question that implies some doubt about the response. . . . The force of such questions is one of 'oughtness'—that is, possibility, desirability, or necessity" (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 570). Necessity seems to be in view here. Once the fact of God's "for-ness" is established, what more really needs to be said to demonstrate the believer's security?

Paul's affirmation that "God is for us" is not mere theological optimism; rather, Paul's comforting thought finds grounding in the objective evidence offered in the historical event of the Cross. Having stated plainly "God is for us," Paul moves to explain the basis for this assertion in the following verse (8:32). The entirety of verses 32–34 might be considered as elaborations on this basic point that God is "for the believer." Though Paul's use of asyndeton[17] throughout the paragraph allows for several possible descriptions of his flow of thought, the basic logical sequence of ideas is as follows:

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[17] Asyndeton, of course, is the rhetorical device whereby an author moves from sentence to sentence without including conjunctions explicitly stating the logical relationships between his thoughts. Commenting on Paul's use of this device in 8:31–39, Moo suggests the asyndeton lends the text "a solemn and elevated style" (Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 539). Wallace confirms the use of asyndeton to produce such stylistic effect: "Asyndeton is a vivid stylistic feature that occurs often for emphasis, solemnity, or rhetorical value" (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 658). Bullinger adds, "When the figure *Asyndeton* is used, we are not detained over the separate statements, and asked to consider each in detail, but we are hurried on over the various matters that are mentioned, as though they were of no account, in comparison with the great climax to which they lead up, and which alone we are thus asked by this figure to emphasize" (E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968], 137). Bullinger's point may apply here. It is possible that to demonstrate the force of his point, Paul attempts to make an overwhelming case in 8:31–34 as he leads up to the climax of 35–39 where he exclaims that believers are "more than conquerors" and "nothing can separate them from God's love."
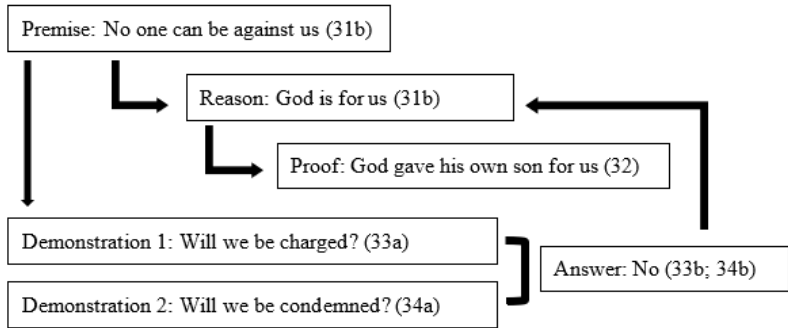
Premise: No one can be against us (31b)

Reason: God is for us (31b)

Proof: God gave his own son for us (32)

Demonstration 1: Will we be charged? (33a)

Demonstration 2: Will we be condemned? (34a)

Answer: No (33b; 34b)

Chart 1: Logical Flow of Romans 8:31b–34[18]

No matter the specifics in the logical connections among Paul's statements, it is certain that the Cross obtains a position of centrality in this passage of Scripture. It is this Cross event—an objective historical reality—that Paul points to as the basis of his confident assertion that "God is for us" and therefore no one can be "against us."

Paul does not simply provide objective proof of God's disposition toward believers; he seeks to demonstrate emphatically the *extent* of God's commitment to believers. To what extent is "God *for* us?" Paul answers this question with another question. Paraphrased, Paul asks, "Will the God that gave us the supreme gift of his own Son withhold any lesser good thing from us?" Paul opens the rhetorical question with a relative clause describing the identity of the God who is *for* us. He is the God "who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all" (8:32a). Paul makes certain that the supremeness of the gift is not lost on his reader. Not only does he place emphasis on the gift by the fronting of the direct object "his own Son" (τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ[19]), but

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[18] For an alternative explanation of the logical flow of the text, see Schreiner, 456–457. In his analysis, Schreiner divides the text into two main sections, 8:31–32 and 8:33–39. In the first section, 8:32 is seen as the evidence of the truthfulness of 8:31 (paralleling the logical scheme presented in this paper). In the second section, Schreiner sees the three questions of 8:33, 8:34, and 8:35 as presenting the implications of Paul's main thesis, ὁ θεὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν (Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998]).

[19] The genitive case of the direct object is not grammatically significant. It is merely the result of the lexical conditioning of its

he also describes Christ in emphatically personal language (i.e., "his own" along with the familial reference "son") highlighting the intensely personal nature and supremacy of God's gift *for* man.[20] The translation of the phrase τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ οὐκ ἐφείσατο offered by BDAG captures the emphatic tone: God "did not spare his very own son."[21]

Rather than spare his very own Son (note Paul's use of the emphatic disjunctive ἀλλά), God "delivered him up for us all." The fronting of the prepositional phrase "for us" (ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν) reminds the reader that Paul has not left his main topic of God being "for us" introduced in the previous verse (8:31). He instead reinforces that claim by grounding God's "for-ness" in the objective proof of the cross. If efficiency of communication were Paul's only concern, the clause has now become needlessly long. For Paul to first explain what God did not do ("spare his own Son") only to immediately move on to what he did do ("deliver him up") is unnecessarily verbose (i.e., if God "spared not his own Son," then clearly, He "delivered him up"). But efficiency of verbiage gives way to Paul's prioritization of rhetorical effect. By starting with the negation ("spared not"), Paul forces his reader to consider what God could have but did not ultimately do. The effect is to bring greater emphasis to God's willful choice, his "delivering up," as it is juxtaposed to the alternative he acted against, his "sparing." As sublime as this thought may be, however, it ultimately functions merely to support Paul's grander point: having given us the supreme gift of his Son, "how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (πῶς οὐχὶ καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα ἡμῖν χαρίσεται;). It is not the sacrificial death of Jesus that becomes central to Paul's thought but the *implication* of that supreme

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governing verb φείδομαι (cf. Acts 20:29; Rom 11:21 (2x); 1 Cor 7:28; 2 Cor 1:23; 2 Pet 2:4, 5).

[20] Moo sees the qualifier ἰδίου as serving to distinguish Christ from his other children, believers, alluded to in 8:14–16. "Calling Christ God's 'own' Son distinguishes him from those many 'adopted' sons that have come into God's family by faith" (Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 540).

[21] Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BDAG)*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000), 467.

gift that he asks the reader to consider.[22] If God willingly "delivered up" the supreme gift of "his own Son," then what does this say about his disposition toward the believer?

In a greater-to-lesser argument, evocative of the rabbinical interpretation strategy of "light and heavy" (קל וחומר), Paul declares that God's willingness to graciously give (χαρίζομαι) his own Son implies that it would be utterly absurd to assume that God would then keep any lesser good thing back from believers. To assume otherwise would be to completely misunderstand (or thoughtlessly fail to consider) the supreme value of the Son to the Father.

Paul's question—"How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—has produced some debate among scholars. Specifically, differences arise regarding the identification of the referent of Paul's "all things" (τὰ πάντα). Scholars do agree, based on the context as well as the governing verb χαρίσεται, that τὰ πάντα refers to *good* things. However, different views emerge when attempts are made to identify the more specific nature of what good things Paul has in mind. Dunn interprets the term as solely referring to an eschatological reality. Noting that Paul's use of the phrase τὰ πάντα typically refers to all of creation, Dunn concludes,

> What seems to be envisaged is a sharing in Christ's lordship … over 'the all'… Christ again being understood as the one who fulfills God's mandate for man (Ps 8:6), but precisely as the head of a new humanity who share his sonship and his devolved authority. The χαρίσεται is therefore a genuine future, looking to the final completion of God's original purpose in making man."[23]

Moo allows for the possibility of Dunn's interpretation but ultimately adopts a more inclusive approach: "Certainly Paul's focus is on those things necessary for our salvation; but, as with 'the good' in v. 28, we should not restrict the meaning to salvation as such but include all

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[22] This interpretation is reinforced by Paul's use of an implied conditional clause. In Wallace's taxonomy, the implied conditional statement of 8:32 falls under the evidence-inference category (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 683). Pragmatically, in such a construction, the author submits the evidence *in order to move to* the inference. In other words, the inference, not the evidence, is of primary importance.

[23] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 502.

those blessings—spiritual and material—that we require on the path toward that final salvation."[24] However, it is possible that both of these attempts to identify Paul's τὰ πάντα obscure the point. Though Moo's more inclusive interpretation is closer to what Paul intends to convey, both he and Dunn weaken Paul's point with the unnecessary quest to specify what Paul has left unspecified.

The emphasis on a concrete identification of what Paul means by "all things" distracts from Paul's *rhetorical* point. Paul is not trying to tell his readers what they might also get in addition to Christ; rather, his point is to draw attention to the *implications* of what God has *already given* in Christ. In other words, Paul's primary point is not to identify what God will give believers along with giving his Son; Paul's primary point is to emphasize the fact that God's giving his own Son is demonstrable evidence that no good thing will be withheld from believers. Borrowing an English idiom helps communicate Paul's rhetorical point: "Seeing God has already given

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[24] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 541. Like Moo, Schreiner takes the inclusive approach but offers two interesting arguments to support this interpretation. While Schreiner does not disagree with those who see an eschatological significance to the τὰ πάντα of verse 32, he suggests it is better to view the phrase as all-inclusive. Schreiner cites two reasons for his conclusion (Schreiner, *Romans*, 460–461). His first reason comes from the repetition of the phrase in the surrounding context (vv. 28 and 37). Schreiner suggests that to understand the τὰ πάντα of verse 32, one must look at Paul's intended scope of the same phrase in these surrounding verses. Schreiner notes the all-encompassing nature of these uses: "The good experienced [v. 28] is ultimately eschatological, but all things experienced in this age—including sufferings per the emphasis from 8:17–18 [and, of course, the idea of suffering is paralleled in vv. 35 and 37]—are for the benefit of believers" (ibid., 461). Schreiner's second reason comes from another of Paul's letters where a parallel is made between the τὰ πάντα of 8:32 and the same phrase in 1 Corinthians 3:21–23 where Paul tells the Corinthians, "All things are yours." Schreiner bases his connection primarily on the repetition of several key words between the two texts: life, death, things present, and things to come. Noting the similarities, Schreiner essentially concludes that Paul articulates basically the same thought in both passages. And, since τὰ πάντα is not limited to the eschatological in the Corinthians context, Schreiner concludes that no such limitation should be applied in the Romans context either.

us his very own Son, is any other lesser good gift off the table?"
Mounce seems closest to maintaining emphasis on this rhetorical
point: "Since God did not spare his own Son but delivered him over
to death for us all, will he not along with this gracious gift also lavish
upon us everything else he has to give?"[25] Mounce comes closer than
Moo (despite their similarities) in that his minimalist interpretation
allows Paul's rhetoric to carry its full weight. Unpacking the
particulars of τὰ πάντα is of little importance to this rhetorical point.
God has already given what might have been considered too precious
to give; since that gift was not withheld, cannot the believer, along
with that supreme gift, expect all other good things?

Grasping Paul's point has the power to radically change the
believer's perspective on suffering and offers a significant
contribution to the comfort offered in Scripture to those personally
experiencing some evil in their lives (i.e., experiencing the "religious
problem of evil"). While it is tempting in moments of pain and
suffering to question God's love, Paul's reminder should give the
believer great pause. When considering the fresh perspective made
possible by the cross, is it fair to question God's love, even in times
of suffering? Seasons of suffering are sometimes viewed as God
withholding some good thing from the believer. What if the believer's
definition of "good," sometimes clouded as it is by his limited
perspective, has strayed from God's definition of "good"? For,
returning to Paul's point, is it not absurd to believe that the God who
has already given his very own Son would choose to withhold some
other lesser good from his children? Recognizing this fresh
perspective comforts the believer with the reassurance that God
withholds no genuine good from his own. The supreme gift of his
own Son is proof.

Despite Suffering in this Life, the Believer's Future is Secure (8:33–34)

Paul's second comforting perspective on suffering, appearing in
8:33–34, is a reminder that no matter the believer's experiences in

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[25] Robert H. Mounce, *Romans: An Exegetical and Theological
Exposition of the Holy Scripture NIV Text*, NAC 27 (Nashville: B&H,
1995), 190.

this life, his future is secure on account of the cross. In these verses, Paul moves his readers to consider their ultimate security in Christ demonstrated at the final judgment. That Paul's questions in 8:33–34 refer to the final judgment is regularly recognized by scholars. Dunn, for example, confidently asserts, "Clearly envisaged [in Paul's questions posed in 8:33–34] is the final judgment scene at the close of history."[26] Likewise, Schreiner agrees noting that both of Paul's questions in these two verses look forward to the eschatological judgment day.[27] In exploring the believer's ultimate security, Paul raises then answers two questions: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" (8:33) and "Who is he that condemneth?" (8:34). Through the repetition of two key prepositions, κατά (8:33) and ὑπέρ (8:34), Paul reminds his readers that he is continuing to elaborate on his original premise in 8:31: "If God be for (ὑπέρ) us, who can be against (κατά) us?" Thus, Paul seeks to comfort believers by demonstrating the ultimate significance of the cross at the final judgment. While the cross does not spare believers from experiencing the evils of life on earth, the more pressing and ultimate concern of eternal suffering poses no threat on account of Christ's work on the cross.

To comfort believers with the reminder of their ultimate security, Paul invites his readers to view the final judgment through the lens of the cross. Because of the fresh perspective offered by the cross, the various parties present in the final judgment scene presented in 8:33–34—God, the believer, and Christ—take on new identities. These new identities are explored by Paul in order to comfort believers with a vivid reminder of their security at the final judgment.

Paul's first question (and its subsequent answer) focuses on the identities of both God and believers: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." This first question demonstrates the believer's security against any possible charges leveled against him at the final judgment. Paul's question emphasizes this ultimate security of the believer in two ways: through his designation of believers as "the elect of God," and through his emphasis on God as the one who "justifies." When the identities of

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[26] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 502.
[27] Schreiner, *Romans*, 462.

both the accused and the Judge are considered, the impossibility of successful charges against the believer and the believer's ultimate security become evident.

First, Paul identifies the accused—believers—as "God's elect" (ἐκλεκτῶν θεοῦ), a group whose final destiny is already secure. Moo correctly notes that Paul's identification of the defendants as the "elect" intentionally refers back to the so-called "golden chain" of 8:28–30 where the elect are guaranteed future glorification. Thus, Moo observes, "This manner of designating Christians [as the "elect of God"] in the question itself is the only answer required."[28] When considering the identity of the accused—"God's elect"—the absurdity that charges against these defendants would ever hold becomes clear. Paul demonstrates the believers' security in the final judgment with a reminder of who they are. The fact that the accused are not merely "the elect" but are "God's elect" is especially significant seeing that it is God who sits as Judge.

Having drawn attention to the defendants' identity as "God's elect," Paul continues his demonstration of the believers' security by reminding them of the identity of the Judge. While Moo's observation, noted above, is correct—that the wording of Paul's question offers its own answer—Paul nonetheless goes on to plainly state that answer for his readers: the one presiding over the trial— God himself—is "the one who justifies." Paul essentially asks, "Who can successfully bring charges against the believer if the Judge presiding over the case has already justified the accused?" The answer, of course, is obvious. The judge has declared the defendant righteous; no one can successfully bring charges against God's elect.

While Paul's first question demonstrating the believer's security in the final judgment emphasized the identities of the defendants ("God's elect") and the Judge ("God that justifieth"), the second question demonstrating the believer's security in the final judgment focuses on the identity of the defendants' advocate—the exalted Christ. Paul asks, "Who is he that condemneth (ὁ κατακρινῶν)?" Though this question differs slightly from the previous question,

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[28] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 542. For an alternative explanation of the significance of the designation ἐκλεκτῶν θεοῦ, see Dunn's exposition which views the term as Paul's attempt to establish continuity between Israel and the Church (Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 502–503).

Paul's vocabulary in both 8:33 and 8:34 indicates that the two questions are strongly related. Paul has not here moved on to a different point. This has been observed by Moo, who sees 8:33 and 8:34 as a single basic thought. Because "'condemn' [κατακρινῶν] and 'justify' [δικαιῶν] are natural contrasts," Moo suggests Paul's question in 8:34 should "be seen as an additional rhetorical response to the statement in v. 33b that it is God who justifies."[29] In other words, the answer to Paul's question in 8:34 elaborates on his answer to the question posed in 8:33. Paul uses the question of 8:34 ("Who is he that condemneth?") to focus on Christ's role in the security of the believer. God indeed justifies (8:33), but he does so on account of the believer's exalted advocate (8:34). Having discussed two parties in this final court room scene—God and believers—Paul now moves on to the third and final party: the exalted Christ.

Paul describes Christ's role in the believer's security by emphasizing his post-resurrection ministry of intercession carried out from his exalted place at God's right hand (8:34b). While Paul focuses on Christ's death for believers in 8:32, his focus here shifts to the fact that Christ is now a living advocate for believers. As Seifrid observes, "Paul here [in 8:34b] continues the thought of 8:32, where he describes the God who 'delivered up' his 'very own son.' While there [8:32] he speaks of Christ's death, here he lays emphasis on Christ's resurrection: 'who died, *rather* [μᾶλλον δὲ] who was raised'" (emphasis added).[30] Thus, as Paul discusses Christ's role in this future courtroom scene, strong emphasis is placed on the fact that this is the Christ who now lives. If a believer can find comfort in Christ's death, as Paul argued in 8:32, the believer must also know that he can find comfort in Christ's life as well (8:34).

The clauses making up 8:34b move in a progression that culminates in Paul's highlighting Christ's role in this final courtroom scene. Moo correctly observes this progression: "The enumeration of actions [listed in 8:34] accomplished by, and through, Christ occurs in ascending order, with the emphasis falling on the last in the series."[31] In other words, 8:34b explains that not only has Christ died, but he has also risen; and not only has he risen, but he has also been

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Seifrid, "Romans," 635.

[31] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 542.

exalted; and not only has he been exalted, but from his exalted position he now advocates to God "for us" (note, once again, the repeated prepositional phrase emphasizing the point of the passage: "God is *for us*," cf. 8:31).

When discussing Christ's role in the courtroom, Paul carefully notes the power of the believer's advocate by describing him as being "at the right hand of God." This phrase "at God's right hand" is more about Jesus' identity than his location. This becomes clear when recognizing the OT significance of the phrase as it pertains to the Messiah. As Moo has observed, the reference to God's δεξιᾷ, echoing the language of Psalm 110, "indicates that Jesus has been elevated to the position of 'vice-regent' in God's governance of the universe."[32] It is this vice-regent who approaches the Father on behalf of believers. There could be no higher advocate and the implications are tremendous. Not only does δεξιᾷ point to the position of power held by Christ, but the very fact that God himself exalted Christ to this position also carries strong implications for the success of his advocacy. God's exaltation of the advocate bodes well for the accused. Dunn notes the point well: "The success of [Christ's] advocacy over that of any challenge is assured, since his resurrection and exaltation to God's right hand was God's own doing, the mark of God's own authorization and approval of those he represents."[33] Thus, this final courtroom scene must not be misconstrued as God reluctantly hearing the appeals of an interceding Christ—God himself elevated Christ to the position from which he now advocates on the believer's behalf. With an advocate like this, there is no chance charges against the believer will succeed. There is no chance the believer will be condemned.

The cross thus offers comfort by speaking to the believer's ultimate concern. While seasons of pain and suffering come and go over the believer's time on earth, his final security is never in question. At the final judgment, because of the cross, no charge will stand (8:33), and no condemnation will occur (8:33). Paul demonstrates this ultimate security through powerful reminders of the identities of those present in this final courtroom scene: the

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[32] Ibid., 542–543.

[33] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 511.

defendants are "God's elect," the Judge is "the one who justifies," and the advocate intercedes from his exalted position at "God's right hand." This reminder of the believer's final security puts suffering into perspective. As Paul wrote earlier in the chapter, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (8:18) (emphasis added). Amid seasons of pain that come and go in the believer's life, there is the possibility of a transcendent peace that comes from the assurance of the believer's final security. This is yet another comforting perspective on suffering enabled by Christ's work on the cross.

Seasons of Suffering are not Indicators of God's Abandonment (Rom 8:35–39)

Having discussed in 8:33–34 the comfort offered by the cross regarding the believer's final judgment, Paul shifts his attention in 8:35–39 to his readers' more immediate concern—the suffering in this life and its potential to produce uncertainty. Here, Paul anticipates the possible question from his reader: "If I truly am secure in my relationship with God, what am I to make of the suffering I continue to experience in this life?" Moo observes this shift in Paul's focus:

> In vv. 35–39, Paul expands the picture [of judicial vindication discussed in the preceding verses] by adding to our assurance for the 'last day' assurance for all the days in between. Not only is the believer guaranteed ultimate vindication; he or she is also promised victory over all the forces of *this* world. And the basis for this many-faceted assurance is the love of God for us in Christ.[34]

In making this shift, Paul now demonstrates the comfort offered by the cross in how it addresses the uncertainty that sometimes results from suffering.[35]

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[34] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 538–539.

[35] Regarding the nature of the shift between 8:31–34 and 8:35–39, Schreiner sees it as a simple shift in imagery where a new figure, a relational figure, is used in 8:35–39 to buttress the very same point illustrated with the legal figure used in 8:31–34. He writes, "Verses 35–39 employ the relational language of love rather than the forensic terminology of the law court (as in vv. 33–34), but they make the same essential

Paul's primary point in 8:35–39 is to comfort the believer by reminding him to align his perception of his suffering with the reality of the cross. Experiencing inexplicable suffering can cause the believer to wrongly perceive that he has been abandoned by God. Feinberg powerfully attests to the temptation the believer faces to entertain notions of divine abandonment in the midst of personal suffering: "The deeper fear and pain is that God is no longer there. It doesn't matter how much you have sensed God's presence in your life before. [In a moment of personal suffering], he seems absent. And when you know that he is the only one who can do anything about your problem, it is especially painful to sense his absence."[36] However, when viewing suffering from the perspective of the cross, the believer can know that his "sense" of God's absence is indeed only a "sense" and does not reflect his reality. This is the comfort Paul offers in 8:35–39.

The Structure of Romans 8:35–39

To see that Paul here intends to confront perception with reality, it helps to first observe the structural device Paul uses to make this point. Though commentators consistently fail to identify its structure, Romans 8:35–39 appears as a chiasm containing three sets of antithetically paired statements—A B C C′ B′ A′—which are illustrated in the chart below. The lack of commentators identifying this chiasm should rightly bring scrutiny to this claim. However, there is significant evidence supporting the observation that Paul's pairing of the lines making up 8:35–39 is intentional. The verbatim lexical repetition between lines A and A′, the grammatical parallels between lines B and B′, the complementary nature of the contents of both the A A′ and B B′ pairs (i.e., question raised, question answered), and the fact that Paul uses chiasmus to structure the concluding lines of the

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point…. The God who is for us will see to it that we are never severed from his love" (Schreiner, *Romans*, 459). Moo's observation is more helpful: while 31–34 affirm the believer's security in the eschaton, 35–39 affirm his security over and against the adverse circumstances and powers faced in the human experience.

[36] Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 451.

second major literary unit of this letter, chapters 9–11,[37] are all factors indicating that Paul here uses this special structuring device to help make his point. It is when this device is identified that Paul's main point—that the believer's perception does not always match his reality—can be clearly identified and properly understood.

A (35a) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

B (35b) shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

C (36) As it is written, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

C′ (37) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

B′ (38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, (39) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,

A′ shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Chart 2: Chiastic Structure of Romans 8:35–39

Identification of the chiastic structure housing 8:35–39 helps the reader to identify Paul's main point by drawing attention to the

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[37] Just as chiasmus is used here by Paul to close the major unit of chapters 1–8, Paul uses chiasmus again to close his next major structural unit, chapters 9–11. The chiasm at the end of chapter eleven, identified by Lund, occurs in 11:33–35 (cf. N. W. Lund, "The Presence of Chiasm in the New Testament," *The Journal of Religion* 10, no. 1 [1930]: 74–93]). Here, Lund identifies an A B C D D′ C′ B′ A′ structure with the three attributes of 11:33a (riches, wisdom, and knowledge) being paired with their corresponding questions in 11:34, 35. The focal point of this chiasm consists of the two clauses in 11:33b focusing on God's "judgments" and "ways."

centrally paired statements, C C′. Scholars generally agree that when chiasmus is employed, the structure's central statements identify the primary focus of the textual unit. As Man observes, "The presence of either a single central or of two complementary central elements in the structure … generally [highlights] the major thrust of the passage encompassed by the chiasm."[38] In the case of 8:35–39, this observation by Man would place Paul's emphasis on the paired statements labeled C C′ in the chart above. Thus, verses 36–37 should be seen as providing the focal point of 8:35–39 because of their central position within the chiasm. In these paired statements, Paul quotes Psalm 44:22 (C) then immediately follows with a statement of his own (C′). These paired statements, connected by the strong disjunctive ἀλλά (consistently rendered in English translations with the negative "no"), thus form the crux of the entire subunit. Identifying the chiastic structure of 8:35–39 helps to identify the main point appearing in 8:36–37.

In addition to highlighting Paul's primary point, the use of chiasmus also aids the reader in better understanding the point being made. Because each statement in the chiasm appears as part of a pair, the meaning of each statement must be understood by examining it along with its paired line (e.g., A is considered alongside A′, etc.). Again, as Man notes, chiasmus includes "the presence of complementary pairs of elements, in which each member of a pair can elucidate the other member and together form a *composite meaning*" (emphasis added).[39] Thus, identifying the chiastic structure housing 8:35–39 not only helps to identify the main point of the text (8:36–37), but it also helps the reader to better understand that point by recognizing the importance of discovering the composite meaning of the centrally paired statements C and C′. The meaning of 8:37 (C′) must be understood in light of its relationship with 8:36 (C).

Slaughtered Conquerors?

Noting the characteristics of chiasmus helps, then, to explain the seemingly odd pairing of 8:36–37. The A A′ pairing makes sense:

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[38] Ronald E. Man, "The Value of Chiasm for New Testament Interpretation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141, no. 562 (April 1984): 147–148.

[39] Ibid., 148.

Paul asks a question (8:35) then answers the question (8:39b). The B B′ pairing makes sense: Paul makes a list (8:35b) then negates a complementary list (8:38, 39a). The central pairing (C C′), however, is less straightforward. Paul quotes a psalm lamenting the inexplicable defeat and subsequent suffering of God's people (8:36) and then follows with the seemingly contradictory claim of Christian victory (8:37). In 8:36, Paul's quotation of Psalm 44 characterizes believers "as sheep for the slaughter"; however, in 8:37, Paul claims believers are "more than conquerors"? This jarring change of tone leads Stewart to ask, "How can believers be put to death as slaughtered lambs *and* be 'more than conquerors'?"[40] Some commentators avoid the question and merely paraphrase the text— that believers are conquerors even in the midst of their afflictions.[41] But such a claim demands further explanation as it fails to explain the paradox of "slaughtered conquerors." One can begin to address Stewart's question by considering Man's observation noted above: to properly understand the author's intended meaning, the nature of the relationship between the paired lines of the chiasm must be properly examined. When considered *together*, the "composite meaning" of the paired statements comes to light as the nature of the relationship between the lines is discovered.

The relationship between the A B C and C′ B′ A′ pairs of the 8:35–39 chiasm is one of contrast. The contrastive relationship between the paired statements is made clear by Paul's use of the disjunctive ἀλλά (translated "Nay" in the AV) to introduce the second half of the chiastic structure. While chiasms can pair together statements that are basically synonymous (i.e., A is synonymous with A′, B is synonymous with B′, etc.), the chiasm of 8:35–39 follows a

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[40] Tyler A. Stewart, "The Cry of Victory: A Cruciform Reading of Psalm 44:22 in Romans 8:36," *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 39 (emphasis added).

[41] Cf. C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985], 211; see also Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 544. Moo offers some speculation that the verb's υπερ- prefix possibly suggests a return to the theme of 8:28 by indicating "that believers not only 'conquer' such adversities; under the providential hand of God, they even work toward our 'good'" (ibid.).

different pattern where chiasmus is used to pair statements *antithetical* to each other. In both types of chiastic structures, synonymous and antithetical, the interpretive key is to consider how the author's pairing of the statements contributes to his point. Again, as Man observes, "The elements paired off with each other in a chiastic structure may be parallel either in a synonymous or an antithetical way, and the placing of such elements opposite each other in the structure serves to *strengthen* the comparison or the contrast"[42] (emphasis added). Applying this insight to the chiasm in 8:35–39, the expositor can observe that Paul seeks to strengthen his primary point—found in the centrally paired statements of 8:36–37—through contrast.[43] Thus, if the statements of 8:36 and 8:37 appear to conflict with one another, that is because this is precisely Paul's goal. To make his point that believers are "more than conquerors" (8:37), Paul first readily acknowledges that the believer's *perception*, based on the believer's own experiences of suffering, stands in stark contrast to this theological *reality* (see Chart 3 below).

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[42] Man, "Value of Chiasm," 148 (emphasis added).

[43] Lund, an early pioneer in the study of chiasmus within the New Testament, also recognizes the chiasm's use of demonstrating a shift in ideas suggesting this is a "feature which is prominent in chiastic arrangements" (Lund, N. W. "The Presence of Chiasmus in the New Testament," *The Journal of Religion* 10, no. 1 [January 1930]: 85). He describes this common form of structuring as "a sudden shift from one idea to its opposite when the center [of the chiasm] is reached" (Lund, 85). That the chiasm of Romans 8:35–39 incorporates a dramatic shift from the first half to the second is demonstrated by several grammatical and lexical features within the text. The first half of the chiasmus of 8:35–39 focuses on uncertainty. Then, the center of the chiasm marks the "sudden shift" toward a triumphant tone in the text.

EXPERIENTIAL PERCEPTION	**A**	(35a) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
	B	(35b) *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
		C (36) As it is written, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."
THEOLOGICAL REALITY		**C′** (37) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.
	B′	(38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, (39) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,
	A′	shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Chart 3: Antithetical Pairings in Ro. 8:35–39

The Perception of Abandonment

The primary point of the antithetical pairing of the statements in 8:36 and 8:37 is to demonstrate that the believer's perception of God in the midst of suffering does not always match the reality of the situation. To make this point, Paul quotes Psalm 44:22 (MT 44:23), a lament by an OT saint distraught over his own experiences of inexplicable suffering. The psalmist graphically describes his plight, likening himself and others within the covenant community to lambs being led to the slaughter. In the midst of his suffering, the psalmist found himself feeling abandoned by God.

Commentators' explanations of the significance of Paul's quotation of Psalm 44:22 vary greatly (if the question is even addressed at all).[44] At one extreme, the quotation is viewed as basically superfluous to the argument, a digression from Paul's otherwise logically ordered statements. This position finds representation in Moo, who calls the appearance of the psalm "something of an interruption in the flow of thought," though Moo ultimately concludes that Paul's interruption is by design "for he is constantly concerned to show that the sufferings experienced by Christians should occasion no surprise."[45] However, Moo's view is not common, and others see Paul as in some way supporting his acknowledgement in 8:35 of the suffering experienced by believers. Cranfield views the quotation as Paul's attempt to contextualize Christian sufferings as "nothing new or unexpected, but have all along been characteristic of the life of God's people."[46] And Dunn views the quotation as stressing that suffering, mentioned in some of its various concrete forms in 8:35, is endless ("all the day") and typical of the human experience (his explanation of the figurative phrase "as sheep for slaughter").[47] This sampling from scholarship demonstrates the variety of ways in which commentators have addressed the significance of Paul's OT citation. However, these explanations do not seem to fully explore the significance of the quotation's original context.

Psalm 44 records the agonizing prayer of a suffering saint confused by God's apparent indifference toward his situation. The psalm can be divided into four stanzas. The psalm begins with a stanza reflecting on God's gracious intervention on behalf of Israel's forefathers (Stanza 1, 44:1–8). The optimistic faith-filled language of the opening stanza turns bleak, however, as the psalm sharply changes to a description of God's apparent abandonment of his people (stanza 2, 44:9–16). Israel is suffering, and God seems far

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[44] Bruce, for example, merely describes the contents of the psalm making no attempt to explain its significance within Paul's flow of thought (*Letter of Paul*, 170).

[45] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 543–544.

[46] Cranfield, *Shorter Commentary*, 211.

[47] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 512.

away. God's apparent abandonment, claims the psalmist, cannot be the result of punishment because Israel has been obedient to God (stanza 3, 44:17–22). And so, the psalmist makes one final shift as he articulates his request for God to change his behavior toward his people from neglect to intervention on their behalf (stanza 4, 44:23–26). Psalm 44:22, then, appears as the final verse of stanza 3, a stanza that explores the innocence of the suffering author, his confusion over his suffering, and the perceived indifference of God toward that suffering. Any explanation of the significance of Paul's quotation must take this context into consideration: Paul is quoting the cry of a saint who perceives that his suffering is the result of inexplicable divine abandonment.

It is possible that the variety of views regarding Paul's quotation of this psalm is due, in part, to some ambiguity regarding the prepositional phrase that opens the first line of the verse. The opening prepositional phrase, עָלֶיךָ, could be taken as denoting cause ("because of you") or perhaps advantage ("on behalf of, for the sake of, for you").[48] If it is interpreted as in some sense denoting advantage, then the sense here is that Israel's persecutors (the heathen nations?) were the ones "leading them to the slaughter" (an interpretation that may accord well with stanza 3's focus on Israel's righteous behavior, e.g., 44:17–18, 20–21). However, as Goldingay correctly points out, no verses in the psalm indicate that Israel's plight was caused by persecution, but the psalmist does affirm that "they [the Israelites] are being killed because of God, because of God's action (vv. 9–14) and/or because God ignores their plight."[49] It does not appear to much matter, therefore, whether the prepositional phrase introducing Psalm 44:22 (MT 44:23) indicates cause or advantage. The underlying premise of Psalm 44 is that the psalmist feels abandoned to inexplicable suffering (cf. stanzas 2 and 3). Whether the suffering was due to God's direct cause (surely insinuated in the poem's second stanza) or because God failed to intervene when Israel's enemies "killed them all day long" (cf. 44:10; MT 44:11), the psalmist was certain God was not acting on Israel's behalf. He was asleep (44:23;

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[48] Cf. Ronald J. Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax,* 3rd ed, revised by John C. Beckman (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007), § 291, 295.

[49] John Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89,* vol. 2 of *Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 47.

MT 44:24) and Israel's inexplicable suffering was perceived as a strong indicator that God was not acting according to his "covenant faithfulness" (חֶסֶד).[50] In short, in light of his inexplicable suffering, the psalmist perceived that God had abandoned his people Israel.

It is this abandonment, perceived by the psalmist in his suffering, that Paul assures will not take place in God's relationship with the Christians to whom he writes. While the Christian experiencing inexplicable suffering may, like the author of Psalm 44, perceive God's abandonment, this is only ever a perception—a feeling—and does not reflect reality. Christians have entered an unbreakable relationship with God based on Christ's work on the cross. And it is the unbreakable nature of the relationship that Paul reinforces when assuring readers that nothing can "separate" (χωρίζω) them from the love of God in Christ (8:35, 39).[51] Stewart notes the relational nature of this verb: "In both the Gospels and Paul, χωρίζω refers to severing the most intimate of human relationships in 'divorce'.... Thus, when describing 'separation' from Christ's love, Paul is describing a broken relationship."[52] It is this breaking of the relationship that Paul assures his readers can never take place. Though the believer may feel abandoned in the face of suffering (just as the psalmist had felt abandoned by God), nothing has changed in the Son-giving God's disposition toward him (just as God's covenant with the psalmist's community was still in full effect despite the suffering they faced).

To be clear, Paul does not promise that there will never be *feelings* of abandonment. Paul's quotation of the lament psalm makes this perfectly clear. Israel was in a relationship with God and had every reason to think, based on the covenant, that if they were right with him, he would intervene on their behalf when a threat would arise. But they *were* right with him and yet he seemed nowhere to be found. Craigie summarizes the psalmist's situation well:

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[50] The psalmist concludes his prayer with this plea: "Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' [חֶסֶד] sake" (Ps 4:26; MT 44:27).

[51] In addition to his use of the word χωρίζω, Schreiner suggests that the repeated use of the word ἀγάπη (vv. 35, 39 and the cognate verbal form in v. 37) also gives a strong relational emphasis to the subunit (Schreiner, *Romans*, 459).

[52] Stewart, "Cry of Victory," 43.

> The real sense of perplexity finally emerges explicitly in vv 18–23 [stanza 3, the stanza affirming Israel's innocence]. If the king and the nation had failed miserably in their covenant obligations to God, then at least their defeat in battle would be explicable. But they had not been unfaithful; they had maintained their integrity in the covenant relationship…. According to their understanding of the covenant theology, God should have been with them and given them victory; instead he had crushed them.[53]

It was their inexplicable suffering that made them feel separated from God. The psalm, however, does not affirm that the apparent separation, seemingly evidenced by Israel's suffering, was the actual situation; the psalm merely records the author's *perception* of the situation—God *felt* far away. Reading the psalm in the larger context of scripture shows a discord between the psalmist's perception and the theological reality. God's faithfulness to his covenant remained even though the psalmist felt abandoned. At this point, the relevance of Paul's quotation of Psalm 44 in his passage affirming the believer's security in Christ should be quite clear: Paul here acknowledges, through the concrete illustration of the psalmist's lament, that suffering can lead to perceptions of a sort of separation from God's love.

Just as the psalmist's perception did not match the reality of his situation, so Paul encourages his readers with the same thought. The feeling of God's abandonment, prompted by the experience of undeserved suffering, does not accurately reflect the spiritual reality. Observing the juxtaposition of the lament with Paul's confident reassurance thus demonstrates the value of interpreting the paired thoughts of the chiastic structure together. One can more clearly see that while Paul is certainly responding to the question and list of 8:35,[54] the primary point of the C C′ pair is to contrast the *perception* of abandonment (8:36) against the *reality* of victory (8:37). It may feel as though affliction is evidence of God's absence or uninterest (C; 8:36), but (ἀλλ᾽) this feeling does not reflect reality because ὑπερνικῶμεν διὰ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος ἡμᾶς (C′; 8:37). It is at this point,

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[53] Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50,* WBC 19 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 334.

[54] Schreiner takes this position (*Romans*, 464).

8:37, that the major antithetical shift, marked by the disjunctive ἀλλ᾿, occurs in the chiasm. Paul moves from uncertainty and despair resulting from faulty perception (8:35–36) to the triumph and confidence of the theological reality so emphatically declared in the climactic word ὑπερνικῶμεν.

The Reality of Victory

What exactly does Paul mean when he claims that believers are "more than conquerors"? It is all good and well to suggest that 8:36 reflects the believer's perception in times of suffering while 8:37 reflects his reality. But the fact remains that Paul has already acknowledged the very real (religious) problem of Christian suffering (cf. 8:35). There will be, according to Paul, seasons of tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and the sword. To revisit Stewart's question, in what meaningful way could a people afflicted with such problems be said to be "prevailing completely"?[55]

Commentators have offered various explanations for Paul's claim of victory. Mounce suggests that the victory Paul claims refers to the believer's Christ-empowered ability to endure the trials of life. He writes, "It is the love of Christ that supports and enables the believer to face adversity and to conquer it. Christians … are victors who have found from experience that God is ever present in their trials and that the love of Christ will empower them to overcome all the obstacles of life."[56] Dunn's view offers a similar interpretation: "Christ's love enables the believer to transcend [the experience of evil in this life] even when toiling in the thick of it. In all these eventualities and circumstances, even in the midst of them …, Paul and his readers were conscious of a love which enabled them to rise above and triumph over them all."[57] The definition that Dunn and Mounce seem to offer is that believers are victorious over afflictions in this life as they, through meditation on Christ's love, patiently endure their suffering. However, it appears Paul has something more objective in mind.

The meaning of ὑπερνικῶμεν must be understood in light of three key phrases from the surrounding context. The first key phrase is "in

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[55] This gloss for ὑπερνικῶμεν is offered in BDAG (1034).

[56] Mounce, *Romans*, 191.

[57] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 512.

all these things" (ἐν τούτοις πᾶσιν) which opens 8:37. Regarding the syntax of the dative τούτοις governed by the ἐν preposition, Bruce suggests the possibility that the phrase is to be taken as a Hebraism best translated "despite all these things" or perhaps "for all that."[58] Both Dunn and Cranfield conclude that the dative here indicates sphere, thus warranting the translation, "in (the midst of) all these things."[59] Whether the verse should be read "despite all these things" or "in the midst of all these things," it is clear that "the things" Paul references are the various sufferings listed in 8:35b. Thus, when Paul claims the believers are "more than conquerors," the conquering relates directly to the experiences of suffering believers. This becomes especially helpful to note when one considers what these enemies seek to accomplish: separating the believer from the love of Christ (8:35a). The victory, then, is victory over any and all attempts at "separating."

Before moving on to the second key phrase, it is important to note the nature of Paul's question in 8:35. Paul does not mean that the "things" listed in 8:35 or 8:38–39 in and of themselves could separate the believer from Christ's love. Neither Paul nor his readers thought that "nakedness" or perhaps "the sword" could have any sort of effect on their standing with God. Instead, the real question Paul seems to be addressing is whether these things *indicate* the believers have in some way been separated from Christ's love. This interpretation fits well with Paul's quotation of Psalm 44 (8:36) where the psalmist perceived God's abandonment on account of his personal suffering. The psalmist did not think that the suffering separated him from God; he thought that the suffering *indicated* his separation from God. Taken this way, Paul's question in 8:35 becomes a classic formulation of the religious problem of evil: "Does my 'nakedness' or my being afflicted by 'the sword' indicate God's abandonment?"

The second key phrase helping to explain in what sense suffering believers are ὑπερνικῶμεν is "through him that loved us" (διὰ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος ἡμᾶς). This prepositional phrase expresses agency: it is Christ that brings about the believer's victory experienced amid suffering. Paul's use of the participle ἀγαπήσαντος to designate Christ is significant, as Rogers and Rogers observe, the substantive

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[58] Bruce, *Letter of Paul*, 171.
[59] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 506.

participle is here used "to emphasize a particular trait."[60] In this case, it is specifically the trait of Christ's love for believers that has made them "more than conquerors." Christ's love is a reference to more than just Christ's disposition toward believers: it is a reference to how that disposition materialized through the concrete action of his substitutionary death on the cross. Thus, whatever Paul means by "more than conquerors," it is a victory produced by Christ's death on the cross, an act of his sacrificial love for believers.

The third key phrase contributing to a proper understanding of Paul's claim that ὑπερνικῶμεν is the explanatory clause that begins 8:38, "For I am persuaded" (πέπεισμαι γὰρ). The explanatory "for" (γὰρ) provides Paul's *reason* for his claim of Christian victory. Believers are victorious because they are secure from the threat of separation: "For I am persuaded *that* [nothing] *shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*", 8:38–39). What persuaded Paul of the believer's security and hence victory over the threat of separation? It was God's love displayed on the Cross. As noted above, Moo states the point very well: "In vv. 35–39, Paul expands the picture [of judicial vindication discussed in the preceding verses] by adding to our assurance for the 'last day' assurance for all the days in between. Not only is the believer guaranteed ultimate vindication; he or she is also promised victory over all the forces of this world. *And the basis for this many-faceted assurance is the love of God for us in Christ*" (emphasis added).[61] Dunn concurs noting that Paul's persuasion "is based primarily on God's love in Christ…as displayed especially on the cross…and subsequent triumph."[62] Observing the three phrases discussed in the preceding paragraphs leaves readers with the following thought: Paul was able to confidently declare believers victorious over "all these things" that threatened separation from God because "he was persuaded of" the believers' security, a persuasion that came from observing the great act of love displayed on the Cross by "him that loved us."

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[60] Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 332.

[61] Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 538–539.

[62] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 506.

What, then, does Paul mean when he triumphantly claims ὑπερνικῶμεν? He means that even in the midst of suffering, we remain the objects of God's love. Though suffering may cause the believer to temporarily perceive that he has been separated from the love of God, this is only in his perception. The theological reality tells a different story. How could Paul be so sure that personal experiences of suffering did not indicate God's abandonment? Paul's certainty came from the cross. When he began to feel like the author of Psalm 44, that he was experiencing inexplicable suffering and God seemed absent, Paul looked to the objective evidence of God's love manifestly demonstrated through the Cross of Christ to remind himself that his perception of God's abandonment did not match his reality.

In Romans 8:35–39, Paul offers this third and final comfort regarding the religious problem of evil that is made possible by the cross: while personal experiences of evil may be painful, they do not indicate divine abandonment. When this is less than clear to the suffering believer, he can look to the cross and say with Paul, "I am persuaded that [nothing] shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord."

Conclusion

While many Christians can offer some form of an explanation as to how the reality of evil does not undermine their belief in an all-good and all-powerful God, they will still struggle when the experience of evil becomes personal. At that point, what is needed is comfort, not an explanation. As Feinberg, reflecting on his own struggle with personal suffering, observes,

> People wrestling with evil as I was don't need an intellectual discourse on how to justify God's ways to man in light of what's happening. That's what is needed to solve the abstract theological/philosophical [i.e., logical] problem of evil.… [The religious problem of evil] on the other hand, is a problem about how someone experiencing affliction can find it in himself to live with this God who doesn't stop it."[63]

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[63] Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 454.

Touching on this same observation, Plantinga observes, "Such a problem [i.e., a problem falling into the category of the religious problem of evil] calls, not for philosophical enlightenment, but for pastoral care."[64] Just as Scripture provides the resources necessary to address the logical problem of evil, so Scripture also sufficiently provides the resources necessary to offer pastoral comfort to those dealing with the emotional aftermath of a personal experience with pain and suffering. One such passage contributing to Scripture's comfort for Christians facing suffering is Paul's conclusion to his exposition of the gospel, Romans 8:31–39. In this text, Paul assures believers that God withholds no good from them, that God has secured their future, and that God has not nor ever will abandon them. Each of these perspectives, Paul makes clear, is possible because of the cross. It is the cross that provides this source of comfort, this pastoral care, in response to the inevitable confrontations Christians will face with the religious problem of evil.

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[64] Plantinga, quoted in Feinberg, *Many Faces of Evil*, 447.

Book Reviews

— *Old Testament* —

— *New Testament* —

— *Historical and Systematic Theology* —

— *Missions and Practical Ministry* —

The Manifold Beauty of Genesis One: A Multi-Layered Approach,
By Gregg Davidson and Kenneth J. Turner. Grand Rapids: Kregel
Academic, 2021. 210 pp. Softcover $17.93.

The Manifold Beauty of Genesis One: A Multi-Layered Approach
is written by Gregg Davidson (Ph.D., University of Arizona), chair
of the School of Geology and Geological Engineering at the
University of Mississippi, and Kenneth Turner (Ph.D., SBTS),
professor of OT and Biblical Languages at Toccoa Falls College. The
book's aim is to show "that Genesis 1 contains layers of truth" (7).
This statement is heavily qualified, but hopes to search for a
"richness" in which multi-layered assessments/angles/emphases can
contribute to complementary and expanded "appreciation of the
grandeur and beauty" of the text of Genesis 1 while minimizing
"unhealthy squabbles that undermine" the church's mission (12).
After an introductory appeal to avoid such squabbles common to the
young earth creationist and evolutionary debates, the authors then
detail their model approach as applied to genealogies. The text then
seeks to discuss seven layers, that of song (Layer 1), analogy (Layer
2), polemic (Layer 3), covenant (Layer 4), temple (Layer 5), calendar
(Layer 6), land (Layer 7), and a chapter of conclusion.

The chapter on methodology begins with a hearty assertion that
"Genesis 1 is history" (15). The authors then begin to describe the
difference in historiographical expectations between Israel at the foot
of Mount Sinai (a welcome, though implicit, nod to Mosaic
authorship) and the current western audience of today. This
methodological section attempts to show how a multi-layered
approach can enlighten the interpretation of "plain and
straightforward . . . history" such as those found in genealogies by
evincing a richness of "literary devices and theological nuance" (15).
Fans of Genesis would have rightfully expected an example from one
of the numerous genealogies which Genesis is structured around to
prove the case in point, however the authors instead opt to work from
the genealogies of Matthew and Luke providing a comparison and
contrastive evaluation. Their explicit reasoning for doing this is
telling, "A deeper look at the opening of the New Testament sets the
stage for an investigation of the opening of the Old Testament" (15).
The chapter on Layer 2: Analogy, likewise begins with an appeal to
New Testament material. This methodological concept seemingly

betrays a NT priority hermeneutic. Indeed, it is this hermeneutical leap which many dispensationalists ardently oppose, convinced that the genealogies of Genesis should influence the interpretation of Matthew and Luke's, not vice-versa. This methodological predisposition will raise concerns, evincing the authors' normal way of collating biblical materials in a way which seems to emphasize latter revelation. Though this may be fashionable among some evangelical circles, the same predisposition to prioritize later revelation is seemingly awarded to natural revelation through the authors' rejection of literal 24-hour days in Genesis 1, due to the spherical shape of the earth (23). This tendency is worth brief examination.

The objection to evenings and mornings without a sun is based on the idea that there was no designated light source, and that God was the light. The argument, as the author's articulate, is that this view requires that 1) God became the light; 2) that God was not omnipresent after he became light and must have fixed his brilliance in one spot; and 3) that God was simultaneously the sole observer from a fixed spot on the earth (23). These assertions can be challenged from within Genesis itself. First, light could have existed in some other form, and later confined to a different source, much like the primordial waters which seemingly had some boundary before Gen. 1:6, even if that boundary was the confines of the whole earth before the "sea." The second notion seems to discount the trinity, or the idea of a special localized presence, which is evinced in the text of Genesis itself via God walking in the garden with Adam and Eve, and in later theophanies. It is reasonable to assume that God can locate himself particularly on the earth, entering the time space continuum without forfeiting omnipresence, especially if the localized presence is that of the second member of the trinity. Thirdly, the text does not require God to be the sole observer of day and night from one fixed position, but to reveal this work from the point of view of the implied reader, someone located at a fixed time and place on the earth.

The authors seem to allow outside data to influence interpretations of the text in questionable ways by awarding more recent natural revelation, which was not available to the original audience, a priority in theologizing. The same type of problematic argument arises in Layer 2: Analogy concerning 24-hour days, where the analogical view is accused of circular reasoning (50–51). This is

problematic because it fails to note the authorial intention and artistry found in Genesis 1. If the days were not meant to be understood as 24-hours, a grammatically feasible use of יום, then why state "there was evening, and there was morning"? These are temporal clauses, and there is no reasonable explanation that the biblical author, or the original audience, would have been able to understand these temporal deictic markers any other way at the time of composition. The authors could have profitably supplemented their work by detailing their theological method, particularly as it pertains to collating biblical materials and integrating extrabiblical truth claims, so that readers might better understand their approach, presuppositions, and convictions.

Though the authors have an obvious disenchantment with the young earth creationist view, there are multiple aspects of their work which are worthy of praise. The chapter on polemics, Layer 3, was especially useful if the Pentateuch is viewed as a unified work, making good use of ANE comparative literature. Likewise, the chapter on covenants is rightfully emphasized since that concept forms "the backbone of Scripture" (77). The significance of the idea for Genesis 1 is the role of man in creation, and the ecological responsibility of mankind is something that is often neglected in evangelical works, to which this book offers a fair and timely corrective. Layer 5 detailing the temple concept is one which must be grappled with considering ANE discoveries. The most novel idea which the authors draw attention to is the calendar layer in Layer 6 positing that the texts of the Pentateuch were composed for liturgical use whereby the first triad of days would remind the audience of the festival of first fruits, while the second corresponds to the harvest, and day seven was an invitation to feast (137–138). This is a new interpretation and worthy of consideration and exploration.

While the book has an obvious bias against young earth creationism, it ultimately useful because it encourages the reader to ask different questions of the text. The authors could have been more faithful to their intention of avoiding what they deemed as "unhealthy squabbles" by positing their polemics against literal days in a different way. Their attempt to view Genesis 1 through a multitude of perspectives is worthy of imitation, even if some of their conclusions are to be otherwise rejected.

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***Psalms, Volume 1: The Wisdom Psalms. A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching* (Kerux Commentaries)**. By W. Creighton Marlowe and Charles H. Savelle, Jr. Grand Rapids: Kregel Ministry, 2021. 240 pp. Hardcover $27.99.

W. Creighton Marlowe, Ph.D., currently serves as the Associate Professor of Old Testament at Evangelical Theological Faculty in Leuven, Belgium. He is a published author in several books and numerous journal publications. Charles H. Savelle, Jr., Ph.D., teaches as an adjunct professor at Dallas Theological Seminary and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Marlowe is the "exegetical author" and Savelle the "preaching author." The latter aspect is a distinctive of the Kerux Commentaries series put out by Kregel Ministry as indicated by the subtitle, *A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching*. The word "Kerux" is from the Greek referring to a herald who announces official proclamations of the ruling magistrate, which the New Testament authors repurposed for those who proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The *Wisdom Psalms* volume is the first of a three-volume commentary on Psalms (with volumes 2 and 3 being *Lament Psalms* and *Praise Psalms*, respectively). They are unusually organized by literary genre, rather than canonical placement within the Psalter. While this might have some value for those who desire to preach from the Psalms by genre, others may find it less than desirable. The is because genre does not have clearly defined boundaries. There is

scholarly consensus on *Wisdom Psalms* as a genre, but there is much disparity over which ones should be included or excluded. For example, this volume includes fourteen psalms: 1, 15, 19, 37, 49, 73, 78, 91, 111, 112, 119, 127, 128, and 133. I quickly compared this with a volume off my shelf by OT scholar C. Hassell Bullock to see which ones he identified as such. He lists only nine, seven of which are included in the Kerux volume (viz., 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133) plus two others (viz., 32, 34). He also provides a chart of four other OT scholars and their respective designations. There were only five psalms that all four scholars included in their respective lists, namely, 1, 37, 49, 112, and 128. Such disparity would perhaps indicate an uneven reception for this work.

After the frontmatter, the commentary begins on page 29 with a forty-one page "Introduction to the Psalter." The author (Marlowe?) briefly addresses all the common introductory matters (e.g., *authorship, readers, place and date of writing,* etc.). In addition, he provides seven charts and ten sidebars throughout the introduction. Most of the charts are embedded in a single page. But one of them spans seven pages and lists all 150 psalms by genre. As for the sidebars, these are set off in a shaded textbox designed to quickly catch the reader's attention. Again, there is much helpful material here, but a word of caution is in order. On page 29, the author states rather dogmatically that the superscriptions of the psalms are not part of the original text and therefore are not to be regarded as divinely inspired. This is repeated (almost redundantly) two pages later in a sidebar titled "Divine Inspiration, Providence, and Canon." In this sidebar, the author adds that the superscriptions were a result of "human invention and ingenuity." Then he states, "So, inspiration cannot be claimed for such editorial activities." Many scholars would take issue with this conclusion (myself included). Since the issue is debated, it would seem appropriate that he acknowledge the alternate viewpoint. I should note, however, that he does acknowledge there are those who argue for accepting the authority of the superscriptions due to God's providence. But that is an argument of an entirely different nature than seeing them as under the inspiration of God.

As for the treatment of the fourteen psalms included in the commentary, I found good help both from an exegetical and preaching viewpoint. One example is the exegetical treatment of

Psalm 119. The author gave titles to each of the twenty-two sections of this lengthy alphabetic acrostic. Of course, few people agree entirely with the minutiae of exegetical detail in any given commentary, and this one is no exception. Yet, for the 176 verses of this Psalm, I found little to quibble with and much to profit from. On the homiletical contributions, I would say that this is probably the greatest strength of this volume overall. Perhaps the treatment of Psalm 73 is the best example of this. The author offers these three points:

- God is good, but the bad looks good to me (73:1–3).
- God is good and the bad are bad even if they look good (73:4–20).
- God is good, so I will praise him even when things are bad (73:21–28).

Despite the helpful material previously mentioned, there are, nevertheless, some significant shortcomings. The first is how the commentary identifies and treats messianic psalms. In the comment on Psalm 2, the author asserts that messianic theology did not emerge until the intertestamental period. He then asserts that NT authors read messianic significance into the OT that was not originally there. On page 63, the author says, "We have only two OT texts using 'anointed one' that could be applied to Jesus. So, to talk literally about OT Messianic prophecy is an overstatement and anachronistic." In the treatment of Psalm 91 (esp. v. 12, "lest you strike your foot against a stone"), rather than seeing this as messianic, he passes it off as hyperbolic language for the psalmist's personal situation. Then, on Psalm 37:13, ("The Lord laughs at the wicked for he sees his days coming"), he offers this comment: "A text in a psalm … as this one … is not a theological treatise; rather, it is an emotion laden [poetic] expression]." I see this as unwarranted restriction on biblical poetry. The biblical interpreter must take each psalm on a case-by-case basis. There are ample psalms that are either philosophical (e.g., Psalm 14) or contain strong theological propositions (e.g., Psalm 19).

Finally, I must make some critical remarks about the composition and layout of the book. There are an embarrassing number of mistakes throughout the commentary. The most significant are the many inversions of the Hebrew words throughout. A clear example

is on page 59, in a subsection titled *Afterlife ("Sheol"/* שְׁאוֹל*)* —
except in the commentary, the Hebrew is written backward as שֹׁאל –
and this is even in a heading. In the commentary under this
subheading, there are eight Hebrew words spelled backwards (*sheol,
5x; ruach* (2x), *nephesh* (1x). This type of error happens on pages 98
(3x), 99 (1x), 134 (1x), 171 (3x), 180 (2x). There is at least one more
instance on page 150, where even the Tetragrammaton is spelled
backward (!). In addition to these, there are other types of errors.
There is a sidebar that begins in column A and ends in column B, but
the shading does not extend to column B. This makes it initially
difficult to know where the sidebar ends. There are also a few places
where Hebrew words of only four or five letters are hyphenated
(except without a hyphen). In my opinion, single Hebrew words
should be forced to stay on the same line. On page 179, there is an
extraneous verb that should be deleted. On page 180, the subheading
omits part of the verse reference. On page 181 there are two errors:
(1) there is an incorrect formatting of a citation from HALOT, and
(2) there is a random period in the middle of a sentence.

Overall, I find it difficult to endorse this book. There is
undoubtedly worthwhile material that would benefit a discerning
pastor, teacher, or scholar. In particular, the theological focus and the
preaching and teaching strategies are generally reliable and helpful.
But the commentary's low view of the superscriptions, the
minimizing of messianic prophecy, and the apparent reluctance to
allow biblical poetry to present dogmatic theological truth are
sufficiently strong drawbacks for me. Add to that the numerous errors
of either copyediting or proofreading and that makes an even stronger
reason to withhold unqualified endorsement.

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ESV Expository Commentary: Deuteronomy-Ruth. By August H. Konkel, David Reimer, Miles V. Van Pelt, and Mary Willson Hannah. Wheaton: Crossway, 2021. 743 pp. Hardcover $39.68.

The ESV Expository commentary seeks "to provide a clear, crisp, and Christ-centered explanation of the Biblical text" under the conviction that "all Scripture speaks of Christ" (10). The contributors have been asked to be "exegetically sound," "biblically theological," "globally aware," "broadly informed," "doctrinally conversant," "pastorally useful," "application-minded" and "efficient in expression" (10–11). This Christ-centered hermeneutic has rightly been challenged in exegesis, however, the expressed goal of the commentary as being biblically theological gives some measure of theoretical legitimacy to the process if the proper exegetical restraints and theological methods are employed. Given that this particular commentary is on the Old Testament, there are areas in which the hermeneutical and theological methods should be rigorously critiqued for validity. This volume covers the books of Deuteronomy-Ruth in protestant canonical order.

The section on Deuteronomy is written by August H. Konkel, who earned his Ph.D. from Westminster Theological Seminary and serves as Professor of Old Testament at McMaster Divinity College and is President Emeritus of Providence University College and Seminary (13). Konkel rejects the idea that Deuteronomy was composed during the time of Josiah, noting that the books specific instruction antedate Josiah's reforms (35) and should be considered "a record of the covenant of Moses, perpetuated by scribes and preached by the prophets" (35). Konkel maintains Moses' dominant authorship while noting that "features such as historical notes and explanations of people groups in the prologue. . . were added by scribes in their presentation of the speeches of Moses" (32). Konkel describes the structure of Deuteronomy based on the three speeches of Moses (26) and finds the correlations between the book of Deut. and late second-millennium treaties through the inclusion of a historical prologue somewhat useful, he notes only that these correlations "should be accounted for" without basing the structure of the book on such treaties. Konkel rejects Martin Noth's assessment of the book as an introduction to the former prophets (51) noting the steady abandonment of the Graff-Wellhausen hypothesis (51). The

response section of the Konkel's portion makes application to social issues concerning migrants and indigenous people (82, 108), theological descriptions of a just war (12, 118–120, 198–200), emphasizes the regular confession of faith for both the OT and NT believer (28, 42–44, 152, 189) and notes covenantal obligations (39, 47, 152, etc.). Throughout the work Konkel avoids appeals to post-cedent Scripture until the response, in which he will mention intertextual allusions and their applications to present context. The work also strives to be historically and archaeologically informed, noting the issues of associations of Moses with the Aten cult in Egypt (228), bronze age treaties (243), and similar useful archaeological data.

The section Joshua is written by David Reimer, who earned a D.Phil from Oxford, and serves as the Academic Dean of Faith Mission Bible College, and is an Honorary Senior Lecturer at the University of Saint Andrews (13). Reimer begins by asserting that the book of Joshua is bookended by the death of Israel's two great leaders, he also notes that much of the book "affirms life and hope" (547). Reimer asserts that Joshua divides into three main sections, chaps. 1–12 describing Israel's entry to Canaan, the second section, 13–21, describing the allotment, and the concluding address of Joshua in 22–24 (548). Reimer notes that the narrative setting is late bronze/early iron age but notes that much of the book from a much later period and different times with final shaping coming in the exilic period (549). Reimer notes the similarities between Joshua and other war annals of the ANE (550—551) as well as various other sub-genres of stories, and direct speech, prophetic oracle, and administrative texts. God's sovereignty and holiness is stressed throughout the work, as God sovereignly fulfills his promise to Abraham through settlement of Abraham's descendants into the land, and the punishment upon both Canaanites and Israelites for their transgression through death (551–552). Reimer does find the conquest to be an account of Genocide, though God ordained, and poses the question of God's morality as an interpretive challenge. Eventually, Reimer finds that this judgement upon the Canaanites was an example of God's holiness in which "the severity of God, the saving of some and the tolerance of others is just one pointer in the trajectory of salvation history that finds its climax in the incarnation, humiliation, crucifixion, resurrection, and exaltation of the Lord

Jesus Christ" (559). The idea of land as a central theme is well noted when Reimer states cites Oliver O'Donovan who asserted that for the Old Testament audience's view of God, "a piece of land is the token of their affection and disaffection" (559). There are questions concerning his conclusion on the theological significance of land, which Reimer bases on Ezekiel and the New Testament, whereby he asserts that in the OT, there is a "growing realization the this is place for God's presence is not finally the place of 'rest' of which the book speaks on several occasions" (560). The Biblical witness throughout both testaments seem to imply that there will be a special manifestation of God's presence in a new Jerusalem by which this specific land will yet again be central to God's economy; therefore, Reimer's conclusion may be an overstatement due to his personal theological persuasion. There was little archaeological material incorporated into this section of the commentary when compared to that of its predecessor. This is especially problematic for the section on Jericho where scholarly audiences would seem to demand at least mention of the archaeological debate surrounding the site and mention of Kathleen Kenyan and her conversation partners, even if Reimer was unwilling to make an assessment. Though it does not detract from his theological emphasis, which is well handled, it does limit its usefulness as a resource to those only interested in a theological exposition.

The section on judges is written by Miles Van Pelt (Ph.D., SBTS) who is the professor of Old Testament and Biblical Languages at Reformed Theological Seminary. Van Pelt notes the pivotal role of the former prophets in the Hebrew Bible as an account which depicts Israel's "ongoing and ever-increasing unfaithfulness" to the Lord compared to the Lord's faithfulness to Israel (896). Van Pelt notes problems of dating, but agrees that 18:30 seems to suggest an exilic or post-exilic composition, though he concedes that the book may have come together in stages or been subject to minor editing (898). Van Pelt does an excellent job of noting various literary devices throughout his commentary, whether repetitions, inclusios, word play, fables, poetry, or riddles. This leads him to give a macrostructure which makes mention of the dual-introductions and dual-conclusions of the book, bracketing the long known 12 judges (6 major and 6 minor). He also notes a chiastic pattern to the introductions and conclusions, outer brackets being a crises of Israel's

inheritance, and the inner brackets being crises of Israel's faith with idolatry (900). The theology of Judges in Van Pelt's work focuses on Kingship, with the continuing plight of Benjamin, and the continuing rise of Judah throughout the work (902). If Samuel was the author, which Van Pelt notes as a possibility, then a deliberate rhetorical effect of this nature would surely be emphatic. Van Pelt is also quick to note the redemptive history and covenantal ramifications in the book, God judges Israel's unfaithfulness, but forgives when they repent and cry out to him by raising up a deliverer. Van Pelt makes short work of the question of violence in judges by showing the Lord's desire to protect Israel from idolatry of the surrounding nation, but also notes succinctly that "the command of complete destruction foreshadows the eschatological judgement that will again against all sin" (910). Though this might seem simplistic, there was no need to rehash what was dealt with in the contents of the Joshua section, and this brief assertion of God's coming judgement against sin was a welcome synopsis. Van Pelt does not seek to villainize the character of the judges in the book since they are sinners in need of grace and they are awarded the epithets of heroes in Hebrews 11. He instead seeks to magnify God's work through human weakness throughout his section (911).

The section on Ruth was written by Mary Willson Hannah, who earned a Ph.D. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and is the Director of Women in Ministry at Second Presbyterian Church in Memphis, TN. Hannah seeks to place Ruth firmly within the context of the book of Judges highlighting the mercy of the Lord, particularly to the "widowed, childless, discouraged Naomi" (1188). Throughout the work, Hannah rightfully identifies the main character as Naomi, and not Ruth, as some mistakenly assume. In fact, Hannah's work is the most literarily focused, as it presents a complete narrative account, structuring her outline of the book based on a plot introduction in 1:1–5 and subsequent sections based on locational changes denoting a scene change (1192). Hannah finds the central drama to centered around the Lord's personal kindness to Naomi but uses these seemingly ordinary circumstances and afflictions to advance his salvific purposes while showing the compatibility of providence and human agency (1194). The institution of redemption was highlighted in light of the notion of covenant kindness; a *leitwort* she notes three times in the account (1196). Hannah is a staff minister

of an Evangelical Presbyterian Church, which does allow the ordination of women, and her section on preaching Ruth noted the need to "avoid overemphasizing the genealogical epilogue's royal interest in a manner that overshadows the book's dominant concern to display God's loving kindness to ordinary Israelites" (1198). In Hannah's desire to do this, she practices more safeguards than others in the same work when making New Testament connections to Christ. The ESV Expository Commentary on Deuteronomy-Ruth is extremely useful for ministers seeking a reformed evangelical treatment of these books. It is contemporary, succinct, and practical. It does leave something to be desired in interaction with various views outside of the reformed tradition and fails to engage critically with more scholarly theological works, whether inside the reformed tradition or not. Though it would be serviceable as pleasure reading, or a ready reference for biblical-theological application, it lacks the exegetical rigor that one would find in other commentaries for serious exegesis.

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Voice and Mood: A Linguistic Approach. By David Mathewson. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021. 191 pp. Hardcover $22.99.

David L. Mathewson has been a professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary since 2011. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Colorado Christian University, a Master of Arts from Denver Seminary, and a PhD in New Testament from the University of Aberdeen. His research interests include the Book of Revelation/apocalyptic literature, Greek/linguistics, and biblical theology.

This book consists of an introduction, two major sections containing three chapters each, and a conclusion. The introductory chapter lays out the significance of voice and mood for understanding the Greek verb, and it introduces the reader to the various issues discussed in the book. The first major section of the book is a discussion of the linguistic significance of voice in the Greek verbal

system. The first chapter is a discussion of recent scholarship on voice in the Greek verbal system. The second chapter argues for the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to the analysis of the Greek voice system. In the third chapter, the author argues that voice is an important and exegetically significant component of the Greek verbal system and the primary differentiation of voice is the author's perception of causality. The author concludes there are three voices (active-direct causality, middle-internal causality, and passive-external causality) in the Greek verbal system.

The second major section of the book is a discussion of the linguistic significance of mood in the Greek language. Chapter four consists of a discussion of recent scholarship on mood. The fifth chapter is a discussion of the Greek mood system based on principles of SFL. The chapter differentiates and proposes semantic meanings for the indicative, imperative, subjunctive, and optative. Chapter six is a discussion of the semantic meaning of infinitives and participles with the participle indicating the truthfulness or reality of the verbal action and the infinitive making no assertion about the truthfulness or reality of the verbal action. The concluding chapter sums up the various conclusions of each chapter. One key takeaway from this book is the idea from SFL that variations between the uses of various grammatical forms indicate choice.

This book has at least five positive qualities. First, the chapters on current scholarship for both voice and mood distill the scholarship down into an easily understandable presentation. Various scholars' views are presented in a manner that is understandable to Greek students from seminary up to the Ph.D. level. Second, the discussion of voice does a good job of examining the underlying meaning of the voice system in a concise manner with a minimum of jargon. This is exceptionally helpful in differentiating between the middle and passive voices. Third, the author's explanation of the mood system is excellent and compelling because it differentiates in a logical manner the distinctions between the oblique moods. This is exceptionally helpful in distinguishing between the subjunctive and optative moods, which are many times hard to distinguish semantically. Fourth, the book does a very good job of giving examples from the Greek New Testament for the various functional categories. This significantly strengthens the book's argument. Finally, the book is an easy read for anyone with at least two years of Greek study.

In spite of these positive attributes, the book has three negative qualities. First, the book assumes the validity of SFL, rather than offering proof that SFL is the correct way of understanding and categorizing the semantic meaning of various grammatical forms. This is problematic because while SFL has gained in popularity it not accepted by all Greek scholars. Second, the semantic explanations of participles and infinitives are simply stated and not proved. This chapter was by far the weakest of the chapters. Finally, the explanation of the future tense form seems to be a workaround to try to fit in Porter's aspectual/non-temporal understanding of the Greek verbal system. The fact that the author does not interact with any counter arguments concerning the nature of the future tense (most notable by Buist Fanning) when making his argument significantly lessens the strength of his argument. The explanation is therefore not convincing to this reviewer.

Overall, this is an excellent introduction the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to voice and mood characteristics of the Greek verb. The book is an easy read, challenging the reader to go deeper but not overwhelming the reader with too much technical information. This reviewer would recommend this book for anyone who has at least two years of Greek study, especially considering the modest price of $22.95.

<div align="right">

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The Septuagint: What It Is and Why It Matters. By Gregory R. Lanier and William A. Ross. Wheaton: Crossway, 2021. 216 pp. Softcover $21.99.

Peruse the bookshelves of most evangelical pastoral offices and you will not likely find a Septuagint. As a matter of fact, most pastors know very little about the *Greek Old Testament*. Dare I say that a knowledge of this translation across the faculty of a typical evangelical university, Bible college, or Seminary is also lacking. And a course on the *Greek Old Testament* (Septuagint) is absent from most curriculums. Why is this? Is it because not many know "what it

is" and "why it's important"? This book attends to these two questions with the goal of providing a brief introduction for laypeople, as well as informative to scholars.

The focus is to answer two questions, "What is the Septuagint?" and "Why does it matter?" These serve as the two sections of the book respectively. The first section handles topics such as: the problematic label of 'Septuagint,' the origin of the Septuagint, the approach in translating from the Hebrew to Greek, and the transmission of the Greek throughout history. The second section discusses: the value of the Septuagint for studying both the Old Testament and the New Testament, and the nature of the authority of the Septuagint for today's church. The book then concludes with valuable insight and resources for a pastor and Bible teacher.

The authors advise labeling the Septuagint with terminology that seems to be more consistent with the translation of the text. They conclude that scholars today may be classifying the text more uniformly and stable (Septuagint) than what it really is; hence, they offer "*Greek Old Testament*" as the classification that best fits. The next few chapters develop the reason(s) for this classification. They say, "Stepping back, we can see how it is unlikely that the Greek Pentateuch was prompted by a single, identifiable factor either outside or inside early Hellenistic Judaism itself" (55). Rather, there were several factors within the Jewish community in both the Hellenistic and Roman periods that contributed to Greek translations of the OT. This likely makes it difficult to conclude that a consistent translation of seventy men was produced, as some scholars claim. Although the translators collaborated as a group, they still approached their task in a careful and critical way. As a matter of fact, the translators demonstrated a control of the Greek language, but also wrote in stylized ways that produced a distinctive translation. Therefore, Lanier and Ross contend that the Greek translation was not a unified entity as scholars think. The Greek Old Testament developed, through both intentional and unintentional variants, Jewish recensions by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, and others such as Origen and Lucian.

Lanier and Ross move on to the second section to admirably contend and encourage the student of the Bible to have a knowledge of the Greek Old Testament for a better understanding of both the Old and New Testament. Why? Using several Old Testament examples,

the authors show that the Greek translations can provide better forms of the text at the clause and word level, as well as insight into Jewish interpretive principles and theology. Using several New Testament examples, the authors also show that the Greek translations offer valid evidence for interpreters to handle quotations of the OT in the NT. It helps to ensure that interpreters have captured the NT author's point. Also, exposure to the Greek Old Testament assists the interpreter with nuances of meaning for key words and/or phrases in the NT. Finally, Lanier and Ross offer these important points. The "Septuagint" is not a unified, singular entity that is equally authoritative to inspired Scripture. The Greek Old Testament does not have the final say in theological matters but can help to shape the theology of NT authors. And do not ignore the Greek Old Testament, rather study it for the benefit of assisting in one's understanding of the OT and NT.

This book is a must read for any pastor, teacher, missionary, and student of God's word. It is relevant, easy-to-read, and informative for all levels of Bible knowledge. The summaries throughout the chapters, and the concluding thoughts that wrap-up the chapters provide valuable take-aways for the reader. Charts, examples, indices, and appendix serve the reader with useful information for future reflection and instruction.

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One in Hope and Doctrine: Origins of Baptist Fundamentalism, 1870-1950. By Kevin Bauder and Robert Delnay. Arlington Heights, IL: Regular Baptist Books, 2014. 400 pp. Softcover $29.99.

Nearly 400 pages in length, this book is for the history buff who enjoys getting into the weeds of Baptist fundamentalism. This is a comprehensive, and at times ponderous, treatment of the Baptist Fundamentalist movement from the latter 19th century to the mid 20th century. Although it traces several prominent movements, such as The Baptist Union, the Northern Baptist Convention, the General Association of Regular Baptists, and the Sword, it's as much about

the men who led these movements. Prominent personalities such as W. B. Riley, Oliver W. Van Osdel, Robert Ketchum, J. Frank Norris, and John R. Rice are profiled "warts and all." In this respect, One in Hope and Doctrine underscores that men of various personalities, abilities, and giftedness are used of the Lord to initiate and develop religious movements that have significant impact for better or worse.

Bauder and Delnay provide an excellent treatment on the background, growth, and marked contrasts of liberalism and fundamentalism. The authors' stated purpose or goal was to provide a comprehensive narrative of the development of Baptist fundamentalism, filling the void that exists on this historical subject, and "to tell a story that has never been heard" (14). Admittedly, however, it's easy to get lost in the details of historical information. But, for those who want the nitty gritty on the origins of Baptist fundamentalism, they will not be disappointed.

Several features to this book include an illustrated timeline on the development of Baptist fundamentalism in North America (before the preface), photographs throughout the book, and an extensive index (388–396). Another notable part of the book are chapter 6, The GARBC, chapter 7, Growing Pains (185–262). In 75 pages, the authors tell the story of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches; its birth, growth, and development, and the difficulties and challenges during the formative years. In addition, chapter 8, The Norris Legacy (265–301) details the life and ministry of J. Frank Norris, a rather notorious if not infamous part of Baptist fundamentalism. The repeated conflicts between Ketchum and Norris are regrettable, but interesting. Ketchum endeavored to take the high road while Norris always seemed to be looking for a fight.

The Epilogue is a fitting summary of the book. On page 385, Bauder and Delnay cite that historically Baptists of whatever stripe held to the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Bible, inerrancy, the virgin birth and deity of Jesus Christ, His miracles, the substitutionary death and bodily resurrection of Christ, and His ascension and bodily return. In the third paragraph on page 385, they ask and answer the question, "What did it mean to be a fundamentalist?" Their comment that many showed a genuine devotion to Christ and walk in the Spirit, but some did not is very telling. Unfortunately, there were some notable clanging cymbals and noisy gongs in the history of Baptist

fundamentalism. Fortunately, however, there were more who had and showed biblical love.

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Bullies and Saints: An Honest Look at the Good and Evil of Christian History. John Dickson. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021. 352 pp. Softcover $28.99.

John Dickson's training and experience as an author (ca. twenty books), a lecturer, popular speaker, a documentarian (three TV documentaries), and critical thinker commands respect for the topic he tackles in this book under review: *Bullies and Saints: An Honest Look at the Good and Evil of Christian History*. Dickson has a Ph.D. in Ancient History from Macquarie University and served in that department from 2004 to 2017. From 2017 to 2021, he served in the Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies at the University of Sydney in Australia. For five years (2016–2021), he served as Visiting Academic in the Faculty of Classics at Oxford University.

The book is 352 pages. It includes 24 pages of frontmatter and 44 pages of backmatter, which means the book proper is 286 pages. Considering that he covers two millennia of church history—which, at times, can be quite convoluted—it is remarkable what he has done. And he has done it in a refreshing way. I find him to be an engaging author, making free use of the first-person perspective, many times connecting the reader with his own life and history. Little touches like that help make his content sing.

When I say that he makes his content "sing," I'm deliberately playing off the same metaphor that he uses as a motif through the book. In fact, the title of chapter three is "The Beautiful Tune" and the epilogue at the very end is titled "The Beautiful Tune—A Coda." He uses this music metaphor to complement his premise that although the church has at times throughout its history sung "off tune" or hit discordant notes, in the main, the church has sought to honor the image of God in man and promote the Judaic-Christian

ethic of love. These two motifs, he suggests, drives the melody so that at any point in history the church at large is always making beautiful music.

Dickson does not approach his task in a strictly linear fashion. In the first chapter, he offers a personal testimony of his disillusionment with the church altogether, as indicated in the chapter title "The Day I Lost Faith in the Church: A Christian Massacre in the Year 1099." Of course, the event he is referencing happened on July 15, 1099, when ten thousand European Crusaders descended upon Jerusalem, bursting through their walls and setting about killing men, women, and children. Then Dickson poses the question as to whether it was truly religious in nature, or more political? His answer is somewhat surprising. In essence, he says, yes and no. Yes, it was sanctioned by the church, but no, it did not happen in quite the barbaric way common history has presented it. In the next chapter, he gives a brief history of the Crusades, sketching out four distinct campaigns ranging in time from the 1000s to the 1200s. Thus, Chapters 1–2 introduce the book in much the same way a modern action movie does. The viewer gets immediately drawn into high-level action. Much of the background is unknown, but it is understood that the details will be supplied at a later point. That's when he presents chapter three and the music metaphor, which is followed by Chapter 4 ("Log in the Eye of the Church"), a brief seven-page chapter establishing the fact that Jesus taught each person in the church should first work on his or her own flaws before trying to correct the flaws they see in others.

In the next seven chapters (chapters 5–11), he traces the history of the good and evil in the church. He identifies the persecution under the Roman emperors up until Constantine's reforms, which resulted in two major developments: (1) religious freedom, and (2) leading the church in becoming a source of charity for the impoverished and sick. Despite a significant setback by his successor, the apostate Julian (chapter 8), the trajectory he set for the church revived under such men as Ambrose, Gregory Nazianzus, Gregory Nyssa, Basil, et al. Such men as these promoted what Dickson calls "muscular" Christianity that pushed a humanitarian ethic as one of the distinctives of the Empire. This led to the establishment of hospitals and orphanages, etc.

Chapter twelve is a significant one. It centers on none other than Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo. The thrust of the chapter is Augustine's book, *The City of God*. Dickson's specific interest is Augustine's reasoning on what constitutes a "just war." Even though this topic was somewhat ancillary to Augustine's primary purpose (and comparatively very brief), it nonetheless became the basis for future appeals to what constitutes a "holy war." Dickson is careful to point out that Augustine never referred to wars as "holy," only "just" or "unjust." He says: "Still Augustine's arguments were to have an influence out of all proportion to his brief concessions about the necessity of state violence. Whatever Augustine's hopes, the monumental influence of his writings in the west in the coming centuries meant that he opened the way to Christian 'holy war,' culminating in the Crusades" (136).

From chapters 13 to 17, Dickson traces the good and evil of the western church, from about AD 500–1000 and the fall of Rome. This, of course, takes the reader to the very point where he opened the book in chapters one and two. In chapter 18, he "rewinds" (as it were) and traces the eastern part of the empire up to the Crusades. The history, he says, "is totally different and yet strangely similar" (197). As he presents the material, he emphasizes that Byzantine was a bastion of intellectual power and resources, an observation rarely made by historians of this time. He notes that without the Byzantine's love for, and preservation of, the classics, we would have lost many great works of ancient history (e.g., Plato, Euclid, Sophocles, Thucydides, et al.).

Dickson also dedicates Chapter 19 to questioning whether the term "Dark Ages" is a proper characterization or was it more a political spin. He argues for the latter suggesting that the motif of "Dark" and "Light" (i.e., "Enlightenment") were deliberate characterizations by 18th century thinkers to elevate their contemporary era above prior eras, and also to largely demean the times of their forerunners. In chapters 20 and 21, he outlines the good and bad surrounding the Reformation and the many abuses that occurred on both sides of the conflict. He follows this with two chapters (22 and 23) that bring us to the modern time, where he points out, among other things, the blight of sexual child abuse that is infamously known in the Roman Catholic Church, but, in truth, is not limited to any one denomination.

He comes full circle in the last chapter of the book (chapter 25). The title is "The 'Log in the Eye' of Us All." Several places throughout his book—but especially in this last chapter—he makes observes that there is a tendentiousness in recounting religious history. He readily admits that the Crusades, for instance, were a horrific blight upon the church. Yet, a closer look shows that apart from a few monstrous campaigns, the Inquisitions had a meticulous process that was monitored carefully and, in the main, was executed fairly and with a high degree of leniency. He also makes the point that however bad the abuses have been in the history of the church—and there have been some serious ones—he argues that it pales in comparison to the abuses that have happened in secular history. For example, he observes that there were more deaths under Joseph Stalin every week than there were during the 350 years of the Spanish Inquisition (279). He makes similar comparisons with China's Mao Zedong, and Cambodia's Pol Pot.

On page 281, he straightforwardly gives us his thesis when he says, "My argument is … [that] the real problem is neither religion nor irreligion; the problem is the human heart in possession of a misdirected passion—a passion for power, land, rights, honor, wealth, or (yes) religion."

I have learned much from reading this book. Although I was aware that current scholarship has moved away from designating the Middle Ages as the "Dark Ages," I would not have been able to elaborate why that is so in any meaningful way. Dickson provides a decent explanation in that regard. So, it is with the Crusades. I think it would be fair to say that the Crusades are presented one-dimensionally as a violent, power gone wild, abusive tyranny of the Christian Church. Dickson shows us that there is much more to the story—and he does so without once dismissing the evils that were part and parcel of the Crusades.

I am glad I read this book and I commend it to anyone who wants a fresh take on many things in church history that often goes unquestioned. Not only will it help fill out one's knowledge base of two millennia of church history, but it will also provide much fodder for sermon and teaching illustrations for pastors and professors alike.

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Faith in the Son of God. The Place of Christ-Oriented Faith Within Pauline Theology. By Kevin W. McFadden. Wheaton: Crossway, 2021. 303 pp. Softcover. $26.99.

Kevin W. McFadden, who is Associate Professor of New Testament at Philadelphia's Cairn University, has written a welcome response to Richard Hays and other advocates of the "faithfulness of Christ" view of Paul's theological argument regarding faith and justification in Christ Jesus.

Through careful exegesis of the phrases that have traditionally been translated "faith in Christ," but have more recently been translated "through the faithfulness of Christ" in several modern versions of the Bible, McFadden has demonstrated that neither the passages themselves, nor the theology of justification in Paul, call for abandonment of the more traditional position. While the author is disagreeing with Hays and others who have adopted the "faithfulness of Christ" translation with its theological implications, he states that his positive thesis is that "*Paul significantly emphasizes Christ-oriented faith in his theology*" (49).

He begins his argument with the soteriological implications of the phrases like πίστεως Ἰησοῦ χριστου (Gal 3:22) in Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians. These are the verses most frequently explained by those in the "faithfulness of Christ" position, such as Hays, Campbell, Hooker, Wright and others, as teaching that to Paul it is not the faith of the believer in Christ, but the faithfulness of Christ that is in view. He uses most of the space of the book to argue from other passages in Paul's writings that Paul's theology

featured Christ-oriented faith, that is, the necessity of faith in Christ to receive the benefits of justification and salvation.

While McFadden states clearly at the beginning of his argument that both translations of the Greek words are possible. Yet, he demonstrates that it is those words in their own contexts, and the overall theological presentation of Paul in his letters, that faith is "belief and trust" in the gospel with Christ as the "fundamental object" of our faith (268). He agrees at points with Hays and others in the other camp, and he also reminds the reader of the fact that these authors will occasionally mention that Christ-oriented faith is important, while then returning to the greater importance of the faithfulness of Christ. Part of their concern is that humans should not, by their faith, have any part in their own justification; but McFadden demonstrates that it is not the faith of the believer that justifies. The work of justification and redemption was accomplished by Christ. In faith, the believer receives the benefits of that work by assenting to it, not completing it.

The author addresses Paul's quotations of the Old Testament, direct statements, and conceptual parallels to Christ-oriented faith, in addition to discussion of the theological implications of both views. He also argues extensively with Hays' arguments in his book *Faith of Jesus Christ*.

The discerning reader will note that, at a few points, McFadden mentions the "disputed" authorship of some of the Pauline letters. Although he does not refute that position, on page 121 he does refer to it as the position of "some scholars" and illustrates that the similarities of the thanksgiving sections in Philemon, Colossians and Ephesians provide striking support for "the theory that Paul wrote these three letters at the same time and sent them together with Tychicus…".

McFadden has provided a bibliography and indexes. Though the book can be read with profit by non-specialists, it should be read by teachers and students of the New Testament, theology, and biblical exegesis.

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The Attributes of God: An Introduction (**Short Studies in Systematic Theology**). By Gerald Bray. Wheaton: Crossway, 2021. 160 pp. Softcover $15.99.

Bray's work on the attributes of God is part of Crossway's series *Short Studies in Systematic Theology* edited by Graham A. Cole and Oren R. Martin. The aim of that series is to provide brief studies of important areas in Christian theology that give the essence of the doctrine as well as application to life. *The Attributes of God* by Bray appears to be successful at reaching the assigned goal in an area where Christians often struggle largely due to disinterest. While believers want to know some basic things about God and how to relate to Him in everyday life, they are not as focused on the sometimes-intricate details of logic that undergird a discussion of God's attributes.

Bray's book possesses clear organization. Similar to many theologians (although labels vary among the presenters), he divides God's attributes into two basic categories: 1) *essential* attributes, and 2) *relational* attributes. God's essential attributes are those which are essential "to His being and lie beyond our comprehension." God's relational attributes are those which describe how He relates to humans and which they can possess to a degree by analogy. For essential attributes, Bray arranges the discussion into two categories: 1) God's essential attributes *as they* are *in themselves* (25–59), and 2) God's essential attributes *as we perceive them* (59–76). Within God's essential attributes as they are in themselves, Bray discusses (a) attributes describing what God is, (b) attributes describing what God is like, (c) attributes contrasted with time, and (d) attributes contrasted with space. Under the heading of essential attributes as we perceive them, Bray concentrates on the three classical doctrines of omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience. Throughout his discussion of God's essential attributes, the most interesting area with the strongest analysis is Bray's defense of classical theism's understanding of impassibility over against open theistic ways of viewing the attributes of God (34–45). The same two general subcategories (*as they are in themselves* and *as we perceive them*) are repeated for the relational attributes (77–102). Under the first, Bray presents God as a personal being and as a rational being. Here he leads into a discussion of issues affecting the definition of the trinity.

Under the second, he analyzes God's holiness, righteousness, and goodness.

After his usually helpful outline of the various attributes, Bray attempts to describe the relevance of God's attributes for today (103–09). At the outset, he raises this significant point: "The divine attributes appear to be abstractions and are therefore best left to specialists who are free to argue about them in theological faculties and academic journals, without any impact on everyday life" (103). Bray attempts to change this perception. However, it is not clear that this section of his book has accomplished what he set out to do. Perhaps the section is too short. Nonetheless, he does affirm the most important practical implication of the holiness of God by agreeing with the Reformation and biblical teaching of justification by grace through faith and not by works of our own personal doing (107).

At the end of the book, Bray gives a helpful appendix on "God's Attributes in Christian Tradition." This historical survey is as long as half of the earlier sections. However, he is wise in this reviewer's judgment to make this information an appendix. While scholars might prefer for this historical review up front, Bray stays true to the purpose of the book as something written to present the attributes in a simpler fashion for study by those who may not be as familiar with the details of Christian theology.

Some of the strengths of this work have already been pointed out. The organization (and the resultant readability) stands as the most positive aspect of Bray's book. In addition, there is a small bibliography that nonetheless allows the reader to explore the attributes more fully. There is also a credible general index which is sometimes missing in books like this. Another positive of Bray's writing is that he often uses Scripture. This is significant in this case because, as he honestly mentions in the opening words of the preface, "A century ago it was a commonplace of what was then 'modern' theology that Christianity had been corrupted in ancient times by an invasion of Hellenistic thought…That thesis is no longer as popular as it once was and today most scholars reject it. Yet, when it comes to the question of God's attributes, the case for accepting a significant Greek influence on Christian theology remains strong" (11). The only antidote to overuse of Greek philosophy is a dogged determinism to let Scripture decide the truth to be believed and acted upon.

Bray's opposition to open theism was acknowledged above as a positive. Here an additional doctrinal stance deserves praise. Bray properly rejects the unbiblical doctrine of the nonviolent atonement (89–91). God the Father cannot be accused of "divine child abuse" in sending His Son to die for our sins. Bray's main defense is the truth that humans do not have any basis for charging God in such matters. It may have been helpful if Bray provided a footnote citing the many Bible passages which support the doctrines of propitiation and God's judging activity involving the Cross for additional support. However, he is to be commended for staying true to the biblical doctrine of the nature of the atonement.

There are some areas that need improvement in Bray's work. None of these affect the overall positive assessment of the book. The following serve as examples of smaller areas of debate. First, the discussion on the simplicity of God needs more development. Bray honestly admits that God's simplicity is not explicitly mentioned in the Bible (28). Yet, he also asserts at the outset of the discussion that simplicity is the "most fundamental attribute of God's being" (this reviewer considers it a highly important theological matter). This is somewhat of a theological conundrum. How can the most fundamental attribute of God's being not be explicitly taught in Scripture? Bray's discussion of the various logical connections and the mention of a couple of tangential Bible passages seem somewhat inadequate.

Second, while discussing God's invisibility, Bray notes, "God's invisibility is a consequence of his incorporeality. If he has no body, his being has no sensory definition and so it is impossible to detect" (32). The logic of the last sentence goes against the account of the rich man in hades who existed there in his spirit but not in body. Yet the text says clearly that the rich man in hades experienced sensation (Luke 16:23–24). If this is a logical possibility with humans, then could it be a logical possibility with God? Of course, God would experience sensation in perfection if that would be the case. This potential contradiction to Bray's statement at least needs to be briefly addressed.

Third, Bray's outline of what the righteousness of God means may be his weakest section due to possible confusion. He notes, "Jesus Christ manifested God's righteousness because he was perfectly obedient to his Father's will in everything he did. It is our

imitation of that obedience, made possible by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, that makes us righteous in God's eyes (1 Cor. 11:1)" (98). Earlier Bray mentions 2 Cor. 5:21. His explanation in this section seems to mix possible discussion of being declared righteous by faith with being made righteous by obedience. Clarity in this area needs to be added.

Other areas of both positive and negative assessment could be discussed, but the ones presented above help to give the general thrust of Bray's fine work. No negatives detract from the important usefulness of the provided outline. Lay people, as well as pastors and professors, will benefit from reading and studying this book. It could even be used in adult Bible studies with competent teachers leading the way. All in all, this reviewer highly recommends this work by Bray to those interested in the attributes of our great God.

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A History of Evangelism in North America. Edited by Thomas P. Johnston. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021. 345 pp. Softcover $17.87.

Thomas P. Johnston (Ph.D., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) serves as a senior professor of evangelism at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is also the president of the Southern Baptist Professors of Evangelism Fellowship. It is the latter role that gave Johnston the opportunity to lead a cadre of twenty Southern Baptist professors of evangelism in the creation of this unique book. This team of missional scholars has a wealth of experience within the Church and the Academy, and they care deeply about evangelism in American society. Johnston and his group of authors explore the historical development of evangelism in North America. They point us to the past so that we might discern how to faithfully do evangelism in the present and in the future. The goal of the volume "was to provide a biographical approach to evangelism, along with a focus on varieties of evangelism methodologies" (page 9). Toward that end, contributors surveyed the life and evangelistic impact of notable American Christians. The august list included

familiar figures such as Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, Billy Graham, and John Piper. It also included lesser-known individuals such as Shubal Stearns, Francis Asbury, John Mason Peck, and Henrietta Mears. Even though the authors are all Southern Baptist, they focus more broadly on the history of evangelism within American Evangelicalism. The chief strength of the book lies in the historical vignettes it provides. Whether retelling the narratives of popular evangelists (like Whitfield and Wesley) or more obscure individuals (such as J. Wilbur Chapman and Chuck Smith), the volume shines when it illuminates various historical approaches to evangelism. Two examples will suffice. First, missiologist J. D. Payne contributed a chapter on David Brainerd, the 18th century missionary to Native Americans. The essay was an excellent overview of Brainerd's life, one that demonstrated the challenges of cross-cultural evangelism in that era. Payne articulated both the sorrows and the successes of Brainerd's missional endeavors in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York. A helpful feature of this essay was its direct engagement with Brainerd's evangelistic methods. Payne identified eight evangelistic approaches in the life and ministry of David Brainerd: 1) prayer, 2) Christocentric preaching, 3) Public baptism, 4) Catechetical meetings, 5) Cultural study, 6) Establishment of English schools and settlements, 7) Preference towards receptive peoples, and 8) Church planting from the harvest. In Payne's discussion of these methods, one can fairly hear the evangelistic heartbeat of David Brainerd. Although Payne notes that Brainerd was a sometimes-flawed evangelist, his approaches give hope that, through prayer, gospel faithfulness, and hard work, we can see the gospel take root in difficult soil. Second, educational expert Kristen Ferguson penned an essay on the merger of education and evangelism in the ministry of the Sunday School pioneer Henrietta Mears. The chapter provided historical data on a towering, yet less-known, figure in 20th century evangelicalism. Ferguson notes that Mears served the Lord as a single woman, claiming that the Apostle Paul was the only man she could have ever married! Her singular focus on serving Christ allowed her to develop skills in education, both as a teacher and as an administrator. When she moved to Hollywood to accept the position of Director of Christian Education at First Presbyterian Church, she inherited a Sunday School program that served 1600 students on a weekly basis.

During her 35-year tenure, the program grew to serve 6,000 students every week. Mears emphasized both excellence and evangelism in church education. She believed that Sunday School teachers ought to use the latest educational theories and techniques. As a professionally trained teacher, she brought the latest pedagogical insights to the field of Christian education. She was also fiercely committed to evangelizing people through the Sunday School. Mears provided evangelism training and opportunities, and the Sunday School provided a conduit for substantial church growth (much of it from new converts). There were also at least two weaknesses in A History of Evangelism in North America. As with any edited volume, certain essays were stronger than others. The critiques that are offered below apply to the project when viewed as a whole. First, the book suffered from a lack of diversity. In a book entitled A History of Evangelism in North America, it was noteworthy that all the examples came from the United States (our Canadian brothers and sisters might object). Furthermore, most of those profiled were professional clergy, and very few were women or people of color. The puzzled reader might wonder if women, minorities, and lay Christians contributed to the development of evangelism in the United States. Second, the lines between evangelism and other ministries were sometimes blurred. For instance, certain preachers were studied because they preached evangelistic sermons (for instance, Edwards and Lockridge). Other events (like revivals) were chronicled because mass conversions frequently accompanied revivals. At times, these discussions could be confusing, leaving the reader to wonder if the book was about preaching, revival, church planting, or evangelism.

Overall, this volume, edited by Thomas P. Johnston, is a significant contribution to our understanding of the history of evangelism in the United States. Its excellent, future-oriented final essay by Paul Akin points its readers in the direction of a fresh missionary encounter between the gospel and American culture. All Christians should learn from our past so that we may be ready for the fresh evangelistic challenge before us. This book will be invaluable in that task.

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Understanding Spiritual Warfare: A Comprehensive Guide. By Sam Storms. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021. 353 pp. Softcover $22.99.

Understanding Spiritual Warfare is another volume from the prolific pen of Sam Storms, senior pastor of Bridgeway Church in Oklahoma City. In fact, many of its seventeen chapters have appeared previously in his other writings. The book is endorsed by such evangelical heavyweights as Wayne Grudem, Matt Chandler, and J. P. Moreland, along with a Foreword by Clinton Arnold, dean and professor of New Testament at Talbot School of Theology, whom he quotes often.

Storms is "unapologetically a functioning, practicing charismatic" (xix). This perspective is a major factor in his explanation of spiritual warfare. He also repudiates the dispensational teaching he received at Dallas Theological Seminary. Storms is concerned that too many Christians think far too little and lightly of the extent of Satan's influence in our world (9), and he blames dispensationalism in part for this neglect (267). Finally, despite the claim to be comprehensive, Storms' focus is strictly upon the demonic, giving no overt attention to the believer's battle with the flesh and the world.

To his credit, Storms rigorously grounds most of his assertions and conclusions in the text of Scripture, since "our beliefs must be rooted in and fully consistent with Scripture" (6). When conclusions

are at best tentative, he generally leaves them so. He also takes his own charismatic camp to task on several occasions for beliefs and practices that go beyond the teaching of scripture, including his rejection of the practice to discern, pray against, or cast down "territorial spirits" (chapter 7).

But experience also looms large in this volume. Storms begins the book with the dramatic story of "a surprising encounter with the demonic," and every chapter is concluded with a brief and often moving testimony of someone who has benefited from his church's "inner healing and deliverance ministry." Storms describes this ministry as "digging deeply into each individual's past and present experience" with "a highly intensive, carefully constructed sequence of prayer, confession, repentance, and affirmation of the truth of God's Word." His desire is that through reading and applying the truths he shares in this book the reader will experience the same "healing and freedom" (xx).

There is much with which to agree in this extensive treatment. Storms' pastoral heart comes through in many applications of his teaching as well as his transparency concerning his wife's spiritual and emotional struggles (158–163) as well as his own struggles with depression (306–308). Though Storms writes for the average Christian, he does not shy away from in-depth discussion of highly debated issues. Several helpful sections provide counsel on dealing with shame (189–201), which he relates to Satan's accusations against believers, unforgiveness (201–209), and temptation (213–230). He also has a lengthy exegesis of Ephesians 6 (288–305), though his discussion of vv. 18–20 in the context of "warfare prayer" goes beyond the text at several points (317–324). Finally, I heartily affirm Storm's declaration that "Satan only wins when we love our lives more than we love God" (251).

Space does not allow for adequate treatment of every point with which I disagree, but two illustrate the general tenor of the book. First, he insists repeatedly it is wholly appropriate for Christians to both "rebuke" and "cast out" demonic spirits as part of a "deliverance ministry" (66, 242, 257, 260–264, 266–269). Indeed, Storms contends believers have the same authority that Jesus did when it comes to dealing with the demonic, based in part upon Jesus' command to the 72 "ordinary" disciples, who had the same gift of exorcism (Luke 10:17–19). Yet, Jesus also instructed these disciples

not to carry moneybags, knapsacks, or sandals (v. 4). Does this instruction also carry over to today?

Second, because of Storms' rejection of dispensationalism, he spiritualizes the Book of Revelation. For example, the 144,000 (7:4) are "all God's people" (89), the army of 200 million (9:16) are "a symbolic portrayal of demonic hosts" (93), and Revelation 12 "describes Satan's efforts to destroy the church" (96, 246–247, 251–253). Indeed, Revelation concerns Satan's activity "throughout the course of church history" (102). However, it is noteworthy that he often omits discussion of many, specific details in the text that undermine his figurative and symbolic approach.

Interestingly, he distinguishes between what he calls *voluntary* and *involuntary* demonization (156). Voluntary demonization occurs when believers "willfully or deliberately" engage in "practices that are an open door for the enemy's activity," such as occultic arts or failing to extend forgiveness (Ephesian 4:26–27). Involuntary demonization occurs when believers persistently and unrepentantly fail to do what God says, such resisting the devil or making proper use of the armor of God. Based upon incidents such as the demon possessed daughter of the Syrophoenician woman, he also includes in this category the impact of "generational spirits" (167–168).

Perhaps the most intriguing part of this book is his treatment of the question of whether Christians can be demon possessed (173–187). Storms "tentative, guarded conclusion" is that a believer can be demon possessed, despite numerous promises that believers will be "kept" or "protected" from Satan (John 17:15, 2 Thess 3:3; 1 John 5:18). He interprets these promises in terms of either eternal preservation or preservation conditioned upon obedience (176–177).

Because of Storms' charismatic and anti-dispensational bent, I cannot endorse this book as a resource for the average congregant or student. Instead, I would recommend two older but excellent treatments of the topic spiritual warfare: Thomas Ice and Robert Dean's *A Holy Rebellion: Strategy for Spiritual Warfare* and John MacArthur's *How to Meet the Enemy: Arming Yourself for Spiritual Warfare*. However, this book is useful as a reference work to understand better how charismatics deal with the issue of spiritual warfare.

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In All the Scriptures: The Three Contexts of Biblical Hermeneutics. By Nicholas Piotrowski. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2021. 304 pp. Softcover $32.99.

It seems apropos for Nicholas Piotrowski to speak on hermeneutics—the *science* and *art* of *legitimately and ethically interpreting texts* (4). Dr. Piotrowski (Ph.D., Wheaton College) serves as the president and academic dean at Indianapolis Theological Seminary where he teaches hermeneutics and NT. Piotrowski's hermeneutical theory is the aim of the book, where his approach explores three layers of contexts: literary, historical, and Christological (9–15) resulting in a "theoretical-philosophical foundation to reading the Bible" (16). The importance of hermeneutics cannot be overstated, if we *do not* study this discipline: (1) we will create God in our own image; (2) we will miss important things in the text; (3) we will never have a consistent theology; and (4) our use of the text could be unethical (6–8).

In All the Scriptures is a timely and insightful book that every serious Bible student will want to explore. The work is organized into eight chapters, supplying an annotated bibliography at the end of each chapter, as well as a very helpful *Glossary of Hermeneutical Terms* (103 definitions). Three chapters though, serve to strengthen the value of this work. Chapter one (*The Text as a Mirror*) presents a history of hermeneutics from the *allegory* and *typology* of Alexandria and Antioch to the *existentialism*, *demythologization*, *relativism*, and

deconstructionism of Postmodernism. Piotrowski emphasizes the ramifications of *Sola Scriptura*. The Bible: (1) is the only authority for doctrine and piety; (2) is its own interpreter; (3) itself teaches us how to read it; and (4) is about Christ *in toto* (31–32). He stresses *biblical theology*, as well as the *hermeneutical spiral*, "an experience of reading the Bible where our presuppositions are tested and refined a little more each time we read" (48).

Chapter two (*What Did Jesus Do*?) proves to be the most meaningful and beneficial section. Piotrowski argues that Jesus and the apostles' interpretative process: (1) paid attention to literary, historical, and redemptive-historical contexts when interpreting and applying the OT; (2) regularly saw typological patterns in the OT that they understood to climax in the person and work of Christ; and (3) serves as a hermeneutic template, revealing to us how to give careful attention to the literary, historical, and redemptive-historical context of any passage, as well as employing typological principles to the Bible as a whole (53). Piotrowski rightly asserts that if a *follower* of Christ *follows* him in doctrine, ethics, and values, would it not make sense to *follow Him in hermeneutics* as well (53, 73)? Chapter eight (*Be Doers of the Word*) will prove helpful to those seeking to walk in the Word and especially for preachers who strive to faithfully apply the sacred text. The author exhorts us that "without a legitimate and ethical approach to reading the Scriptures we will make *hasty* application. That can lead to unwise application, or even downright *wrong* application" (235). To be sure, good-proper-fruitful application will *only* come when we *first* get our hermeneutic right. He offers some thoughts on what application entails. We should: (1) remember application is not simply for the *individual*—there is a *corporate* aspect; (2) appreciate that right knowledge *is* application— when we stop thinking error, and start thinking truth, application *is* happening; (3) accept that application may be delayed; and (4) delight that Scripture gives us *wisdom*! Some decisions in life do not have "chapter and verse," but require sound thinking (238–240).

Along with these strong chapters, this work provides a couple of thematic strengths—its emphasis on the context of the sacred text and the centrality of Jesus. First, interpreters will want to discern *what the text says*, Piotrowski asserts that "*texts exist in contexts too. No text, utterance, or expression ever exists in abstract*" (2–3), whether the context be literary, historical, or Christological. He provides a notable

example from Jesus (Matt 4:1–11), who uses *one whole context* (Deut 6–8) pertinent to his situation and interprets from that entire context, even though he only uses three sentences (vv. 4, 7, 10) (54–55). Jesus and the NT writers maintained contextual integrity when quoting the OT (as we should in all the Scriptures), contrary to Richard N. Longenecker's view of an indistinct hermeneutic (57n8). To be sure, each book has its own *coherency* (the attribute of a book when its various parts fit together, relate to and depend on each other) that depends on its own *integrity* (the *wholeness* of any book, and its ability to hold itself together and even interpret itself) (76–77) … when we atomize texts or isolate passages from their whole book context, we violate book integrity (77).

Building on that, next, the emphasis on Jesus Christ—his accurate hermeneutic concerning himself *in all the Scriptures* both *by* himself and *by* the apostolic witness, as well as all who presently seek to *rightly divide* the Word. This emphasis was both instructive and inspiring. Jesus and the writers of the NT were faithful to *literary contexts*, they did not "treat the Old Testament as a collection of pithy one-liners, but as *whole text*s with theological implications larger than just a single verse (54) … they did not pluck versus or ideas out of their literary contexts or misappropriate verses" (57). They were faithful in *historical contexts* as well, knowing that the totality of the Scriptures coalesce as a witness to what God is doing in *salvation history* for his people (124). Moreover, their fidelity to *redemptive-historical contexts* were consistent— "Jesus and the apostles read in terms of big literary contexts, in a historically minded way, understanding that redemptive history builds to reach its crescendo in the person and work of Jesus Christ, *and that we should read the same way*" (71). In short, the OT is *Christotelic,* the NT is *Christocentric*, and altogether the Bible is *Christological*—in all of these, it *is the logic of the gospel* that ties the diversity of the Bible together (158). This is not an attempt to make the OT subordinate to the New (165, 262), it simply expresses that Christ is revealed *in all the Scriptures* through: 1) OT quotes, echoes, and allusions in the NT; 2) prophecy, 3) typology, 4) major recurring themes; and 5) whole-book contexts (168–195).

This book will prove beneficial, "As he inspired the biblical authors to write, he will also illumine your mind to understand, especially when you read prayerfully and carefully" (18). It is

recommended for: 1) anyone who wants gain more *legitimate* and *ethical* interpretations of the Scriptures; or 2) ministers who habitually practice hermeneutics as a part of their calling. He rightfully sees this as "a *starter* book … [providing] hermeneutical pathways that the student will want to explore in a life-long journey of honing one's exegetical skills" (15). For a deeper hermeneutical dive, one should consider Köstenberger and Patterson's *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*: *Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History*, *Literature*, *and Theology* 2nd Edition (Kregel Academic, 2021) or Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard's *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* 3rd Edition (Zondervan Academic, 2017). Piotrowski is a must read for all who take the Scriptures seriously and want to interpret them with integrity.

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Dissertations Successfully defended at Baptist Bible Seminary

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